

Something to crow about

The NT's feathered residents put on an incredible show for an international camera crew recently, and proved you don't have to look far to find sensational species in one of the world's best birding spots

STORY KATIE STACEY



Clockwise from main: rufous owl in Darwin Botanic Gardens (Picture: RUBEN CEBRIAN); red goshawk (Picture: LUKE PATERSON/NT BIRD SPECIALISTS); the crew consisted of Ryan Sage, David Lindo, Oscar Trioso, Sarah Burgess, Luke Paterson, Ruben Alonso (back), Vanesa Palacios (front), Luke Massey and Katie Stacey; hooded parrot (Picture: LUKE PATERSON/NT BIRD SPECIALISTS); David Lindo, The Urban Birder (Picture: VANESA PALACIOS); Darwin CBD at night (Picture: RUBEN CEBRIAN)

AS the crowd at Shags enjoyed the end of a hot day with a cold beer, and the band competed in the noise stakes with a flock of rainbow lorikeets coming home to roost, a camera crew filmed recklessly beneath the trees they perched in. "You can always tell the foreigners," said Mike Blank,

general manager of Mantra on the Esplanade. "They are the ones who walk under the trees at night." To locals this show of feathers is the norm, but for us it is an urban phenomenon. In fact, all the birding we witnessed during 10 days in Darwin and Kakadu proved the Top End boasts some of the best and most accessible birding sites in the world. Our crew, led by British wildlife presenter David Lindo,

aka The Urban Birder, was shooting two mini films on the birds of Kakadu and Darwin. Guided by birder extraordinaire Luke Paterson from NT Bird Specialists, we were in 'bimbo' heaven as soon as we landed. In birding lingo, a bird you have never seen before is a 'lifer', but with half the team from Spain we quickly adopted their term — 'bimbo'. As we set off for Cooinda, the bimbos kept flying in. First timers to the

NT, everything was novel — galahs, sulphur-crested cockatoos, red-winged parrots — the colours that flitted across the road were mesmerising. Luke even spotted a frilled-neck lizard too. Was there no end to the wildlife on show in this incredible place? Our next few days suggested not. **A**T Nourlangie in Kakadu we watched various honeyeaters and helmeted

friarbirds feeding on grevillea flowers, while a peregrine falcon swooped into its nest overhead. We went in search of an endemic species found nowhere else on earth, the white-lined honeyeater, which our hawk-eyed guides quickly tracked down. As the sun reached its highest point at Nawurlandja Lookout, chestnut-quilled rock pigeons sought shade to feed and we followed their lead, heading to Lake Jabiru.

We spotted partridge pigeons by the road and trees bowed with the weight of hundreds of little red flying foxes. As dark fell the trees were relieved of their burden as the bats left en masse to forage, only to be replaced with a white cloud of little corellas — a spectacular changing of the guard. The darkness did not end our birding success, with two barking owls perched outside our room and, around the corner, a great bower bird

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