



asleep on a branch. We were amazed at how bold the wildlife was.

On Yellow Water billabong the sightings continued with Australasian darters, white-bellied sea eagles, bar-breasted honeyeaters and black bitterns. Saltwater crocodiles were an added bonus and among the lilies, where the comb-crested jacana tended their chicks, it was easy to capture stunning footage.

We headed to Pine Creek and came across a 'bimbo of exception', one of the rarest birds of prey in Australia, a red goshawk. This magnificent bird happily posed as we filmed.

"It is a sheer delight to see such a rare, gorgeous bird of prey," Luke said.

We couldn't agree more. The day finished in style with endemic hooded parrots drinking from a sprinkler 50m from the pub.

ON our last morning in Kakadu we hightailed it to Ubirr to see exquisite rock paintings and enjoy the

Jurassic Park-like views. We spotted a koel and the Wilkins short-eared rock-wallaby — only recently identified as a new species — hopping around a fig tree next to us.

Then it was back to Darwin for the truly urban section of our trip, taking part in a 'bird-off' along the way. While David, in Luke's car, saw a wedge-tailed eagle and rose-crowned fruit dove, the second car, driven by bird enthusiast Ryan Sage, spotted rainbow pittas and brogas at Fogg Dam. How do you decide on a winner between that?

We had barely set foot outside our CBD accommodation the next morning when we saw two rainbow bee-eaters settled on an aerial, flitting off every now and then to hunt — the perfect urban birding vision.

At Nightcliff Markets the trees hummed with Australasian figbirds, little friarbirds and white-gaped honeyeaters, while larger shadows swept overhead in the form of brahminy kites. From the market to Nightcliff

Jetty it was a birding bonanza, but a humble magpie-lark caught our eye. While watching the bold double-barred finches skirting the silver gulls at a leaking tap, we noticed the magpie-lark collecting mud from a corner of the puddle. We followed it to where it was making a nest above the jetty car park — losing the majority of its beak contents onto the parked cars beneath.

THE variety of birds got even more astonishing — red-tailed black cockatoos hanging from lamp posts; Australian white ibis roaming the gardens of the Ski Club; a handsome rufous owl asleep in a tree at the Darwin Botanic Gardens; an Eastern osprey with fish for its chicks in the nest on a nearby transmitting tower (mobbed by an Australian hobby as it came in — perhaps in the hope it would drop its dinner); a tawny frogmouth nestled away on The Esplanade. It was a riot of bird life.

And the grand finale, which

we watched grow from a tiny pre-roost on The Esplanade to an explosion of feathers flooding the sky with colours and calls as thousands of rainbow lorikeets settled down to roost in the heart of the city.

We were so taken by the unique spectacle we headed back before dawn the next morning to see the effect of such numbers leaving, and were amazed to find a council worker power-washing the path below the roost — an impressive dedication to this epic natural marvel.

After sunrise we headed to Cullen Bay to film a striated heron and grey-tailed tattler picking through the water as Wagait residents hopped off the ferry.

We stopped at Mindil Beach and saw black butcherbirds, before heading to Jingili Water Gardens, where we spotted the azure kingfisher, grey goshawk and red-headed honeyeater. With a glut of bimbos under our belts we still hadn't had our rainbow lorikeet fill, so we approached Mantra on the

Esplanade, who kindly gave us access to their roof, from where we caught some spectacular footage.

PRE-DAWN the following day we headed to East Point to time-lapse the sunrise over the CBD. Our mission was to film wading birds so we headed to Lee Point and walked along the beach to Buffalo Creek, where a plethora of birds waited — red-capped plovers, little terns and Caspian terns. As the lead cameraman caught sight of some sooty oystercatchers he turned to tell me to crouch down ... and incredibly the massive rip as my trousers split did not disturb them, nor did the following giggles.

Each day in Darwin we were met with surprises, and not only from our feathered friends. While filming an orange-footed scrubfowl at Frog's Hollow we met indigenous people from East Arnhem Land. It was fascinating to learn about the relevance of these birds to their clan and culture.

We experienced never-ending sightings — a beach stone-curlew at Nightcliff (where we fitted in some rock pooling, finding mantis shrimp and sea cucumbers), to the Shoal Bay Dump where we spotted kites, pied herons and more ibis. Then our trip wrapped up with a proper Aussie BBQ. After piles of meat and delicious barramundi (can we import this to the UK please?) we rolled back to our hotel.

Our final few hours were a chance to chase birds we'd missed, like the bower birds at Bayview, and we finished off with another spectacular roost site — the little corellas on milkwood trees along McMillans Road.

It was an epic adventure and the sheer volume of birds astounded us. We can't wait to show the finished film, which will be launched at Birdfair — 'The Birdwatcher's Glastonbury' — in the UK in August. After that it will be available on the Leica website, and will help put the NT firmly on the birding map.