

Feather Fascination!

with local Birdwatcher,
Jim Butler



LOVING ALL LIFE

I am passionate about her. Jonathan Frazen wrote "one half of passion is obsession; the other half is love". I was obsessed with meeting her, out on the native grassland plains of the Riverina in NSW. This area is so astonishingly flat! By day, the sky is a blue hemisphere sitting on the level ground in every direction.

To her, the Earth is flat and she has a clear view over the vegetation! In the evenings, the glorious Sun sinks Westward and simultaneously the Earth's shadow rises in the East topped by the Belt of Venus! I had only ever seen this before from a beach on the East Coast! The sparkling domed night sky similarly merges

into the flat dark earth.

She spends her days foraging on the grasslands under a danger dome. Above her are numerous predators; a Black Falcon sits on the fence and Kestrels and Kites are patrolling. There is nowhere for her to hide, she only has her cryptic colouring to protect her.

It is the mating season now and she lays eggs for a number of males, leaving them to do the incubation and the raising of the chicks. After sunset, she calls a number of times, to broadcast her presence in this vast dark silence; then goes quietly to sleep.

Her soft calls at dusk orchestrated our meeting. I moved towards her and waited in total silence. She called again and I moved closer. We kept up this invisible ballet until I was sure she was close by, then torches were switched on and illuminated her.

She was the living, alert, quiet embodiment of all the images I had studied. But nothing had prepared me for this exquisite encounter. As I looked at her I could feel my heart overflow with love for the world's precious Plains Wanderer (15cm).

Love life, love birds.

Protect biodiversity

- Jim

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Image: Female Plains Wanderer
taken by Nick Leseberg