

Annual Report of Convenor, BirdLife Northern Queensland - 2 March 2013

2012 has been the first year of BirdLife Northern Queensland. It started off with great expectations by joining two vibrant groups of birding enthusiasts, across a vast area of coastal and outback Queensland. We have over 200 members now from Torres Straits, Karumba, Mt Isa, Cairns, Innisfail, Mission Beach, Tully and even Cooktown. But we faced the year with some anxious moments as we merged two sets of birding goals, cultures, values and administrative processes. Never easy to get right with any merger.

Now more than 12 months on, let us celebrate our first birthday with confidence as we are a much stronger regional branch. We technically lost some of our previous Birds Australia Townsville members, especially those on our previous committee. But this has been offset by the addition of other members, and what is now developing into a strong partnership with the Townsville regional branch. Members from both branches now enjoy twice as many outings, surveys, presentations, and workshops to choose from, as well as two separate newsletters throughout the year.

Our first BirdLife NQ committee started a monthly program of meetings and outings. From our formation meeting in April to the first AGM, we held 7 meetings and workshops, covering a range of expert speakers on topics from Tasmania to Africa, and places in between. To ensure we can reach most of our scattered members these have been held not only in Cairns, but also in Port Douglas, Yungaburra, and Mission Beach, with an average attendance of 25-30 members. As well as these informative meetings, we also organised more social birding events, where we visited favourite localities such as Cattana Wetlands and explored new sites, such as Minamoolka Station. We will keep this program happening through the rest of 2013, with events on the first and third weekends of every month.

We have also been active in our conservation efforts, including:

- initiating annual surveys for the elusive and little known Buff-breasted Button-quail;
- with an apparent decline in reported sightings of Fawn-breasted Bowerbirds, a targeted survey was done in Cape York Peninsula, finding some localities with healthy populations;
- continued our ongoing monitoring of some of our special NQ species, Sarus Cranes and Tooth-billed and Golden Bowerbirds;
- assisted Bush Heritage with scientific counts of birds on their Yourka property, adjoining the Wet Tropics World Heritage area; and
- held initial discussions with Northern Gulf and Cape York Natural Resource Management groups on bird surveys in nature refuges in

these areas.

We have provided financial support to research on:

- Sarus Crane breeding in the Gulf country
- supplemental feeding for Southern Cassowaries after Cyclone Yassi
- Golden-shouldered Parrots in the newly established Alwa National Park in Cape York.

We actively supported the successful “Places You Love” campaign by writing letters to our state and federal members of parliaments, and the Prime Minister. We made a submission to the Senate Enquiry in support of proposed amendments to the national Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. And we have started investigations into an education program in some local schools and possibly at the Tinaroo Education Centre, with very helpful advice and support from the Townsville branch.

This is a long list of achievements for our first year, which is built upon the previous work of both Birds Australia and BOCA groups. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the BirdLife Northern Queensland committee. In particular, we should thank two retiring members - Karen Doyle who has looked after our Contact Call newsletters for several years; and to Alan Gillanders, who has been Convenor, Deputy Convenor, outings leader, workshop presenter, and a great mentor for many members.

And I would like to say a warm thank you, to you our members. Because without you and your enthusiasm and passion for our birds, we would not exist! Thank you all, and look forward to you helping us to make 2013 a great second year as BirdLife Northern Queensland!! Thank you!