

BirdLife Northern Queensland Convenor's Report for 2016 Presented at AGM on 10 March 2017

Let me start with some of our important highlights that we achieved during 2016.

First, as you aware since 2008 we have been surveying northwestern Queensland and adjacent parts of the Northern Territory for Carpenterian and Kalkadoon Grasswrens. Following extensive fires and severe drought in recent years, we feared the worst. So in May 2016 we resurveyed many locations where the grasswrens had been recorded. It was a relief to find both species were still present throughout their known range in the vicinity of Mount Isa. However, populations in the Boodjamulla and Wollogorang IBAs were more restricted than in previous surveys. Building on the finds of these regular surveys which led to the new classification of the Carpenterian Grasswren as Vulnerable, Southern Gulf Natural Resource Management is now developing a fire management strategy amongst pastoralists. These achievements are the result of the dedicated leadership of Graham Harrington, and the work of numerous members of BirdLife from throughout Australia.

Another milestone achieved in our conservation efforts has been the accumulation of 20 years of annual crane counts. These counts have been organised by Jon Nott, and then Eleanor Scrambler, and lately by Virginia Simmonds. Virginia is now retiring from this role, so we thank her for her tireless efforts over the years. The analysis of these data is now underway, organised by Graham Harrington.

Ongoing monitoring of Golden and Tooth-billed Bowerbirds was done, especially by one of our members Dominic Chaplin - who has struggled up some of the remotest and least known mountains in far north Queensland, such as Mt Finnegan, Mt Amos, Mt Spurgeon, and Mt Fisher.

Several more of our members have been involved throughout the year in working with Cairns Regional Council on the Esplanade, Cattana

Wetlands, Cairns Botanical Gardens, Cairns Airport and Machan's Beach. So big "thank you"s to Paul Fisk, Tony Nielson, Denis Walls, Mikey Kudo, Pippy Cannon, Jude Friesen, Brian Venables, Peter Valentine, Tom Collis.

This past year, we appointed committee members to organise programs of activities in each of the Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Tablelands and further north. As a result we have seen a marked increase in activities and attendance. And at most of our Tablelands presentations there are usually over 100 people attending, due to publicity drawing in both members and interested public. Great effort from Peter Valentine, Martin and Sam Willis, Tom Collis, Ceri Pearce and members who led these events, including Doug Herrington, Del Richards, Sandra Christensen, Robert and Clair Goodwill and Lynette Ensor. Our members helping us discover new locations for great birding and companionship.

Another achievement has been the start of monthly Sticky Beak outings, aimed for our younger members, and led by a variety of parents. Thanks to Golo Maurer for organising this initiative.

We also participated in the first BirdLife national twitchathon, working with other Queensland branches to raise over \$4,000 to fund priority conservation issues in our state. Thanks to Peter Valentine and Renee Cassels for organising and publicising this, and to the teams who participated and raised the money.

During last year, BirdLife Australia launched its new Birddata portal, along with smart phone apps. We have done training workshops and outings to get more members using these helpful tools, and to increase the data needed to track the trends of our common species and improve the accuracy of the Bird Atlas. These workshops will continue this year.

We have maintained our efforts with systematic surveys for Torresian Imperial Pigeons (from Elim Beach down to Mission Beach), with partners such as Northern Gulf NRM, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, and Bush Heritage.

We kept ourselves informed by four outstanding issues of our newsletter *Contact Call*, a well-presented easy to use web site, a well-moderated Facebook page, and our enews. These are possible due to the ongoing work by Ceri Pearce, Mikey Kudo, Doug Herrington and Renee Cassels. Another vital role is done by our Treasurer Wendy Cooper, who pays our bills and keeps the money flowing in - a big "thank you" to each of these committee members.

In an effort to keep us focused and to prioritise our limited resources, your committee with assistance from Alistair and Amanda Freeman drafted a conservation strategy. We now have 4 priorities:

- grasswrens
- altitudinal surveys of bowerbird bowers
- repeat surveys of beach-nesting birds, and
- communications plan to keep members and public informed and engaged.

We will take actions on these over the coming years and report on the success of these actions each year.

As your Convenor, I take great pride in presenting this report to you the members, for making 2016 such a productive year -
THANK YOU ALL!

Kath Shurcliff