

Contact Call

Birders of North Queensland

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OFFICE BEARERS

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Ingham:

Vacant

BNQ CALENDAR

14 - 17 April - BNQ Easter Campout.

23 April - Wader Watching on Cairns Esplanade.

Come and learn about those "little brown jobs" that feed on the mudflats. Meet on the Esplanade opposite Trade Winds Hotel at 2.30pm. A high tide of 2.25m at 5.35pm, should give us 2 hours to watch the birds on the incoming tide.

7 May - Birdwatching at Crocodile Farm.

Meet at Edward River Crocodile Farm at 2.30pm. Entrance fee \$8 - have a coffee in the snack bar before exploring the excellent wetland/mangrove habitat.

CONTACT NUMBERS FOR OTHER EVENTS

BOCA Cairns

(070) 562 007 or (070) 556 139

BOCA Mackay/Whitsunday

(079) 592 184

BOCA Townsville (077) 891 306

Lake Eacham Birdwalks

(070) 531 183

Nth Qld Field Naturalists' Club

(070) 531 183

WPSQ Townsville (077) 788 474

EASTER CAMPOUT

We have been invited by the Dept. of Environment and Heritage to undertake a bird census of a newly acquired National Park. This seems an ideal activity for Easter and all members are invited to participate. However, the Park will not be open to the public until 1997 so it is essential that you let one of the Executive Committee know beforehand that you will be attending and we will send you a map and precise instructions of how to get there. We have been asked to say that no dogs or rifles will be allowed but fishing and open fires will be OK. the camping will be in a pleasant spot, swimming will be on the agenda and of course children are welcome.

The Park is in the vicinity of Princess Hills homestead, which is just south of the Herbert River where it turns eastward and forms the Herbert River Falls. It will take between 3-4 hours to reach the area from Cairns and Townsville. We will be more precise about that when we have done a recce, checked out the best routes and selected a campsite. DEH will be providing a vegetation map and the objective is to prepare a bird list for all the major vegetation types. Any other animal sightings will also be valuable so if members or non-members with other zoological

interests wish to attend and get stuck into the non-feathered fauna we will be only too pleased to have them along.

The relevant 1:100,000 map is Cashmere sheet 7961.

COASTAL FOREST REMNANT PROJECT

One of the possible activities that has been discussed at previous meetings is to better establish the importance of surviving forest remnants amongst the sugarcane on the coastal plain in north Queensland. It is virtually certain that these are vital seasonal habitat for birds that are moving north-south on migration or moving between the highlands and lowlands. Thus as these forest fragments disappear it will affect bird populations in places far distant from the coastal plain. The rediscovery of the Mahogany Glider in this area has been influential in stopping the Qld Forestry Service from clearing more native forest for pine plantations but this has not given any protection to forest on freehold land. To establish voluntary management agreements with landholders DBH need as convincing a case for the importance of these fragments as possible. The need for data is urgent! A sugar boom is coming and incentive for further clearing will be high. DEH would be very keen to assist us with vegetation maps etc. Best of all though is that we would have them as a vitally interested customer for our data. We know the results of our bird recording will go directly into the better conservation of north Qld birds and their habitat. This is exactly what many members said should be a prime focus for BNQ.

See over for more details.

How you can participate: Contact Graham Harrington if you would like to coordinate this project, or participate in the planning of it, or you know of forest patches that you think should be included and/or you would like to be involved in the bird recording trips. In order to be useful the areas monitored will have to be monitored at least four times per year and preferably six times. Standard procedures will have to be used but it will still be a fun activity with the added bonus of being undeniably useful.

CATTLE EGRETS IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

In the last few months up to a thousand Cattle Egrets have been counted at the colony at the south bank of Ross River in Townsville. This is a huge leap from the 12 pairs reported by Gordon Claridge in the 80s. Nothing is known of their spread into north Queensland - a project to which all BNQ members can contribute. Please record your sightings (date, site, no. of birds and any roost sites) and send them to me. Jo Wieneke, 22 Bishop St, Belgian Gardens, 4810.

AROUND THE NORTH

A few cripplers for Townsville. King Quail at the Common on 29.12 94 and Flock Bronzewing, Red-chested Button-quail and Stubble Quail near Toonpan. Townsville's first reported Franklin's Gull was seen flying up and down Ross Creek by Milton Lewis who, during his research into Golden-headed Cisticolas, has mist-netted some mystery reed warblers.

From Cairns, Lindsay reports a Little Curlew on the Cairns Esplanade Mudflats, a Little Bittern at Centenary Lakes in early February and an unusually large flock of 35 Great-crested Grebe at Lake Barrine, where recently a very tame Bush-hen has been feeding near the jetty. On Daintree River, Chris Dahlberg and Lloyd Neilson are keeping a close eye on the nest of a Great-billed Heron - the first to be well documented in Australia.

A TRIP TO THE TOP END - RAOU CONGRESS DARWIN 1994 - Lindsay Fisher

It was 10.15pm when we arrived in Darwin and the temperature was 31°C. This was to set the scene for the two weeks we were in the Top End for the RAOU 1994 Congress and Campout - hot, hot, hot! Someone with a warped sense of humour decided that the best time to show those southerners the Top End at it's best was in December. Six of us from BNQ made the trip to Darwin - Sue Clegg, Jo Wieneke, Andrée Griffin, Elinor Scambler and Keith and myself.

Friday evening was registration time followed by a slide show of local bird life. Saturday morning the show started with a programme ranging from the sex life of Dusky Moorhens to the ecology of the Rainbow Pitta. After teething problems with the temperature control (adjusting it from freezing to chilly), and mastering the audiovisual computer controls (said to be the most advanced in Australia!), everything seemed to run smoothly.

As always with congresses, it was a great social event with everyone catching up with old friends and making new ones. "Ticking" birdwatchers is always fun after reading about someone for years then actually meeting them in the flesh. The Congress dinner was held at a Chinese restaurant on the Saturday evening with about 40 people present - we all over indulged in food, wine and talking and a great time was had by all.

By the time the last speaker had finished on Sunday, we had all had an information overload and were ready to re-group on Monday and get back to the practical side of birdwatching. About 30 went on the campout to Kapalga (CSIRO's research station in Kakadu). Don Franklin did an exceptional job of coordinating 20 assorted birds and managing to drive the bus amid all the heckling.

First stop was Fogg Dam where we had two hours. Most people raced around both the dam and the

rainforest, with stunning looks of White-browed Crakes by the causeway and Rainbow Pittas calling from trees. Kapalga proved to be an ideal campout venue, providing air-conditioned accommodation (for most) and excellent kitchen facilities. Amid all the birds were a smattering of herpos (not sure why they came to the "chook" conference, as they called it) but they willingly led spotlighting trips each evening and showed us the delights of Death Adders on the flood plains with the bonus of Barn Owls and Red-backed Button-quail. After the first day of frugivore counting around Kapalga - (our tree just happened to be next to the roadhouse and icecream!), we were let into Kakadu and became tourists.

Nourlangie Rock proved fruitful with good looks of White-lined Honeyeaters, Sandstone Shrike-thrushes and Chestnut-quilled Rock Pigeons among the splendid rock formations and paintings. After almost losing two of our company we headed to Cooinda and had a hurried lunch (and icecream!) before loading up for the Yellow Water trip. Our guide did an excellent job of showing us all the best birds including a Little Kingfisher.

The next day we divided into two groups. Both survived long hot walks with one group seeing Banded Fruit Doves and Rufous Owls and the other dipping out on grasswrens and just getting hot! Letter-winged Kites were seen by some but Red Goatsuckers proved illusive.

The last morning was wet and we cleaned up ready for the slow trip back to Darwin. After an hour's bird census at Mary River, we stopped at Beatrice floodplains to see an Oriental Pratincole followed by a Black Falcon near Fogg Dam. At McMinn's Lagoon, in the rain, we saw Swinhoe's Snipe and more Oriental Pratincoles as a finale to the trip. It was then a fond farewell to everyone as we got back to Darwin. Our trip had been a huge success and memories of a lush, green Darwin, will remain for a long time.