

Contact Call

Birders of North Queensland
Royal Australasian Ornithological Union: North Queensland Group

June 1995 ♦ Issue: Australian Brush-turkey



OFFICE BEARERS

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Ingham vacant

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

We are recommending to members that they use the name "RAOU North Queensland Group" rather than BNQ when dealing with the media, government departments and other people. The RAOU has a fine reputation that is to our advantage and as we become an effective force in bird study and conservation, we want the RAOU to get the recognition.

Graham Harrington

BNQ CALENDER

23? July - Bird census at TFTA

Townsville Field Training Area (TFTA) is the Army reserve including "High Range" on Hervey's Range. A biological survey of this quite diverse area was completed in 1992 and the Army is now keen to see some follow-up. A half-day outing is tentatively set for 23 July (date still to be approved). Meet at 6 AM at the gate to TFTA which is the first left off Hervey's Ra. Rd. at the top of the escarpment. We want to break up into at least two groups to adequately survey Melaleuca wetlands, riparian tracts, open woodlands, rocky outcrops and vine thicket. Contact Dave James (077) 75 1507.

19-20 August - Remnant habitat blocks in Ingham and Cardwell Shires

The clearance of remnant habitat blocks and corridors for the expansion of sugar cane is a major ecological crisis in full-swing. Virtually all of the remaining tropical lowlands mosaic between the Burdekin and Tully Rivers is under threat, and this means the loss of wintering

habitat for southern migrants and Wet Tropics highland species, local extinction of Cassowaries and other birds, and possibly complete extinction of Mahogany Gliders, six butterflies, six orchids and an antplant. Data is urgently needed to strengthen the conservation argument. This weekend we hope to make preliminary surveys in as many blocks as possible to identify areas for regular monitoring. The amount we can cover is dependant on the turn-out, so come along for the weekend or just a half day. Details of meeting and camping spots, and maps of habitat blocks will be available in Aug. Contact Dave James (077) 75 1507, or your local rep.

Sun. 20th August Redden Island (Cairns)

Meet at gate near toilet block on road to Barron River mouth, Machans Beach, 7.00.

Sept 23rd-24th Sat/Sun

Campout at Princess Hills. Phone area reps for details.



EASTER AT PRINCESS HILLS

Arrangements for the Easter campout were thrown into disarray with the late release of the March issue of **Wingspan**. This was due to problems at the printers and we hope in future that **Contact Call** will reach members in plenty of time with details of field trips. An account of the campout may be found in **Wingspan**. Saturday afternoon we relinquished the pleasure of birdwatching in order to have a meeting. About twelve members attended

A number of topics were discussed and two proposals were voted on. The first was that the next AGM would not be held until April-June 1996 as it was felt that the Group had only just started (ie the first formal meeting was in November 1994), and next year would be soon enough for an AGM. It was also noted that elections of office bearers would not be necessary until the 1997 AGM.

The second topic to be voted one was regarding BNQ's finances. At present the only income was from an allocation given to us for each member by Head Office. In order to supplement this, it was decided to charge members attending campouts \$5 per family or \$2 concession. This will give us some money to afford any extra expenses. Other funds can be raised by sale of T-shirts and RAOU greeting cards.

Problems of distributing **Contact Call** through **Wingspan** were discussed after the delay in the release of the March edition. It was decided that due to the high expense of mailing **Contact Call**

ourselves, (there are over 100 members in BNQ) we would persevere with the present method.

Lindsay Fisher



RETURN TO PRINCESS HILLS

Members are asked to return to Princess Hills and undertake further survey work either with the next official BNQ visit in the school holidays, centred around September 23-24, or privately at your own convenience. If going alone, please take a map showing track section numbers and the official census form, (obtainable from me) and confirm with the Ranger Dave McDowall that your visit is convenient (Ph 070 971 448). The park is not open to the public and visits by our members must be part of the survey work. Non-members should not be invited without clearing it with the BNQ Executive Committee.

Townsville members will be relieved to hear that DEH will try to open the track through from Wallaman Falls by September. This will greatly reduce travel time.

Having inspected the Herbert River bend at the western end of the Park, I believe that is where we should camp in September. It is only 35 minutes drive from the Park entrance and offers a variety of vegetation types including riverine woodland, tall dry eucalypt forest and very dry wooded grasslands not seen on the Easter campout. In September the park is likely to be very dry and the nearby river pools will be welcome to both birds and surveyors alike!

Graham Harrington.



WADER WATCHING AT CAIRNS Sunday 23rd April

A windy sunny afternoon on the Esplanade attracted 10 members to watch the incoming tide push the wading birds into shore. These notoriously difficult to identify brown jobs scurrying around the mudflats were identified and shown to those who were trying to come to grips with them. Identification pointers such as size, bill shape and length, as well as feeding behaviour was pointed out. The advantage of a spotting scope for watching these birds was demonstrated - they actually became recognisable from the blobs of mud! The tide pushed the birds in close and the sun setting behind gave optimum viewing conditions. Some of the birds such as Curlew Sandpiper, Lesser Sand Plover and Red-necked Stint were coming into breeding plumage. The Black-tailed Godwits flew in just before the tide forced the birds to head off to high tide roosts. Royal Spoonbills caused some amusement as they scurried up and down the tide line in a pack sifting the water in unison.

