



Contact Call

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

December 1995 ♦ Issue : Stubble Quail

P.O Box 129 Townsville QLD 4810

OFFICE BEARERS

Convenor:

Graham Harrington (070) 965 051

Secretary: Jo Wieneke (077) 714 707

Treasurer: Sue Clegg (077) 715 268
Fax (077) 715 899

Representatives:

Mackay: Bill Higham (079) 517 505

Bowen/Ayr: Jon Wren (077) 862 614

Townsville

David James (077) 751 507

Innisfail/Tully:

Klaus Uhlenhut (070) 655 181

Cairns: Lindsay Fisher (070) 581 164

Atherton Tablelands:

Elinor Scambler (070) 953 296

Cape York Peninsula:

Michael Barnett (070) 698 365

Western Queensland:

Peter Britton (077) 872 188

Ingham vacant

BNQ CALENDAR

The AGM will be held between the months of April - June. Venue to be announced early 1996. Keep Easter free as we will have a trip planned.

Keep in touch with your area representative for local field trips.

Another trip to Redden Island will be held in January - contact Lindsay if you wish to attend as the date is yet to be decided.

Contact Call Distribution

Again we have had problems with the distribution of Contact Call. Only a few BNQ members seemed to have received their September issue in Wingspan although it was delivered by Head Office to the mailing company with correct instructions. A copy was mailed to members at a later date. We hope that this issue will be received with your Wingspan - please let your local representative know if you ever miss an issue.

TRIP REPORTS

Princess Hills 22-24/9/95

The campsite set beside the Herbert River was a perfect place for 13 BNQ members to spend an excellent weekend. Most members arrived on the Friday finding the three to four hour drive from the Tableland and Cairns - a pleasant change from the Easter camp site which had taken up to six hours to get to.

Saturday was spent exploring the Herbert River downstream. It was a wide gentle river where we camped funnelling into a series of waterfalls before tumbling over the magnificent Herbert River Falls about two km downstream from our camp.

Bird watching in such lovely surroundings was a pleasure and a species list of was compiled. Highlights included a Hoary-headed Grebe on the river and a group of about 40 Black Swans.

We hope to make future trips to Princess Hills as we have far from exhausted areas to be surveyed. We have compiled birds lists for a most of the ecosystems within the park and have indicators of abundance. Any members wishing to do surveys on their own contact the ranger (070 971 448) and Graham Harrington for official census forms and other information. (Please note that this is a four-wheel drive area only.)

Tully Gorge 13-15/10/95

Members arrived Friday evening and Saturday morning at this delightful camping spot by the Tully River run by the Forestry Department.

It was a perfect place to sit and talk about the remnant forest project especially as there were good examples close by which gave us a idea of what the project would entail.

David James will be producing details of the proposed project which will give all members the opportunity to get involved in a most worthwhile study.

We hope to use this camp site for future meetings as it is midway between Cairns and Townsville although next time we won't invite the March flies!

Cairns Esplanade 20/8/95

About 30 members of the Trinity Anglican School and their parents were present to learn about the birds of the Cairns Esplanade. BNQ members Dawn and Arnold Magarry along with Keith and Lindsay Fisher were on hand to

give a short talk about the migratory birds and then help identify them. The importance of the mudflats as a feeding station for the migratory birds that come from as far away as Siberia was stressed.

The significance as a world renowned bird watching spot was also pointed out and demonstrated as several other 'birdos' along the Esplanade joined us. The day chosen was perfect as the tide pushed the birds towards the walkway where everyone could identify them as well as see the diversity of species. In all 31 species were seen. Hopefully those present went away with the view that the mudflats are not the useless eyesore that many would have us believe but a very important feeding ground for both migratory and resident birds. Thank you to Sue Taylor for organising the afternoon and raising \$32.00 for BNQ funds.

Redden Island 27/8/95

Five people attended this field trip to Redden Island with the aim of starting regular monitoring for the area.

Redden Island is situated at the mouth of the Barron River, which forms one boundary along with Redden Creek and the ocean. Cairns Port Authority, owners of the island, have fenced off the main area to vehicles, and provided access to walkers. This has prevented one of the previous problems of rubbish being dumped. Access is still provided for people who want to drive to the river mouth. Future plans include interpretive walks on the island.

10 different habitat types have been identified on the island, ranging from mangroves through woodland to rainforest providing plenty of diversity for the bird species - 50 being seen on this trip. One of the highlights was to see a pair of Lovely Fairy-wrens taking food into their beautifully woven grass nest. A Rose-crowned Fruit-dove sat out in the open long enough to get good views and a Red-winged Parrot flew over - quite unusual on the coast. Many plant species were also identified. The morning finished at the river mouth identifying waders.

A second trip was held 12th November when seven members and a visitor attended. It was a pleasant mornings walk and 51 species of birds were identified including three new ones for the list bring it to a total of 92. A Northern Fantail - one of the new ones - entertained us by giving a splendid vocal display.

This area, close to Cairns at Machans Beach, is convenient for an on-going survey. Any members who visit are asked to send their species list to Keith and Lindsay who are keeping a data base for Redden Island.

TWITCHATHON

Once again it was that time of year for birders to go twitching. This year it was to raise money for research into the effect of baits used in cane paddocks on owls and birds of prey.

"Gone Bonquers" team of Graham Harrington (on his first twitch) and Keith and Lindsay Fisher spent a hectic 24 hours racing around to get a total of 191 species. Highlights were a Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo at the base of Mount Lewis, a Glossy Ibis at Mt Carbine and Crested Shrike Tits at Kaban. A great time was had by all and we'll get the 200 next year!

"Eggs" team from Townsville started at Cumberland Dam, Georgetown and finished on Cairns Esplanade and got a total of 212 species which, on the last information received, was the highest total in Australia with Gone Bonquers team second!

MEMBERS CORNER

BLUE-FACED HONEYEATERS

Members Kerri and Gordon Redding from Atherton replied to Sybil Bottoms request for observations of Blue-faced Honeyeaters on the Tableland.

They live in Atherton and have two distinct garden types. One backs onto Priors Creek and is totally native - mostly rainforest with tall gums that grow naturally along the creek - and the front garden which has some native plants but mostly exotic. They often get Blue-faced Honeyeaters (including immatures) in the red passionfruit vine on their front wall but rarely see them in the back garden. They have also observed them on Golf Links Road Atherton.

Also on BFHE's, Elinor Scambler notes that in two years of observations at Pelican Point near Tinaroo, none have been observed. However, she does have a breeding record from Atherton. She mentions that Bravery (Emu 1970) classes them as "an uncommon resident of the Atherton Shire, in dry sclerophyll areas including NW of Tolga and in towns and gardens."

Sue Cameron, who lives at Tinaroo township, has had no BFHE records, however another member, Peter Dickenson from Walkamin, has seen BFHE's pass through regularly for the past ten years. So it would appear that they prefer the drier areas and Atherton gardens to Tinaroo Township!

BIRD NAMES FOR THE NINETIES

STD - Spotted Turtle Dove (Dawn & Arnold Magarry)

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

Pied Heron - 27/10/95 Hasties Swamp near Atherton (Dawn & Arnold Magarry)

Least Frigatebird - 29/8/95 for a week a group of about 30 on the coast near Mossman during the bad weather we had in August. (Del Richards)

Barn Swallow - 14/9-4/10/95 Mossman (Del Richards)

Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher - 25/10/95 arrived back in Mossman area. (Del Richards) and on 28/10/95 on the Bloomfield River (Charlie Gifford).

Cattle Egret - 27/10/95 Pinnacle Pocket Road, Atherton - approx 100, most in breeding plumage and one with a blue wingtag.

RAOU BIRDLIST CARDS

Every bird in Australia and Territories in the new order with the new names. Very robust and compact - great for trips or life lists. **\$1 each** (plus postage) from Elinor Scambler - proceeds to BNQ.

BNQ BIRDLISTS

A gremlin got into the computer and changed some of the names on the new birdlist!

Australian Swiftlet = White-rumped Swiftlet
Torresian Imperial Pigeon = Pied Imperial Pigeon

Any other changes, additions (or mistakes!), please contact Keith Fisher. For copies of the list send a SAE to Lindsay Fisher PO Box 2209, Cairns QLD 4870

GOULDIAN FINCH SURVEY

Since the September CONTACT CALL a number of members have been out looking for Gouldian Finches.

Dawn & Arnold Magarry went to Cumberland Dam near Georgetown and to the study site further west, but had no luck. However they thoroughly enjoyed the experience and recorded 55 species of which 33 came in to drink.

Graham Harrington, Glen Holmes and Keith & Lindsay Fisher went to a property near Mt Carbine where Gouldian Finches have been sighted in the last two years. A pleasant weekend sitting by dams, waterholes and soaks was had, but once again, no Gouldian Finches. Flocks of Black-throated Finches and constant scolding by parties of Apostlebirds and made the weekend memorable, as did the Green Tree Frogs sitting high in the trees croaking at us - and this is dry and arid country!

Anyone wishing to take part in the survey, please contact Klaus Uhlenhut :- P O Box 133, Silkwood QLD 4856 or Fax 0070 655197.

HASTIES SWAMP

This small area of National Park south of Atherton has turned up some interesting birds this year. The unseasonal rain in August helped to keep the water level up and entice a

wide range of species. Regular monitoring by a number of BNQ members has helped to keep the interest in Hasties - some birds are only there for a few days while others stay a while (and usually leave the day before Keith and I arrive!)

Elinor Scambler and other Tableland BNQ members are preparing a bird list for Hasties with the co-operation of DEH. If you would like to contribute, please contact her or Judy Fitzsimon (070 912139).

Seen at Hasties in this last few months :- Radjah Shelduck, Chestnut Teal, Pied Heron, Australasian Shoveler, Black-tailed Godwit Latham's Snipe, Ruff, Pink-eared Duck, Square-tailed Kite.

After editing three issues of Contact Call while Jo Wieneke was overseas, it is time to hand back to her. Maybe the next issues won't be so biased towards Cairns and the Tableland! Any contributions for the March issue should be sent to Jo at the Townsville postal address by January 31st. Keith & Lindsay Fisher