



Contact Call

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

September 1996 ♦ Issue : Maggie Goose

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BNQ CALENDAR

October 28th -29th

Twitchathon Campout - Murray Falls

This should be a great weekend - details on back page.

December 1st

Townsville Xmas BBQ. Bishop St Belgian Gardens. Details in next issue.

Tableland Xmas BBQ - any offers for venue? Please contact Lindsay Fisher or Elinor Scambler.

November 16th -23rd

Expedition to Rokeby N.P. Contact Graham Harrington for details.

March 28th -31st, 1997.

Easter Campout and surveying at Princess Hills.

April 25-27th, 1997.

AGM and Campout at Greenvale.

CONTACT CALL DIRECT

Because of problems with delays in publishing Wingspan it was decided to mail out Contact Call directly to BNQ members. This will allow more time to plan for group activities and save the need for special mail-outs. Contributions towards cost of postage are welcome

THE FIRST KOEL

Dr Darryl Jones of Griffith University has a graduate student studying Koels and would like records of when these birds arrive at different locations in Queensland. Please make a note of the first time you hear (or heard) a Koel this season and send the record to:

Dr Darryl Jones, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan Qld 4111.

E-mail : D.Jones@ens.gu.edu.au

GROUPS MEETING

On Friday, May 24th a meeting of representatives from all regional groups of the RAOU was held in Wollongong. This preceded the annual Scientific Day and the AGM. There are now six groups, Northern NSW, SNAG, Vic Group, WA Group, Tas Group and BNQ.

BNQ was represented by Graham Harrington, Sue Clegg and Jo Wieneke. The Meeting was called and chaired by Peter West of the Southern NSW and ACT Group. Topics discussed included activities by groups, the problems of keeping in touch with members and raising money for research projects.

It was decided that all groups could benefit by exchanging newsletters. BNQ members travelling south are welcome to get in touch with the other groups.

TABLELAND FIELD TRIP

Unfortunately the late arrival of the last Contact Call did not give much notice of the planned weekend at the Nott's property. The few who came along to 'Rose Gums', the property of BNQ members Peta and Jon Nott, on July 21st were rewarded with a most enjoyable morning's birding. Beautiful weather combined with a delightful walk down a wooded ridge to a crystal clear creek proved most enjoyable. Birds were a little short in number but contact call between members was profuse! A large area of their property has been revegetated and the growth of the trees is most impressive. The panorama from their balcony gives stunning views of the coastal range and with the aid of a telescope makes birding quite an experience. We managed to add three new species to their bird list of 123 - Square-tailed Kite, Bower's Shrike Thrush and Yellow-breasted Boatbill. We hope to visit again and thank Peta and Jon for their hospitality.

Lindsay Fisher

TOWNSVILLE SUBURBAN BIRDS RE-SURVEYED

In 1980-81 Darryl Jones surveyed twelve suburban streets of varying ages, in Townsville and for comparison also looked at a woodland area near James Cook University. The survey was done three times in each street in the summer and again in winter. The results of this exercise were published in a paper, *The suburban bird community of Townsville, a tropical city*, Emu, 83: 12-18.

Sixteen years later, Townsville BNQ members are re-surveying the same sections of the same streets. The winter count has been completed and changes in the bird communities have already been noticed. Unfortunately there seems to have been a big increase in Indian Mynas. The next counts will be done in January.

BOP WATCH

The Bird of Prey (BOP) Watch scheme was established by the RAOU and the Australian Raptor Association (ARA). During 1986-90 volunteer observers counted raptors along highways for a total of over 5 million kilometres and sent in over 26,000 survey sheets. For many BOP watchers, long stretches of road in the west were enlivened the constant cries of "Raptor ahead!" The difficulties of watching, identifying and recording while driving at high speeds on highways resulted in a few near accidents but all participants survived and hopefully will be keen to take part again.

Luckily all the information was gathered and entered on a data base prior to the introduction of Rabbit Calicivirus Disease. To find out the impact of the elimination of one of the major food sources of raptors, the new BOP Watch will run from 1996-2000. If you would like to take part please phone or write to Elinor Scambler, MS1318, Gadgarra Rd, Yungaburra, 4872, and you will be allotted a number and receive instructions and your first survey sheets. These should be sent in to Will Steele, the BOP Watch coordinator, c/o RAOU, 415 Riversdale Rd, Hawthorn East, Vic 3123.

Elinor would be very grateful if a member could volunteer to be the contact for help with raptor identification. Their phone number would be given to new BOP watchers.

GOULDIAN FINCH SURVEY

Members have been visiting dams in the Georgetown area and monitoring all birds coming in to drink at waterholes during the day. This should produce some really interesting data. One Gouldian Finch was seen in July at Cumberland Dam by a tour group - so there are still some around.

XMAS SHOPPING

Do your Xmas shopping easily and early this year. Buy a pack of 10 RAOU Calendars. They make ideal presents.

AROUND THE NORTH

Pied Imperial Pigeons are back in the Cairns area and a few were seen during the recent committee meeting at Mission Beach. A pair overwintered in Townsville but none of the migrants have been reported yet. The first Channel-billed Cuckoos have been seen. Don't forget to report your first Koel to Darryl Jones. While Judy Fitzsimon is away Elinor Scambler will be writing the *Bird Talk* column in *The Tablelander*. Please contact her as soon as possible with items of interest.

NEST RECORD SCHEME

The Nest Record Scheme has been in operation since its inception in 1963 and data is being used by researchers and planners. There is still much to learn about the breeding biology of our birds, especially here in the north as most of the records to date are from observers in southern states. With the breeding season starting to get underway, now is a good time for members to become involved. Information on ALL birds in North Queensland is needed. For information on the scheme write to Nest Record Scheme Coordinator, c/o RAOU, 415 Riversdale Rd, Hawthorn East, Vic 3123.

NESTS NOT WANTED

It seems that little can be done to eliminate introduced birds from our towns and cities. Evidence in the Townsville Street Bird Survey showed that Indian Mynas are increasing. In Townsville a favourite site is in roofs of buildings. Anyone who has handled mynas will know that they are loaded with bird lice, an excellent reason for discouraging them from sharing your roof with you! If you see mynas going into your neighbour's roof tell them too.

We can't stop them but we can discourage them and perhaps slow them down. Incidentally, it was also shown in the survey that gardens planted with exotic trees and shrubs attract more mynas and sparrows than ones planted with natives.

TWITCHATHON 1997

The Twitchathon will be held on the weekend October 26-27th. As usual the idea is to make up a team of from two to ten and count as many birds as possible in the 24 hours from 1.00pm Saturday till 1.00pm on Sunday. This year the

emphasis will be on raising money for the national Woodland Appeal and having fun! With this in mind there will be a campout at Murray Falls during the Twitchathon weekend.

Arrangements are as follows: Meet at Murray Falls camping area in time to set up camp and register your team by 11.30am. If you are not already in a team you can join up with one or with others to form another team. Inexperienced birders are welcome to go with more experienced ones.

Twitching starts at 1.00 and there is a 50km radius limit. Teams to be back at camp by 6.00pm for compulsory eating and socialising. No twitching from 6-8pm. Two hours of twitching for nocturnal birds are allowed between 8pm and 5.00am. Unlimited birding between 5.00am and 1.00pm is allowed within the 50km radius. Teams must report back to Murray Falls by 1.00pm and will be fined \$1.00 per 5 minutes over time as an extra fundraiser.

Speeding fines and any criminal offences will result in disqualification. There will be a camp prize for the winners and all teams will be eligible for the national prize of \$600.00 worth of books from Andrew Isles Book Shop, for the most money raised from sponsors.

No one will be compelled to twitch! Anyone is welcome to come to the campout and do some relaxing birding round the park.

If you cannot make it to the camp you can still join in and twitch in your neighbourhood or anywhere in Queensland. For more information, registration sheets and sponsor sheets please write to The Secretary BNQ.

WANTED TO BUY

Any ornithological books or journals.
Contact Cliff Frith,
PO Box 581 Malanda, Qld 4885.
Phone (070) 968 105. Fax (070) 968 316

TAPES FOR SALE - new release

'Birds of Queensland's Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef' No 1. Non-passerines. No 2. Passerines. Birds of Lamington National Park. \$15 each or \$36.00 for all three, plus postage.
David Stewart, PO Box 1261 Atherton, Qld 4883.
Ph/Fax (070) 914 091

THANKS

BNQ is very grateful for the assistance provided by the office of the Member for Thuringowa, Ken McElligott, in the production of this newsletter.