



Birds Australia

Contact Call

BIRDS AUSTRALIA -
North Queensland Group



June 1997 ♦ Issue : Freckled Duck

PO Box 129 Townsville
Qld 4810
E-mail: bowerbird@msn.com

OFFICE BEARERS

Convenor:

Graham Harrington (070) 965 051

Secretary: Lindsay Fisher (070) 581 164

Treasurer: Sue Clegg (077) 715 268

Fax: (077) 715 899

Area Representatives:

Mackay: Bill Higham (079) 517 505

Bowen/Ayr: Jon Wren (077) 862 614

Townsville: Jo Wieneke (077) 714 707

Innisfail/Tully:

Klaus Uhlenhut (070) 655 181

Cairns: Keith Fisher (070) 581 164

Atherton Tablelands:

Elinor Scambler (070) 953 296

Mossman/Daintree:

Del. Richards (070) 983 103

Cape York Peninsula:

Michael Barnett (070) 698 365

Western Queensland:

Peter Britton (077) 872 188

AGM AT GREENVALE

In the absence of convenor Graham Harrington, Ivor Preston chaired the meeting. After the Convenors, Treasurer's Project and Area reports, and election of office bearers, the first item of general business was the name change in line with the change to Birds Australia. We are now officially BIRDS AUSTRALIA - North Queensland Group. Also discussed were Jon Wren's concerns about owls as train-kills, Cairns Esplanade and the possibility of surveying Beach Stone-curlews and Pied Imperial Pigeons.

The town of Greenvale with mainly exotic street and garden trees was not remarkable for its birdlife. However, a few kilometres down the road Miners' Lake, was spectacular with an abundance of waterbirds among the blue flowering water lilies. We also visited a smaller dam and the Burdekin River on Lucky Downs station. Our thanks go to Doug Corbett from the hotel who obtained permission

from landowners for us to enter private property. For a list of birds seen that weekend contact Lindsay Fisher.

MEETING OF REGIONAL AND SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Sue Clegg and Graham Harrington attended this meeting on May 23rd in Albury, NSW (at their own expense!!!!).

It is clear that projects are the lifeblood of any group and grants can often be obtained for such activities. We will try to refloat the coastal forest remnants survey. We will apply for funds to purchase some small, time able tape recorders to record the dawn chorus each day. This was a David James idea. We should get excellent data this way and at the same time train our members to be birdsong proficient.

Concern was expressed that the WINGSPAN editor was often unable or unwilling to accept certain sorts of Regional news. It was agreed that WINGSPAN is a very important means of communication between members and that every effort should be made to optimise this traffic. We recognised the right of the editor to edit submissions but felt that such editorial licence should be ultimately responsible to the Director to whom members may appeal over an editing dispute. A letter has been sent to the Director on this matter. As we have a new WINGSPAN editor, now is the time to write and say what you liked and disliked in the last few issues. GH

BIRDS IN A GLUEPOT

Birds Australia entered an exciting new phase, when it purchased its first Conservation Area, namely Gluepot Station in the mallee in South Australia. This will be a major step in the long-term conservation of the Black-eared Miner. See Wingspan for all the details and support the fund-raising for it if you can.

This is a sound investment for the birds of the future. Lets hope this is the first of many. The British counterpart to Birds Australia is RSPB and they are

now reputed to be the biggest landowners in Britain.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Mike Tarburton who is writing the Swiftlet section for HANZAB is seeking information on swiftlet colonies on Hinchinbrook Island and any others between Rollingstone and Mackay.

Dr M.Tarburton, PO Box 595, Apia, Western Samoa.

e-mail: tarburton@talofa.net

BNQ CALENDAR

We have decided to have a monthly activity organised from the Tablelands except where there is a Regional function. Members from others Regions are welcome to attend and we will advertise them as best we can through Contact Call. If in doubt contact Elinor Scambler for up-to-date information. They will normally be held on the fourth weekend of each month. The aim is to recruit new members, teach beginners bird identification and survey techniques and have a good time.

The provisional program is as follows:-

June 29th: Bird Census of six contrasting habitats in one short drive over Lamb Range. Meet Platypus Park 7.30. Leader Graham Harrington.

July 27th: Census of all known Sarus Crane roosts. We will make this an annual activity. Contact Elinor Scambler for details.

August 24th: Special Bird of Prey morning around Atherton. There are large numbers of raptor visitors at this time. Meet Platypus Park 8.00pm.

September 19-21st: Weekend camp at Princess Hills. Leader Jon Nott. Details in September Contact Call.

October 4-10th: BIRDS AUSTRALIA congress and campout, Albury NSW.

25-26th TWITCHATHON.

November 23rd: Priors Creek annual bird count. Leader Kerry Redding.

December 20th: Christmas Party with Bowerbirds and Tree Kangaroos.

TABLELANDS AREA REP.

At the AGM a message from Elinor Scambler was misunderstood and it was thought she did not wish to continue as the Tablelands Area Rep. As this was incorrect Jon Nott has handed the position back to Elinor and this has been endorsed by the Executive Committee. G.H.

PRINCESS HILLS NATIONAL PARK

Jon Nott has taken over coordination of this Project. The aim is to compile a bird list for each vegetation type in the Park and to establish the number of birds in each species to be heard and seen per unit time along certain routes through the Park. This way we will see if there are any shifts in bird abundance in the future.

Jon Nott - Phone (070) 954 475

CAIRNS ESPLANADE WADER MIGRATION DISPLAY

This Project is designed to heighten local awareness of the importance of the Cairns mudflats for wader migration and the tourism potential in waterbird watching. We have had an encouraging response from the City Council. This will be a joint Project with the Cairns BOCA Group.

LAKE TINAROO MANAGEMENT PLAN

This is due out shortly. It is rumoured that the future management may degrade the Lake as bird habitat.

HASTIES SWAMP We are awaiting permission from QDE to start raising money to build a hide.

BEACH STONE-CURLEW STUDY INSTIGATED

A decision has been made to undertake a study of the distribution and status of the Beach Stone-curlew in North Queensland. The study will be part of increased activities by BANQ and an opportunity for members to become more involved in birding activities. The decision was taken after discussions at the AGM at Greenvale and more recently with other Birds Australia members. The study has the approval of the Department of Environment and we will have access to their data base on the species.

The Beach Stone-curlew is a cryptic species that is restricted to coastal and island environs. It appears to be sedentary and is vulnerable both due to the fact that only one egg a year is laid and that the bird's habitat is prone to inundation by high tides and disturbance by human activities. In southern states egg collecting has been a problem. A more

detailed article on the study and directions for registration as a participant will appear in the next issue of Contact Call but in the interim please take the time to extract records and observations from old note books and think about sites where you might monitor the species. This study will contribute to the conservation of the species and their habitat, and lends itself to systematic long term observations that will not require large amounts of time and should fit in well with other birding and social activities. We particularly welcome input from those who live in, or visit 'off the beaten track' locations.

I would be pleased to receive any comments or enquiries about the study.

Gary Wilson - Study Coordinator.

P O Box 76, Millaa Millaa, Qld. 4886.

E-mail: Wilsongw@prose.dpi.qld.gov.au

BOP WATCH

Elinor Scambler is the Group's Bopping coordinator. She will identify routes that are not getting Bopped and try to organise bird-watching weekends which will allow us to 'BOP as we go'.

GOOD NEWS FOR OWLS

Use of *klerat*, that had devastated raptor and owl populations in the Ingham area is so diminished that numbers of birds have started to increase. Local wildlife consultant John Young has made a video to show cane farmers all local owl species consuming cane rats and feeding them to their young. Farmers are being encouraged to retain strips of old eucalypts near creeks and there has already been success with the introduction of nesting boxes for owls.

CYCLONE JUSTIN VISITS CAIRNS

Cyclone Justin blew into Cairns on Saturday 23rd ~~May~~ knocking down a few trees and causing some foreshore erosion. As cyclones go it was thankfully only a category one. Its path went directly over Cairns and up to the Tableland where it dumped huge amounts of rain. This made its way down to the sea causing flooding on the coast.

A quick look around on the Sunday revealed many terns sheltering on the airport including 94 Common Terns - very unusual for Cairns, 101 Little Terns, 123 Crested Terns and 2 Gull-billed Terns. Waders sheltering there included 98 Eastern Curlews, 67 Whimbrels, 97 Lesser and 23 Large Sand plovers, 31 Bar-tailed Godwits and 86 Great Knots. The knots were the first seen on the airport in three years of observations

though they are common on the coast about a kilometre away.

We took a look further along the coast, passing a Common Noddy along the highway, and on arrival at Yorkies Knob we watched 38 Greater and eight Lesser Frigatebirds soaring into the wind and gradually heading north. Also here were Brown Boobies, Little and Crested Terns, and a Striated Heron. Further north at Palm Cove we were amazed to find a large flock of 150 frigatebirds hanging in the wind over Double Island. They were too far away to identify but a great sight to see. Where had they come from? A question that remains unanswered. That weekend there were several other reports of frigatebirds over Cairns suburbs and the Esplanade.

We concluded our morning's observations being cut off by floodwaters on the highway and around Freshwater Creek! We couldn't get home until 7.30 pm! Oh well, such are the joys of birding.

Keith and Lindsay Fisher, Cairns.

P.S. Cyclone Justin also brought Greater Frigatebirds, Lesser Crested Terns and a Common Noddy to Townsville too. Ed.

FRECKLED DUCK IN NTH QLD

This edition of Contact Call is named after the Freckled Duck, a rare vagrant to our area, not recorded during the surveys for the Atlas of Australian Birds. In June '92 fifteen birds visited the borrow pit near Ross River Dam, Townsville. There have been other sightings in the Charters Towers area.

LARGE PREY FOR BLACK KITE?

On 8.11.96 at Bambaroo, south of Ingham NQ, an Australian Magpie-lark was seen floundering on the ground by a freshly cut strip of sugar cane. The bird appeared to have a broken wing and was trying to fend off a Black Kite which was hovering over it and stooping to the Magpie-lark. After a few moments, the kite managed to grab hold of the Magpie-lark and carried it off over the canefields. It seemed a large a prey item for a Black Kite to carry with very little effort.

Roy & Margaret Mackay, Paluma

Contact Call CONTRIBUTIONS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME
Jo Wieneke-Editor

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.