



Birds Australia

Contact Call

Birds Australia

North Queensland Group

September 1997 • Issue : Black Swan

P O Box 2209, Cairns Qld 4870
email : lkfisher@internetnorth.com.au

OFFICE BEARERS

Convenor:

Graham Harrington (070)965051

Secretary:

Lindsay Fisher (070)581164

Fax (AH) (070)580337

Treasurer: Vacant

Area Representatives:

Mackay: Bill Higham (079)517505

Bowen/Ayre: John Wren (077)862614

Townsville: Jo Wieneke (077)714707

Innisfail/Tully:

Klaus Uhlenhut (070)655181

Cairns: Keith Fisher (070)581164

Atherton Tablelands:

Elinor Scambler (070)953296

Mossman/Daintree:

Del Richards (070)983103

Cape York Peninsula:

Michael Barnett (070)698365

Western Queensland:

Peter Britton (070)872188

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NEWS

Graham Harrington is off the scene from mid August to the end of October. The Executive Committee has asked Jon Nott to deputise in his absence. - he can be contacted ph/fx : (070) 968230, P O Box 776, Malanda QLD 4885 or by email : Nott@internetnorth.com.au

The Executive is further depleted by the loss of Sue Clegg who is moving to Brisbane in September. She has done far more than simply be treasurer. Until recently she was sharing the secretaries work with Jo Wieneke. She has represented the Branch at the national meetings of Regional and Special Interest Groups, travelling at her own expense. She has attended a whole variety of other national meetings of Birds Australia including SHOC in Albany last October. We look forward to still seeing her at some of our future events and wish her well in the big smoke.

CALENDER

September 19th-21st: Weekend camp by the Herbert River at Princess Hills. Arrive Friday afternoon for an early start on Saturday to survey southern areas of the Park. Swimming and walking along the spectacular Herbert River after the survey is done! John Clarkson from the Qld Herbarium will be with us to explain the flora. 4WD vehicle or good clearance

required for access to camp site. Ring Jon Nott or for maps and further details (070) 968230 or Lindsay Fisher.

October 4th-10th: Birds Australia Congress and campout, Albury NSW

19th : Sunday. 8.30 am at Cairns Esplanade by ANZAC memorial. A joint event with Cairns Urban Landcare Group to learn about the waders.

25th-26th: Twitchathon weekend. For details see attached flyer or phone Lindsay.

November 2nd: Cairns-Machans Beach, Sunday 7.30am Redden Island survey. Meet on Cinderella St., gate by toilet block. Phone Keith Fisher to confirm.

5th: Weds. Birdcount for Atherton Landcare - Priors Creek. Phone Elinor Scambler or Kerri Redding (070) 912955

8th: Sat. Census of Tableland Sarus Cranes and Brolga at roosts. Late afternoon/early evening followed by BBQ. Contact Elinor Scambler.

23rd: Sun. Public birdwalk for Atherton Landcare - Priors Creek. Meet 8.30am near roundabout on Tolga Road. Contact Elinor Scambler or Kerri Redding.

29th-30th: Weekend camping at Broadwater State Forest Park, near Ingham. Special area and large tarp supplied! Contact Lindsay for details.

December 7th: Cairns - Machans Beach, Sunday 7.30am Redden Island survey. Meet on Cinderella St. gate by toilet block. Phone Keith Fisher to confirm.

As arrangements can change after publication of Contact Call, we have decided it will be best to contact the person arranging the event close to the time. This will give more flexibility, especially, weather conditions. We may also arrange extra events so always keep in touch with your local rep!!

Although all these events are being held around Cairns and the Tableland, we need organisers for other areas, how about it local reps?

LAMB RANGE FIELD TRIP

On Sunday 29 June the Tablelands monthly meetings got off to a shivering start by undertaking a survey across the Lamb Range. Starting in very dry Ironbark /Lemon-scented Gum savanna woodland, the road followed an increasing rainfall gradient until it got to the top of the range. From there it descended to Lake Tineroo. Three teams of people spent 20 minutes walking through each major habitat recording the number of birds seen and heard. Habitats changed from the dry woodland to medium height Bloodwood Forest, Red Stringybark Wet Sclerophyll

Forest, Rosegum Wet Sclerophyll, highland rainforest and, nearer to Tineroo, a warmer rainforest. As may be imagined the bird life changed remarkably along the transect.

One feature was the Bridled Honeyeaters, usually denizens of the rainforest, feeding 5km out on the flowering Grevillea glauca. The other rainforest honeyeaters were not observed in this habitat.

We found 20 minutes by an experienced team appeared to be almost enough time to record the great majority of birds present. We deduced this from comparing the lists compiled by the tree teams as they were extremely similar. It was also noticeable that towards the end of the 20 minute period new species for the list were few and far between in most habitats. Probably 30 minutes would provide more comprehensive data, but more than this would reveal little. (20 minutes is the length of time used in Birds on Farms Survey). An excellent and worthwhile trip.

EUBENANGEE SWAMP FIELD TRIP

In superb and enjoyable sunshine, 12 adults and two kids fended off 1.6k-tonnes of mozzies and a very large crocodile (distant, luckily) - and recorded 51 species plus a couple of extra over lunch at Warrina Lakes, Innisfail. Our notes from three 20 minute counts in different habitats, plus suggestions for a revised bird list, will be given to National Parks. It would be interesting for members visiting Eubanagee to try out a survey at the same sites if visiting the area. This would give us ongoing data especially later in the year when more trees in the riverine forest are fruiting and wetland sites are drying up. **For details of methods used plus a pro forma, contact Elinor Scambler.**

REDDEN ISLAND

The Redden Island species list now stands at 108 (Copies available). Ongoing surveys are continuing, they consist of a leisurely walk around the island and a visit to the mouth of the Barron River, this normally takes about 2½ hours. It's a good opportunity to investigate the area and learn species as well as bird calls. We usually see at least 40+ species in the varied habitats. See dates in calendar.

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

*** 16.8.97 Grey Falcon seen gliding high over the rainforest near Malanda by Graham Harrington.

*** An unconfirmed report of a White-browed Robin at Centennial Lakes Cairns.

BIRDS ON FARMS

This national Birds Australia project has two years to run and a Tableland farm is now included. It's the site of the first planned tropical wildlife corridor in Australia, designed and built by DoE with community help (especially TREAT – Trees for the Evelyn & Atherton Tablelands) and WTMA. Known as Donaghy's Corridor, after the farmer who has contributed his land along Toohey Creek, it will link the Lake Barrine rain-forest fragment with the much larger Gadgarra State Forest ending over 60 years of isolation for many Lake Barrine biota. Thousands of trees (local species) have been planted with final plantings due next season. The corridor design is experimental and our data will help with monitoring of results over the next few years. We have four count sites in different habitats, plus 50ha of the farm area, to survey each quarter. There isn't public access to the farm, but field days are held from time to time and interested Birds Australia members can attend. **For further information contact Elinor Scambler.**

PRIOR'S CREEK BIRDCOUNT

Our group was asked to help Atherton Landcare to monitor birds in revegetation sites along Prior's Creek in the middle of Atherton. Last year Kerri Redding and Glen Holmes contributed their local records to compile a bird list and we led a public bird walk along the creek. On July 16th we conducted our first quarterly bird survey recording species at two sites plus those along the linking section of the creek. For this year's walk and next count, see calendar of events.

BIRDS ENTREPRENEURIAL

Want a handy card with ALL the NEW English bird names in the RIGHT order! Useful on trips as a tick list if you don't want to adulterate your field guide or keep massive diaries. Also useful to show or donate to local tourist operators or organisations who want to do the right thing and put together a good bird list for visitors (and useful to leave with National parks in some states to encourage them to catch up with Christidis & Boles species order).

Available from Elinor Scambler for \$1 each plus postage – all profits go to **YOUR** Birds Australia. North Queensland Group.

BOP WATCH FIELD TRIP

On Sunday morning 24th August, 25 members and friends joined in a Bird of Prey Watch focussed on the Atherton Tableland. The BOP Watchers made their way independently from various directions meeting at Platypus Park, Atherton at 11am to discuss results and enjoy a BBQ lunch.

175 birds of 12 species were seen with Black Kite (100) being the most numerous. As is often the case when a

formal survey is being conducted, species usually seen on the Tableland eg Spotted Harrier and Pacific Baza, were elsewhere for the duration of the count. This situation was partially redressed during the afternoon when the group retired to Hasties Swamp and had good views of Grey Goshawk, White-bellied Sea-eagle and Swamp Harrier.

We did not sight the Red Goshawk, Square-tailed Kite and Grey Falcon that have recently been seen on the Tableland, nor did we sight any of those enigmatic 'pied harriers' or 'unusual' Black-shouldered Kites, though anyone seeing such should take detailed notes. There was a report from BOCA members that we met up with, at Hasties Swamp, of an adult Pied Harrier being sighted the previous week at nearby Plath Road and a juvenile had been seen north of Mossman recently.

The data gathered during the BOP Watch will be sent to Will Steele at Birds Australia by individual BOPers or they can be sent to me. I thank those who took part in the survey and urge you to maintain your BOP Watch activities. It has been suggested that we repeat the Tableland BOP Watch on a seasonal basis. I will include a note in a future edition of Contact Call. **Gary Wilson, P O Box 76, Millaa Millaa QLD 4886**

BEACH STONE-CURLEW STUDY

Included with Contact Call is an instruction and survey sheet for Birds Australia N Q Group Beach Stone-curlew Study.

This study is timely in that it compliments others, on the species, being conducted by the Queensland Department of the Environment, The Bird Observers Club of Australia, Jodie Collins who is a Masters student at James Cook University, and the ongoing work by state and national wader study groups. The involvement of Birds Australia North Queensland Group members is particularly appropriate because we have the opportunity to contribute data from areas rarely visited (certainly not repeatedly) by others and from an area from which we have little data about the Beach Stone-curlew.

It is intended to maintain the study for an initial three years, but this time-line will be revised as it proceeds. Long-term studies of any species are particularly valuable, but none more so than those of long-lived, low reproductive success species restricted to a specific habitat type, the Beach Stone-curlew is such a species. Paul O'Neill of DoE in Rockhampton will soon publish data on this species from Central Queensland and interesting anecdotal records exist for other areas, in particular of behavior about turtle rookeries. Additional data from North Queensland on the status and biology of the Beach stone-curlew would compliment and clarify the existing data on this species.

Gary Wilson, Study Coordinator.

WADER COUNTS

Are there any members who are interested in helping with wader counts around Trinity Inlet, Cairns? Don't be put off if you cannot identify them – this is an ideal opportunity to learn and contribute to the data base. Believe me they are not difficult to learn! There is money allocated in this year's TIMP (Trinity Inlet Management Program) budget towards this project and unless we can organise regular counts we will lose it. A survey of waders in Trinity Inlet has been conducted for TIMP over a year and we would like to build on that and get a better understanding of the role that the birds here play in the East Asian-Australasian flyway as well as helping their conservation. Counts are being conducted with Cairns BOCA and Birds Australia members. **Phone Keith Fisher 58 1164, if you are interested.**

NOTES FROM MEMBERS

Madge Barnett from Mackay sent the following observation. By 12/8/96 nearly 200 Magpie Larks were roosting in our patch of Eucalyptus tessellaris where Black Kites regularly nest. The Magpie Larks tormented the Black Kites acting as a vicious pack so the kites were unable to fly freely. On 18/8/96 I found a dead Black Kite – a perfect specimen which I feel had been forced into a fatal navigation error by the Magpie Larks. Black Kites have nested here for many years and I have never seen them take a Magpie Lark (*refer June Contact Call*) except for the remains of one under the pole they carry food to. Bandicoots seem to be their favourite food, while the remains of rats, toads, snails and even fish have been found. After this observation the kites did nest and raise one young.

And from Richard Retallick JCU Townsville. In December 1996 while driving through upland rainforest at Eungella National Park, an interesting bird crossed my path. It was a full-bodied bird, and was shiny black/blue. It immediately came to mind that it was a male Satin Bowerbird, but they are not supposed to be at Eungella. I stopped and ran after this bird, but couldn't find or hear anything. Having done nearly monthly trips to Eungella for the last three years, I feel I have a good command of the birds there. The only other species this mystery bird could have been are Pied Currawong, Black Butcherbird, or Spangled Drongo, none of which I am happy about. Has anyone any comment on this sighting or thought that they may have seen Satin Bowerbirds in this area?

*Contributions to the newsletter to be sent to the Editor Jo Wieneke, P O Box 129, Townsville QLD 4810
or email : bowerbird @ msn.com*

THANKS: Birds Australia North Queensland Group is very grateful for the support given by the office of the Member for Leichhardt Warren Entsch, who is himself a keen birdwatcher