



Birds Australia

# Contact Call

BIRDS AUSTRALIA  
North Queensland Group

December 1997 ♦ Issue : Radjah Shelduck

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## OFFICE BEARERS

### Convenor:

Graham Harrington (07) 4096 5051  
Secretary: Lindsay Fisher (07) 4058 1164  
Fax (AH) (07) 4058.0337  
Treasurer: Elinor Scambler (07) 4095 3296

### Area Representatives:

**Mackay:** vacant  
**Bowen/Ayr:** Jon Wren (07) 4786 2614  
**Townsville:** Jo Wieneke (07) 4771 4707  
**Innisfail/Tully:**  
Klaus Uhlenhut (07) 4065 5181  
**Cairns:** Keith Fisher (07) 4058 1164  
**Atherton Tablelands:**  
Elinor Scambler (07) 4095 3296  
**Mossman/Daintree:**  
Del. Richards (07) 4098 3103  
**Cape York Peninsula:**  
Michael Barnett (07) 4069 8365  
**Western Queensland:**  
Peter Britton (07) 4787 2188

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NEWS

Jon Nott is continuing to stand in as Convenor for Graham Harrington until the new year. Elinor Scambler is our new Treasurer. If any member from Mackay would like to nominate themselves as area rep. please contact Lindsay.

## CALENDAR

**Dec. 6th:** Christmas party chez Harrington - details over the page.  
**Dec 12th:** Townsville Christmas get-together. BYO food and drinks and come prepared to swim. 23 Bishop St, Belgian Gardens 7.00pm Phone 4771 4707 or 4771 5268.

### Provisionary program for 1998

**Jan 18th:** Survey Redden Island, meet 7.30 Cinderella St, gate by toilet. Phone Keith Fisher to confirm.  
**Jan 24-26th:** Australia Day weekend at Kingfisher Park, Julatten.  
**Feb: 28th:** Hasties Swamp National Park-meet 8.30 for official launch of the new Birds Australia/ National Parks bird list plus sociable birdwatching.  
**March:** Cairns Esplanade - farewell the waders. Contact Keith Fisher for date.

**April 10-13th:** Easter at Princess Hills (weather permitting)

**May:** Innisfail area with DoE.

**June:** Redden Is.

As arrangements can change after publication of ContactCall, please contact your local rep. or the person arranging the event, closer to the time.

## PRINCESS HILLS REPORT

19-20th September, 1997

Twelve adults and three kids put in a mammoth effort to complete a bird survey through to Herkes Creek at Lumholtz National Park - Princess Hills Section.

As the ranger did not want too much vehicular traffic on that end of the park we camped at the Herbert River and six of us went in two vehicles to Herkes Creek on Saturday morning. There was a log over the road approximately four km from our original campsite three years ago, so we surveyed this section on foot and did two short sections driving back to camp on a 1 km/10minutes stop basis. Early Sunday morning we split into four teams, covering the remaining sections by 11am, again on a 1km/10minute stop basis. We ended up with 91 bird species. A new bird for the Princess Hills list was the Brown Quail.

General: The Herkes Creek end of the park seems to be closing down with the road blocked and lantana growth nearly closing that section entirely. The camp at the river was as beautiful as always.

Special thanks to Eric Sticklen & Glen Holmes. Without their help we would never have been able to do the job, as our regular 'heavies' were either working or cluttering up some coronary ward in Melbourne.

Jon Nott (Relieving Convenor)

## TWITCHATHON

Despite efforts to promote this event in Nth Qld only 3 teams took part and only two of those made it to the BBQ at Platypus Park.

### Results

**Giant Petrol Bills** (Perhaps after the V8 Discovery that was used to great effect by this team) led by Glen Holmes

\* 243 species (one more than in 1996)

\* Best Bird: Common Starling

**Red-necked Cranks** (after the crakes that live at the bottom of the Fisher's garden and sound really cranky, calling every night apart from the night of the Twitch.) led by Keith Fisher

\* 192 (one more than their best previous result)

\* Best Birds: Party of Varied Sittellas-first sighting in five Twitchathons.

**Mouldy Shower Birds** (a reflection of the state of bathrooms on the wet and humid Tablelands and a play on words with one of our more sort-after endemics) led by Graham Harrington

\* 150

\* Best Bird: Bassian Thrush (very secretive and rarely seen)

## BIRDS AUSTRALIA CONGRESS

A full report of this year's Congress in Albany will be in the Dec. Wingspan. On the first day, most of the papers documented the loss of woodland particularly in southern states, with the ensuing disappearance of birds. Much of this took place in less enlightened times but today there is no excuse. In Queensland it has been estimated that up to 650,000 ha per year are being cleared, putting us among the highest deforestation rates in the world.

Many papers on the second day were on a more positive note. One of those was Amy Jansen's on birds in a revegetated corridor on the Atherton Tableland. Victorians, used to slow growing eucalypts, were impressed that rainforest trees could attain considerable height in only a few years.

## BIRDWATCHER'S PARADISE

This was the heading of the double page spread in the Cairns Post, reporting on the 'Welcome the Waders' organised by BANQG in conjunction with Cairns Urban Landcare Group, on October 19th to publicise the return of the waders to the Cairns foreshore. Leanne Bowden and Greg Miller members of QWSG flew up from Brisbane to help out with display material and talks. Over 70 people turned out including members of

BOCA, a visiting bird tour group, and a party from Townsville. Many more people walking along the Esplanade stopped off to listen to talks or view the display. The main thrust of the morning was to publicise the importance of the Cairns mudflats and the role they play in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. The tide was perfect and the birds obliging. Good numbers (for Cairns) of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Curlew Sandpipers, Black and Bar-tailed Godwits, Red-necked Stints were present as well as many more species. The highlight of the morning was the appearance, almost at high tide, of an Asian Dowitcher, which stayed around long enough for most people to see it, before flying off with a group of Bar-tailed Godwits.

Many thanks to Lindsay and Keith for the hard work that made this morning such a success.

A similar event will be arranged for March 1998. A website with information on the Esplanade and birds in general for our area has been suggested and member, Ian Sinclair (of Internetnorth) has agreed to coordinate the web page.

#### **THE FIRST ANNUAL TABLELANDS CRANE SURVEY**

Twenty seven members and friends counted up to 2000 cranes at 11 sites on Saturday evening November 8th. Sarus Cranes predominated at sites in the wetter Tablelands, eg Bromfield Swamp but Broilgas rule in Mareeba. An enjoyable event, with good media follow up. Thank you everyone who attended and John & Peta Nott for the great BBQ in the national tally room afterwards. Some members are re-surveying sites and there will be a crane newsheet out soon - many interesting questions remain. We are trying to map extra 1997 roost sites on the Tablelands - so if you know of any, or would like a newsheet sent to you, please contact Elinor, 4095 3296

#### **PRIORS CREEK, ATHERTON**

On behalf of Atherton Landcare. Birds Australia members Glenn & Jenny Holmes & Elinor Scambler did the second quarterly bird survey of Priors Creek, Atherton in October. Kerri Redding and other members led a public bird walk there on 23rd November.

#### **CATTLE EGRETS BACK IN TOWN**

In mid October the first Cattle Egrets arrived back at the breeding colony in the mangroves on the south bank of Ross River, Townsville. Numbers have built up to over 1200 and breeding is underway. Counts in previous years show that they

leave by the end of March. No one knows where they go but from reports received, their arrival here seems to coincide with their absence on the Tableland. If you see Cattle Egrets on the Tableland next year, please make a note the date and numbers and send to Jo Wieneke, 22 Bishop St Belgian Gardens, 4810. If you would like to help with the weekly counts phone 4771 4707.

#### **CALLING INNISFAIL MEMBERS**

1. PhD student James Moloney is studying birds in rainforest remnants in the Innisfail area. If you'd like to join him on one of his field trips give him a ring on (07) 4721 1845 h or (07) 4781 5053 w

2. Does anyone in the Innisfail area have a boat capable of taking a few birders to Russell Island to count Pied Imperial Pigeons? Phone 07 4771 4707.

#### **INTERESTING SIGHTINGS**

**A Little Ringed Plover** is back at Pelican Point for the 4th successive year.

**Yellow Wagtails** have been seen at the Townsville Town Common, Yarrabah Rd turf farm and at the dam at Kirai Research Station. Permission from the manager is needed before entry here.

**A Kelp Gull** made an appearance at the Esplanade in November and one was also seen at the Mossman River.

**Barn Swallows** returned to Mossman on Sept 22nd.

**A Grey Falcon**, perhaps the same bird as previously seen by Graham Harrington, has been seen again at nearby Tarzali and Mount Fisher and during the same period Elinor Scambler and other observers had good views of a **Black-breasted Buzzard** at Lake Barrine.

**Letter-winged Kites** have been seen near Kairi and a previous record of a **Papuan Harrier** at Plath Road has been followed by tentative records from the Lower Palmerston and from the Julatten area.

#### **BEACH STONE-CURLEW SURVEY**

The BSC survey continues apace with records from a number of quarters, even a batch from Stephen Garnett's files in far off Kangaroo Island.

Bowen rep-resentative Jon Wren provided details of the problems birds on the town's popular Queen's Beach are having with illegal off-road driving activities - Jon is pursuing the matter with the Bowen Shire Council.

A good liaison and data exchange has been established with Townsville-based DoE officer Margot Wamett who is co-ordinating studies in that part of the north.

#### **BUSH STONE-CURLEWS POISONED**

On Magnetic Island in September, 28 Bush Stone-curlews were deliberately poisoned and their bodies left either dead or dying at the Picnic Bay Dump. A reward for information that could lead to a conviction, has been offered and investigations continue.

#### **BARRON RIVER ICM**

BANQG responded to an invitation for public comment on the first draft of the Barron River Integrated Catchment Management Plan. We made a detailed written submission and attended to a one day public forum. BANQG supported the need to regular and systematic surveys of the avifauna of Lake Tinaroo to supplement the existing Pelican Point counts. We also supported the implementation of a survey of faecal sterols to determine the percentage input of coliforms by various animals including birds. The latter survey has been funded and will proceed.

Gary Wilson

#### **CHRISTMAS GET-TOGETHER**

At chez Harrington Saturday arvo 6th December and overnighting for maximum destruction to personal physiology. Attractions will be hides at a Golden Bowerbirds bower and at a Tooth-billed Bowerbird court, early morning birdwalks (with a good chance of Lumholtz Tree-kangaroo) and spotlighting for five spp. of possum and said macropod.

Tents can be accommodated or chuck a swag on a floor or if you are into bribery there are four spare beds. Bring your own potables and edibles but be prepared to share. How to get there. The address is Seamark Rd., Malanda. Seamark Rd. is a westerly turn off the Maianda-Millaa Rd. If coming from Malanda, Seamark is 7km towards Millaa on the right. If approaching from Millaa it is approx. 3km past Tarzali on the left. Travel 8km up Seamark to a name board on the right. An added attraction is that a Grey Falcon has now been seen twice in the vicinity. Not your conventional rainforest bird! Heated arguments about identifying Atherton Scrubwrens are predicted with some certainty. - Graham Harrington.

Contributions to **Contact Call** are always welcome. Jo Wieneke-Editor  
e-mail bowerbird@classic.msn.com

#### **THANKS**

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