



Contact Call

BIRDS AUSTRALIA
North Queensland Group

March 1998 ♦ Issue : Australian Wood Duck

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OFFICE BEARERS

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Jon Nott (07) 4096 8230
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BNQ CALENDAR

REGIONAL MEETINGS

April 10-13th: Easter Starcke National Park. Approx 6hr drive from Mareeba via Cooktown. Contact Jon Nott.

June 27-28th: AGM Mission Beach.

See details in next column.

Aug 8-9th: Campout at Murray Falls near Tully. Contact Lindsay Fisher.

FIELD TRIPS

Every Thursday 5-7.00pm: Monitoring at Ibis/Egret colony, Ross River, Townsville. Contact Jo Wieneke.

March 15th: The Esplanade - Farewell the Waders. 11am ANZAC Memorial. Contact Keith Fisher

May 16-17th: Campout and surveys at Mt Fox, via Ingham. Contact Jo Wieneke before May 12th.

May 23-24th: Campout at Property at Kaban near Ravenshoe. Contact Jon Nott

July 26th: Redden Island with BOCA and Land Care. Meet 8.30 am. Contact Keith Fisher.

Aug 30th Tableland BOP watch.

Sep 6th: Lamb Range transects count.

AGM AT MISSION BEACH

This will be held on the weekend of 27th-28th June at Mission Beach. C4 have kindly agreed to let us use their excellent facilities for our meeting and in the evening will cater for us. More details will be in the June CC, but the focus of the weekend will be cassowaries. Book accommodation early as it is at the height of the tourist season.

Although we would not normally be electing new Executive Committee positions (this is only done every two years), we will be electing a new Convenor, as Graham Harrington will be standing down due to other commitments. We will also be appointing a Convenor Elect so if you are interested in either of these positions, please contact Lindsay.

FROM THE CONVENOR

Northern Gulf Regional Strategy Group.

We have been invited to join this Group. If anyone would like to act as the BIRDS Australia Representative please contact Graham Harrington. The next meeting is on May 1st at Georgetown. What an excuse to visit Cumberland Dam and be the one to locate a major breeding colony of Gouldian Finches! (Who says they don't breed in winter?) The primary role of this Group is to make recommendations on how NHT funds will be spent in the Region and 'direct natural resource management' in the Region. This could have a critical effect on bird habitats and bird populations. It is great that we have been asked and vital we attend the Meetings.

Why Have A Regional Group?

Because it is impossible for HQ in Melbourne to service adequately either the birds or its members throughout the continent and islands. It is a way of assisting those members who wish to be active in bird study or conservation to act in unison and learn from one another.

And it increases the awareness of the forces that are affecting bird populations in the different habitats across Australia. It simply makes BIRDS Australia more effective in addressing its objectives. We are a very large Region. You may not wish to participate or organise activities but please inform your committee if there are any threats to birds that you see in your area. We would try to set up a study or make representations to the appropriate authorities. As an example, on the Tablelands members have begun an annual census of Sarus Cranes. With the mushrooming sugar cane industry, arable farming is changing rapidly. We need to know how this will affect the winter feeding grounds of these impressive birds. It was great fun and it took just one evening in the year. It is unlikely it would have happened without a Regional Group. So be the eyes and ears of BIRDS Australia in your area. Habitats are disappearing and changing. The birds need us.

BNQ SLIDE COLLECTION

It has been proposed that the North Qld Group compile a collection of slides of all the birds in our area. These could then be borrowed by members, for educational and promotional purposes..

David James has already offered some of his excellent seabird slides. Anyone willing to contribute slides please contact Keith Fisher

GOULDIAN FINCHES

The search is on again for Gouldian Finches. As part of the Endangered Species Plan DoE are planning an all out assault on the Georgetown-Croydon area in the dry season when the birds will be visiting the remaining bodies of water. Final plans have not been made but it is hoped to have 30-40 birders in the area over a 10-day period in Oct. Contact Graham Harrington for more details.

REDDEN ISLAND SURVEY

On January 18th, 1998 seven members of

BA-NQ Group continued our regular surveys of Redden Island. The morning was overcast and pouring with rain but this did not deter us. Because of poor weather a shorter than usual route was taken and this produced a total of 40 species including excellent views of Double-eyed Fig-Parrots. A Tawny Grassbird, calling from some grass near the shore, was a new species bringing the total list to 115.

AUSTRALIA DAY WEEKEND AT JULATTEN

Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge at Julatten is always a popular venue for birders and the Australian Day weekend was no exception.

The first day we toured the greater Julatten area taking in Abattoir Swamp, Rifle Creek, Mount Molloy Cemetery and Wetherby Station. In the heat, there were not many birds to be seen but one non-avian high-light was an excellent view of two tree snakes in the swamp waving their heads above the grass and showing off their vivid yellow bellies.

Sunday began with a 20-minute bird count around the Park. Four groups of birders logged a total of 34 species hinting at the potential diversity there.

Outside the park though, the oppressive heat prevented many birds from being active. Highlights were good numbers of Bustards at Mary's Farm and good views of Brush Cuckoos near the swiftly flowing Mitchell River.

Blue-faced Finches were high on a few peoples' agendas, but there had been a landslide at the bottom of the Mt Lewis Road. On Monday morning a group of eight walked the 15km to the clearing and back and was rewarded with 20+ BFFs. They came back exhausted, but happy. The rest of us had to be content with good looks at a Red-necked Crake and Buff-breasted Paradise-kingfishers!

The curry and pasta nights were very popular, as were the two slide shows - one by Keith & Lindsay Fisher on Malaysia and another by John Clarkson on the vegetation and wetlands of Cape York. Our thanks to Ron Stannard for proving to be an excellent host for Kingfisher Park. L.F.

HASTIES SWAMP LIST LAUNCH

Over 40 people met at the swamp for a very successful launch of the first Hasties Swamp Bird List, a cooperative venture between BA-NQ Group and DoE Far

Northern Region. John Clarkson, a member of both, spoke about threats to wetlands and Senior Ranger Arthur Sellers officially launched the list.

Also present were DoE Regional Manager, Lindsay Delzoppo, other DoE staff, BA-NQ Australia members and friends and it was a special day for members Judy & Don Fitzsimon who have been 'friends of Hasties' for many years. Our stunning new 'Birds Australia' banner was displayed for the first time.

Our members and friends compiled the list of 193 species from observations over the last few years, with illustrations from the last Atlas. DoE did the final layout and the list is now available from the Cairns and Lake Eacham offices. The launch attracted a good response from the media & the Atherton Shire. Our group is now actively discussing with DoE, plans for a hide at HSNP.

Thank you to: Don & Judy Fitzsimon, Alan Gillanders, Glenn Holmes, Eric Sticklen, K & G Redding, K & L Fisher, DoE: Arthur Sellers, N Moore and T Smith. Special congratulations to Elinor Scambler for organising both list and launch so efficiently.

AROUND THE NORTH

The **Townsville Town Common Conservation Park** has come under attack in the local press as being neglected, untidy and full of weeds! The Townsville City Council has withdrawn funding for the park claiming that DoE was not meeting its responsibilities for maintenance. Negotiations continue but in the meantime the Common is looking great after the best wet season for years.

Black-naped Terns at Bowen

In January David James observed about 20 Common Terns and about 60 Black-naped Terns at Coral Beach near Horseshoe Bay, Bowen. Seventeen of the Black-naped were juveniles, some in fresh juvenile and others in advanced moult to first immature (1st basic). The juveniles were still begging and being fed by the adults, and adults were singling out specific juveniles to feed. A few of the juveniles still had short wings and tail and were probably not capable of sustained flight. It would seem that a colony of about 20-30 pairs bred on the point at Horseshoe Bay. HANZAB does not specifically list any mainland records. Ian Cowan had also noted terns 'looking

as if they were breeding' in December. Bowen Area rep Jon Wren commented that people use this area seldom in the breeding season and that large numbers of terns including Black-naped have also been seen at Dalrymple Pt 5km south of Coral Beach.

Cairns Esplanade Update

Cairns, City Council and the State Government have allocated money for the redevelopment of the southern section of the Cairns Esplanade including the building of a swimming pool with sandy beach. There will be an environmental assessment, details of which are yet to be announced. We are particularly concerned about any change to the present sea wall, which could result in the loss of feeding areas for the waders. Our field trip on March 15th will be an excellent opportunity to publicise the importance of the mudflats in **their present condition** for migratory waders. There will also be a short talk on waders and a display of photographs. This event is being held in conjunction with Cairns BOCA and we hope for a good roll-up.

Red-rumped Swallows

Tony Palliser, chairman of the Rarities Committee would like to borrow photos of the Red-rumped Swallows to determine whether they are Red-rumped Swallows or the similar Striated Swallows, *H. striolata*.

Email: palliser@zip.com.au or write c/o Birds Australia head office.

BEACH STONE-CURLEWS

Garry Wilson is still keen to receive observations or information. Post to PO Box 76, Milla Milla Qld 4876 or email WilsonGW@prose.dpi.qld.gov.au

WHERE DO THEY GO?

Record numbers of Cattle Egrets were recorded at the Ross River breeding colony in Townsville. Numbers are dropping from over 2000 in January and by the end of March they will all have left. If you note an influx of Cattle Egrets in your area please record dates and numbers and send to Jo Wieneke.

Contributions to **Contact Call** are always gratefully received. Jo Wieneke - editor. e-mail: bowerbird@msn.com

THANKS

BNQ is very grateful for the assistance provided by the office of Senator Margaret Reynolds in the production of this newsletter.