

Birds Australia

Contact Call

Birds Australia

North Queensland Group

March 1999 • Issue: Australasian Shoveler

CALENDAR

Feb 27-28th Tableland Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo survey at Lakeland Downs (See story on page 3) - Ian Sinclair for details.

March 21st Cairns Sunday. Wave The Waders Goodbye - the Cairns Esplanade, your chance to learn those little brown jobs & find out how you can participate in regular surveys of Trinity Inlet. Meet at 9.30 opposite Tradewinds Hotel near interpretive shelter.

April 2nd-5th Tableland/Cairns Easter campout & atlasing in the Laura area - Ian Sinclair / John Clarkson for details.

April 2nd-5th Townsville Easter - proposed atlasing camp at White Mts NP. Contact Jo Wieneke for details.

April 18th Sun Wader counts, Cairns Esplanade 8.00am, boat 8.30am and airport 10am

May 16th Sun Tableland/Cairns Herbertonshire atlasing trip. (Date may have to be changed - check with local rep.)

May 30th Sun Wader counts, Cairns Esplanade 7.00am, boat 7.30am and airport 8am

June 12th -14th Queens Birthday AGM to be held in Townsville

June 26th - July 11th Atlas campout, Rutland Plains, Cape York Peninsula.

June 27th Sun Wader counts, Cairns Esplanade 6.30am, boat 6.30am

August Cairns / Tableland BOP watch.

September Atlas campout at Bathurst Heads - Cape Melville on Cape York Peninsula

September 26th - 2nd Oct Birds Australia National congress and campout - see notice on page 6 for details.

October 9th Sat Tableland Crane Count

Oct 30th-31st Twitchathon

November Tablelands/Cairns Plath Road, off Atherton-Ravenshoe Rd.

December Christmas Party

Arrangements can change after publication of Contact Call, contact local reps. for the latest info. This will give more flexibility, especially weather conditions. Extra events may also be arranged.

COUNTS & SURVEYS

TABLELANDS 1998 BIRD OF PREY

WATCH

On the afternoon of Saturday 29th August, 10 teams of BA-NQG members and friends undertook the annual Atherton Tablelands BOP Watch. The teams journeyed from all points of the compass to converge on Platypus Park in Atherton at 1630 to lodge and compare their results. Weather conditions for the count were mild with variable breezes and occasional showers in some areas.

509 birds of 15 species were seen with the Black Kite (320) being the most numerous. Keith and Lindsay Fisher recorded 205 Black Kites on and over a field near Atherton that was being ploughed by a cane farmer. Numbers of birds and of species were up on the 1997 count conducted on August 24 last year when 175 and 12 were the respective values. The teams covered a

total of 1207 kilometers in 24 hours 15 minutes in their quest for an average of a bird every 2.4 ks and 2.86 minutes. With the exception of the extraordinary record by Keith and Lindsay the numbers of birds and species seen by each team was remarkably similar indicating a similarity in effort and result and the probability of an effective count.

As in the previous year the count failed to reveal the presence of any the unusual species e.g. Square-tailed Kite, Black-breasted Buzzard and Letter-winged Kites that are occasionally seen about the Tablelands nor were any 'suspect' harriers sighted. However, Brahminy Kites, White-bellied Sea-eagles and Ospreys were seen by several teams and a pair of the latter known to nest at Lake Tinaroo were seen engaging in courtship displays. Observers in the wetter and more densely vegetated southern Tablelands saw Grey Goshawks and Collared Sparrowhawks.

After the count the organiser presented a brief summary of the findings and participants engaged in the BA-NQG tradition of some good food and discussion and a modicum of fluid refreshment. Record sheets from the activity will be forwarded to BOP Watch Coordinator Will Steele.

Gary Wilson

STARTLING RESULTS FROM THE LAMB RANGE CENSUS

On the 29 November about 20 people, including some new members participated in a bird census across the Lamb Range. We adopted the "preferred method" of the designers of the Atlas. That involves spending 20 minutes recording the birds in 2 ha of a single type of habitat.

In this case we had identified four contrasting habitats. As we climbed the western side of the Lamb Range we could see clear evidence of the increasing rainfall with altitude. We started in very dry Ironbark woodland. Further up the trees were taller and closer forming a medium forest type dominated by Pink Bloodwood and Blue Gum. Higher again we entered wet sclerophyll forest with trees to 40m dominated by Red Stringybark and Turpentine. Finally we reached the cool of the rainforest just below the ridge.

Within each habitat we stopped and did our census. We split into the same three parties on each occasion and went about 100 m in different directions before we started our census of 2 ha of bush. All three parties had competent bird identifiers in them although no one claimed to emulate Eric Sticklen's ability to put a name to the merest of squeaks. We were pretty confident that we had identified most or all of the birds in the 2 ha by the end of 20 minutes (except in the rainforest where we were sure a longer time would have produced many more species).

The difference in the birds in each habitat type was remarkable. Of the 57 species recorded, only thirteen occurred in two forest types and five of those occurred in three types. The rest were confined to one habitat.

More remarkable was the difference in the lists of birds seen by the different groups of people. No group saw all the birds recorded for any one habitat as Table 1 shows.

Table 1: Total number of bird species recorded for four types of habitat and the number of species recorded by three groups of people (A, B & C).

	Low woodland	Medium Forest	Tall Open Forest	Rainforest
Total	11	23	28	22
A	6	16	16	14
B	3	8	18	15
C	9	13	13	10

(Cont. P2)

OFFICE BEARERS

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Townsville: Jo Wieneke (07) 4771 4707
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Mossman/Daintree: Del Richards (07) 4094 1199

Cape York Peninsula: Michael Barnett (07) 4069 8365

Torres Strait: Denise Fowler (07) 4069 1162
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Western Queensland: Peter Britton (07) 4087 2188

Conservation Representative: Amanda Freeman (07) 4095 2148
E-mail procella@ozemail.com.au

PROJECT CONTACTS

Lake Tinaroo Faecal Coliform Study and Bush Stone Curlew Study
Position Vacant - Any volunteers?

Northern Gulf Regional Strategy Group
Ian Fox Ph (07) 4091 4193
E-mail foxi@fastinternet.net.au

Gouldian Finch and Birds at Waterholes Survey
Klaus Uhlenhut Ph (07) 4065 5181
E-mail kirrama@4kz.com.au

Redden Island Survey (Cairns)
Keith Fisher Ph (07) 4039 0972 (note new phone number)
E-mail lkfisher@north.net.au

Sarus/Brolga Tableland Crane counts
Elinor Scambler Ph (07) 4095 3296
E-mail dacelo@internetnorth.com.au

Egret & Ibis Counts (Townsville)
Jo Wieneke Ph (07) 4771 4707
E-mail bowerbird@msm.com
or Tania Korn RIVER coordinator (07) 4721 4077

Counts are at Ross River every Thursday afternoon in conjunction with the RIVER group. Phone Jo if you'd like to help. We are hoping to get funding to help track the Cattle Egrets after they leave the colony.

Now this was exactly why we undertook this trip. To find out how many 2 ha blocks you need to do before you can make a stab at saying what birds are present. Clearly it is more than three!

I persuaded a statistician colleague of mine to do a few analyses. We looked at how different the results were between the different groups. Firstly we found no evidence that one group was recording more birds than another was. What we did find was that they were finding DIFFERENT birds in all the habitats. We calculated the "dissimilarity index" between the groups - an index of 1 means that the groups all saw completely different species and an index of zero means they had identical bird lists. In the Ironbark woodland the dissimilarity index was 0.85, which indicates the groups produced very different bird lists. In the two Eucalyptus forest habitats the index was 0.5 and in the rainforest it was 0.4, which is better but still nothing like identical.

My conclusion is that if you want to do a thorough job of censusing birds in a habitat you need to continue to do different 2 ha areas until you stop getting new species showing up. But prepare yourself for doing something like eight 20 minute searches or more!

Graham Harrington

FNQ Regional Officer for the Atlas

REDDEN ISLAND 17/1/99

Six people attended this field trip to continue the regular surveys of the island. Two weeks earlier several of our members saw a Great-billed Heron foraging in Redden Creek and we were hoping it was still around. We were unlucky as high tide covered its foraging areas along the creek banks, this bird was probably the same one which has been seen irregularly along the Barron River and the Cairns airport over the last nine months. The high tide also covered sandbars at the mouth of the Barron River causing a lack of waders in our species list of 42. A single Noisy Friarbird seen foraging in the woodland was a new sighting for the island as well as being unusual. Noisy Friarbirds are occasionally attracted down to the coast in Cairns when the eucalypts are in flower but this is not the case at this time of year. Good views were had of a pair of Double-eyed Fig-Parrots foraging in the woodland. A Northern Fantail was heard but proved elusive when we tried to track it down - this area is probably the closest spot that these fantails come to Cairns city. The mossies were quite ferocious in the mangroves and eventually drove us out but not before we had heard a Shining Flycatcher scratching out his call. The species list for this area continues to grow and now stands at 123.

Keith Fisher

KINGFISHER CAMPOUT, 23/24TH

JANUARY 1999

The first Tableland BA-NQG Birds Australia activity for the year was held at Kingfisher Park on the weekend. About thirty people attended, and a good time was had by all. To the amazement of everyone, some birdwatching occurred, in between the consumption of food, wine and huge amounts of talking. The gastronomic highlight was a delicious stew cooked up by Ron Stannard, one half of our genial hosts for the weekend.

The Saturday afternoon activity consisted of a search for Red Goshawks in the Mt Carbine area. Not surprisingly we didn't see any, although great views of bustards were some compensation. Apart from that the birding was relatively quiet.

The entertainment on Saturday night was in two parts; the first mainly consisted of a slide showing somebodies bag, in some airport, somewhere. After this frivolity, things got a bit serious; we were entertained by Ian and Rita's slides of their trip through deepest East Africa. These were enjoyed by all, and then most of us tested our language skills (Japanese) by watching a video showing the kingfishers etc of the wet tropics. Again enjoyed by all that saw it.

Sunday morning saw most of us up at the clearing on Mt Lewis. Great views of the Blue-faced Parrot-Finches were had, as well as the Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, which were very unusual in that area and height (950m). The weather was amazingly clear; not a cloud around. At around the halfway point, we stopped to check out a site for White-eared Monarch. No luck, though great views of Double-eyed Fig-Parrots.

A very enjoyable weekend and a very easy start to what will be a busy year, with several atlas trips planned.

The total number of birds seen was 85; Keith and Lindsay Fisher have the details.

Ian Sinclair

RED-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOOS

AT LAKELAND DOWNS

For some years now Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos have been causing much distress and economic loss to farmers at Lakeland Downs on Cape York Peninsula. The Red-tails have learnt to pull the peanut plants from the ground to get to the nuts underneath. They do this with methodical efficiency, working in from the edges or extending anywhere in the paddock where the nuts are a bit thin. The farmers have tried everything to get rid of them. They have permits to shoot up to 30 a year and have put in sophisticated scaring equipment but with no real effect. Even if the cockatoos are scared from one place, they simply settle out of range on another part of the crop.

This year the farmers are trying a new approach with help from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. Local farmer Martin Gerate has generously donated 40 acres of his land for a sacrifice crop which all four local peanut farmers have helped to grow. The cockatoos are going to be allowed to feed on this crop at will while at the same time being scared off all the other peanut crops in the district. Whether it will work remains to be seen. If it does, however, the local Laura-Normanby Catchment Management Group will try to get funds to refine the technique over future years.

Even if it does work, however, the farmers fear that the provision of a sacrifice crop will only result in more Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos and more trouble for them. This is where Birds Australia comes in. The only way of telling whether there has been an increase is by counting the birds regularly and, if possible, looking at the age structure of the population. The aim is to count the cockatoos three times a year. The first count will be on the last weekend in February when it is thought that the only cockatoos at Lakeland will be birds that have bred or are breeding locally. The second count is to be in late May at the height of the peanut season so that the number of birds can be correlated with the amount of damage. Finally a count will be made in late October when it is thought that cockatoo numbers are at their highest to estimate how many cockatoos are using Lakeland during the year.

On each occasion an attempt will be made to estimate the ratio of birds with pure red tails (adult males) to those with barred tails (females and males less than four years old). Amongst the bar-tailed birds it may also be possible to count the newly fledged young of the year by their begging, slightly paler bills, rather fluffier plumage and shorter tails. Analysis of last year's counts suggested that, after pairing off all the adult males and subtracting the young of the year, each pair recruited an adult to population only once every ten years.

It is a project with considerable potential. There are few places in Australia where farmers have cooperated to plant sacrifice crops for pest birds. The expertise of Birds Australia, and the credibility of that expertise, will be essential in assessing the long-term sustainability of the project.

(see field trip details on page 1)

Stephen Garnett

TABLELAND CHRISTMAS PARTY

12-13/12/98

Tableland and Cairns members met on a property in Topaz for a social weekend. A communal dinner, washed down with the traditional bottle or three of vino, was followed by a quiz. Lindsay had put together a birding quiz to test our skills with the questions pinned at various points around the old dairy (converted to sleeping quarters). It was quite a challenge just to find the questions let alone answer them! Jan England had also prepared a quiz testing our skills on raptor identification, which proved quite a test to try and work out the birds in flight. It was a fun ending to the day.

Those that slept over had an enjoyable early morning bird walk around the edge of the rainforest before other members arrived to hear a talk by Cliff Frith. Cliff's talk was about bird books, where he described the various types of books he has collected for his working library. The collectable side of books was also discussed as was looking after and preserving books. Cliff's enthusiasm and love for books certainly shone through and those present were entertained and given an insight into book collecting. The morning was finished off with a sale of surplus books - thanks to Cliff and Dawn for opening up their home to us.

Keith Fisher

WHAT HAVE THE BIRDS BEEN DOING?

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

Of note in this sightings round up is the number of swift and swallow sightings, there certainly seems to be more around the Cairns / Mossman area this year.

2nd December An adult pair of **Brush Turkey** (race *purpureicollis*) at Walker Creek, 25km north of Normanton. Martin Cachard. (South of accepted range but has been seen in this area previously -Ed.).

15th Dec. A **Buller's Shearwater** *Puffinus bulleri* was seen at Cape Bowling Green just south of Townsville, by members of The Townsville Region Bird Observers Club on a regular wader count. Also seen on this trip was 3200 **Common Terns**. Ian Clayton. (posted on BirdingAus). Most records of Buller's Shearwater, in Queensland, have been from the south-east.

19th Dec. One **House Swift** - *Apus affinis* over Cassowary House, Kuranda. - Phil Gregory (posted on BirdingAus).

24th Dec **Rose-ringed Parakeet** - Obviously an escapee, seen Kate St. Woree at the rear of the Cairns golf club. Not a species we need to start breeding here as it has done in at least 21 other countries. KF, LF, Kath Shurcliff and Dave Houghton.

21st Dec. Single adult **Grey-headed Robin** at Goldsborough Valley State Forest 2km north of main camping area at 100m above sea level. Martin Cachard. (Generally found in highland rainforest but will come down to near sea level where there is continuous rainforest from the highlands) Ed.

27th Dec One **House Swift** over Brinsmead near Freshwater (a suburb of Cairns) "very probably more than one bird so it looks as if there may be a bit of an influx". Phil Gregory (posted on BirdingAus).

24th Dec. One **Pied Heron** Cairns Crocodile Farm and again one at Mourilyan on the following day. Martin Cachard.

9th and 17th Jan. 20-30 **House Swifts** in a mixed flock with **White-rumped Swiftlets** (1500-2000) and **Fork-tailed Swifts** (100+) over Trinity Beach (Cairns suburb). Martin Cachard.

22nd Jan A **Glossy Swiftlet** was seen by Del Richards, flying with White-rumped Swiftlets in South Mossman. This is a very rare bird for mainland Australia.

24th Jan 300+ **Fork-tailed Swifts** mixed with 200+ **White-rumped Swiftlets** at the Rex Lookout on the Cairns to Port Douglas road. Looked for Needletails and House Swifts, but couldn't see anything other than these two species. KF & LF

28th Jan. 2 **Glossy Ibis** flew into Cairns Airport and landed in ponding adjacent to mangroves along the Barron River. KF.

Martin Cachard saw a single bird at the Cairns Crocodile Farm on 8th Jan and Dawn & Arnold Magarry saw one there the week before, also Jonathon Munro reported another sighting late Jan. on the Cairns Esplanade.

28th Jan. - Greg Bates saw a **Lesser Sooty Owl** at Brinsmead Glen which was a good sighting for here, (we used to live there but had not seen or heard one in 11 years although we ended up with a species list of 127 for our backyard - KF & LF).

1st February. **Rufous Owl** eating a juvenile **Spangled Drongo** at Whitfield, Cairns at 11.00am. Jonathon Munro.

2nd Feb. Another **Rufous Owl** was seen eating a juvenile **Black Butcherbird** at Brinsmead Glen by Greg Bates, this one was also sighted mid-morning.

4th Feb. **Little Kingfisher** Lower end of Halloran's Hill, Atherton - Ian Sinclair

7th Feb. 6 **Barn Swallows** perched on a powerline along the Lower Freshwater Road, Kamerunga, Cairns. Jonathon Munro.

(I looked on the 9th at the same location where there was a mixed flock of White-rumped Swiftlets, Fork-tailed Swifts, Welcome Swallows, Fairy Martins and White-breasted Woodswallows hawking over a cane paddock, no Barn Swallows though - KF).

9th Feb. 30+ **Crimson Finches** mixed with **Chestnut-breasted Finches** in cane paddock on Lower Freshwater Road, Kamerunga, Cairns. KF

9th Feb **Square-tailed Kite** and **Brolgas** in the Innisfail (Etty Bay) region

John O'Malley sent the following from Townsville. Sue and I have seen a lot of **Australian Bustards** around the place in the last 2 months. 4 of them at the Common, and 10 of them up behind the Ross River Dam. Also, the **Black-throated Finches** are still in residence about 1km after the gate.

Glen Holmes reports a few interesting sightings out west whilst on a visit to Georgetown 27-28/1/99. Seasonal conditions are good with extensive grass cover, so the next few months should provide good birding. Common birds at present include **Red-chested Button-quail**. One **Swinhoes Snipe** was seen at Durham Dam. This snipe is a widespread but overlooked visitor to NQ about Nov-March each year and is seen frequently on the Atherton Tableland, adjacent coast and many other areas. I also saw 10 at Lake Moondarra (Mt. Isa) on 18/12/98.

CYCLONE RONA SIGHTINGS

Not much reported to us on the coast, Frigatebird sp. at Yorkeys Knob and around the airport was all we heard about. Amanda and Alistair Freeman reported from the comfort of their lounge room that they had 23 **Roseate Terns** at Lake Barrine. They arrived on Friday (12th Feb), stayed through Saturday but had gone by Sunday morning. We had excellent views through the scope three had the pink breeding plumage flush. Other unconfirmed reports were of **Sooty, Crested, Common, Bridled** and possibly more **Roseate Terns** from Lake Tinaroo. Ben Constable reported a female **Lesser Frigatebird** also at Lake Tinaroo.

INTERESTING BEHAVIOURS

Les Thyer from Mackay, posted the following on Birding Aus . A group of us had an unusual sighting in Eungella National Park on Wed 2nd Dec. Several Regent Bowerbirds, along with Eastern Spinebills, Eungella Honeyeaters and Lewin's Honeyeaters were seen repeatedly entering and leaving a hole, or more accurately, a split in the tree trunk just above a branch in a rainforest tree about 18 - 20 metres from the ground. When they emerged they would preen and shake themselves momentarily before either re-entering the hole or flying off. I don't think they were drinking water because, through the telescope no water spray could be seen as they shook themselves, and there was plenty of other places to drink, since recent rain had left many pools on the ground. There were insects flying around the vicinity of the opening so I think it must have been a native beehive that they were raiding. I was unaware that the Bowerbirds would actually feed off honey. Has anyone else seen this before?

Stephen Garnett had the good fortune to observe the following: We were driving into Tully shortly before dusk last week when a flurry of Metallic Starlings dashed across the highway above the sugarcane. They followed the contour of the vegetation as usual before sweeping into the air with a second flock that had arrived from another direction. Stopping the car to watch, we saw flocks of 50 to 100 starlings coming in from all directions to join the flock, which rapidly coalesced into a tower of several thousand swirling birds. They were a mixture of adults and juveniles and were as swift and well coordinated as any smoky flock of waders.

We thought at first they were gathering to roost in a large milky pine that stood isolated in the paddock. Then we noticed that, as the flock swept close above the cane, the lowest birds were dropping out and settling. Gradually the flock shrunk even as others were joining it until it was no more than a disturbance in the grass tops. From the 100 metres away that we were standing the cane looked as featureless as any other was, so what attracted them to that place and in what condition they left it we do not know. I wondered whether anybody else had seen flocks of starlings roosting in sugar cane.

INFORMATION LEAFLETS

So far we have No 1 *Redden Island, Machans Beach, Cairns*, No 2 *Birds of Cairns Gardens*, No 3 *Binoculars & Telescopes*. No 4 *Atherton Tableland* is in the planning stages. If anyone has ideas for more - areas in other regions for instance let us know but we don't want to duplicate any other available brochures (from DOE or Forestry for example). We can highlight local areas of importance as well as promoting BA-NQG. You can send us

the text and we can put it together. Ideas for funding these would also be welcome.

Keith and Lindsay Fisher

A BLAST FROM THE PAST

In 1926 there was much debate about birds and Prickly Pear in Queensland and several species, Emu, Crow and Scrub-Magpie (Australian Magpie) were targeted as spreading this pest species. So much so that bounties were paid for their destruction along with Emu eggs. In the five month period from the 1st February 1926 the following bounties were paid on destroyed birds and eggs: Emu 8,441 @ 2s 6d per head, Crow 10,039 @ 6d per head, Scrub Magpies 1,154 @ 4d per head and Emu eggs 7,117 @ 1s each. Huge numbers and clearly Emus were considered to be the major problem by the Prickly Pear Land Commission, Queensland.

It was also reported that the government entomologist for South Australia took 2,991 injurious caterpillars from an Emu and it was thought that in one day they could be eating 10,000 caterpillars! So the Emu was apparently doing more good than harm.

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## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

### ESPLANADE UPDATE



I attended another meeting with the consultants and architects of the Esplanade project on 1st December. Those present included representatives of Cairns BOCA, Dept. Environment & Heritage (DEH), Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) / Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and Dept. Primary Industries - Fisheries. We had been sent drawings of the Esplanade master plan with concept drawings for the environmental interpretive center and these were discussed. The main discussions centered on the proposed use of the interpretive center, which is to be placed just south of the existing playground adjacent to a high tide wader roost. Originally this center had been sited partially on the roost but at our suggestion had been moved back landward. The interpretive center, which is 275sq. m was decided to be too small to accommodate DEH, WTMA and GBRMPA, all of whom had expressed a wish to have a presence within this re-development. The exact future content of the interpretive center wasn't decided but we will be pressing to ensure it concentrates on the Trinity Inlet and especially the bird life.

A proposed aviary on the southern esplanade end was also omitted from this latest plan. We had previously commented that we could see it serving no useful purpose, seeing as it only consisted of a roof and no sides. The idea was to plant native trees within and attract the birds into it!

It is encouraging to see that the consultants are listening to the bird groups and acting on their recommendations, lets hope this process continues in a positive manner and a satisfactory outcome is achieved by all the parties involved. The next stage will involve another round of public comments.

**Keith Fisher**

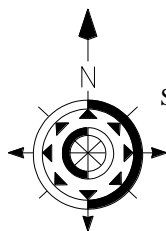
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CAIRNS WADER COUNT NEWS

These counts are becoming increasingly important as the Esplanade redevelopment issue is unfolding. Paul Fisk has been appointed to put forward recommendations regarding the status of the migratory birds in Trinity Inlet and we are working with him to ensure all the issues are looked at. More volunteers are required to help with the monthly counts collecting this valuable data. It is important that we have a comprehensive picture of the number of birds and their movements so we can speak with some authority. Counts at Casuarina Point (mouth of the Barron River) are conducted from a boat kindly donated by DOE and manned by them. The Esplanade and the airport wetlands are other areas regularly monitored. So far mainly Cairns BOCA members have been involved but we would like more Birds Australia members to join in and help. We can conduct identification sessions if required but experts will help you learn very quickly on the counts! You can come along to the field trip at the Esplanade on 21st March (details page 1), and have lessons or to the next count on the 18th April which will be on the Esplanade at 8.00am, details of



ATLAS PROJECT



ATLAS CONTACTS

Send atlas sheets to:- PO Box 776, Malanda QLD 4885 or hand them to the following RO's/SRO's

Northern Region (Cardwell North and north of Gulf Development Road) **Northern Regional Organiser:-**

Graham Harrington ph: 07 4096 5051

email: treetop@north.net.au

SRO'S:-

Stephen Garnett ph: 07 4052 3088 (Cairns)

email: stephen.garnett@env.qld.gov.au

Glen Holmes ph: 07 4091 4364 (Atherton Tableland)

Lloyd Nielsen ph: 07 4094 1549 email: nielsenl@tpgi.com.au

(Northern Atherton Tableland)

Elinor Scambler ph: 07 4095 3296 (Atherton Tableland)

email: dacelo@internetnorth.com.au

Eric Sticklen ph: 07 4091 2300 (Atherton Tableland)

Keith Fisher ph: 07 4039 0972 email: lkfisher@north.net.au

(Cairns)

Southern Region

(Comprising of Cardwell south and south of the Gulf Development

Road including Mount Isa.) **Southern Regional Organiser:-**

Jo Wieneke ph: 07 4771 4707

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SRO'S:-

Margaret Streamer ph: 07 4777 5164 email: marstream@bigpond.com

(Townsville/Ingham)

Jon Wren ph: 07 4786 2614 email: jonwren@hotmail.com

(Bowen/Ayr)

Marion Crouther ph: 07 4958 4613 (Mackay)

Andre Griffin ph: 07 4770 8521 (Townsville/Paluma)

Ian Clayton ph: 07 4725 6489 email: birds&bush@ultra.net.au

(Townsville)

The Atlas project is picking up momentum and this year should be an exciting one with many atlassing field trips planned in all our areas.

Those of you who have registered should have received your first atlas newsletter which has lots of tips to successfully atlas. So if you are not registered contact your local RO or head office Ph 03 9882 2622 Fax 03 9882 2677 or email atlas@raou.com.au

There is a supplementary atlas record form for North Queensland available, which contains some of the birds not on the main atlas form, however this should only be used if the extra species not on the main form exceeds 12. Less than 12 extra species can be entered at the end of the main form under the heading of Birds Not Listed, this will result in less paperwork for you as well as the RO/SRO's.

Rory Poulter who is putting records onto the database at HQ says that one of the most common mistakes by observers is inadvertently entering a wrong species when completing the Record Forms. We are finding quite a few of these, so don't fret if it happens. Most, if not all, are picked up through checking either manually or by the database. If errors are not picked up by manual vetting by the RO's or myself then the database will automatically pick up any errors or out of range records. The exception being some of the more common species such as Magpie Larks etc. I rely on the database to do much of the checking. Every Record Form that comes in I check manually before they are scanned into the database. We are receiving about 300 forms a week and I can comfortably process 1000 forms per week. So far 5000 forms have been received. It is no problem for me to process the Record Forms, it is a pleasure for me to enter all this data into the database and watch it grow. It is actually quite fun playing with the database.

INNISFAIL/TULLY -REP NEWS

Klaus Ulenhut sent some of his summer notes from his trips up Cape York and around the tableland.

This January has also produced some sightings of House (Little) Swifts, seen over a period of 3 days during the Cape York bird week. Small dark swiftlets sparked interest and speculations, but unfortunately nobody had a good enough view to positively identify the birds. Other summer migrants from New Guinea arrived in time and in normal numbers, which include Black-winged Monarchs, Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfishers and Red-bellied Pittas. Probably due to the mild and wet winter in the north the Riflebirds and Trumpet Manucodes kept a low profile and no display of either species was observed. Even calls were down to a minimum in comparison to other years. The same can be said about the Tablelands region. Bowers of the Golden Bowerbird and Tooth-billed Bowerbirds weren't attended in most areas, which is not quite normal in January.

Other interesting sightings in the Innisfail (Etty Bay) region include Square-tailed Kite and Brolgas on the 9.2.1999. Happy Birding, **Klaus**

BOWEN NEWS

NEW BIRD FOR BOWEN SHIRE LIST

Late in November 1998 Vince and Maree Winkel at Dalrymple Point, Bowen found an injured **Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher** in their yard. The bird was subsequently given to a Wildlife carer that cared for the bird from 24 Nov. to 2 Dec. when it died. The sad point seems to be the fact that the bird required a course of needles from the Vet and at the time of it receiving its third injection complications set in and it died. The bird had an injured wing and was an adult with no bands. Cairns members may recall the name Winkel as Vince was responsible for Parks and Gardens in the Cairns area prior to relocating to Bowen.

NESTING BLACK-NAPED TERNS

A colony of **Black-naped Terns** has successfully bred on the long sand spit on Stone Island in Port Denison. Many young birds can be observed from Dalrymple Point being fed by the adults with the accompanying noise certainly breaking the peace of this idyllic spot. Last year David James reported a possible mainland breeding site at Cape Edgecumbe. It is pleasing to report that the locals have not disturbed this site to the best of my knowledge.

OWL STRIKES ON THE NEWLANDS/ COLLINSVILLE / ABBOT POINT RAIL CORRIDOR

It has been pleasing to note that the concern I expressed over 12 months ago with the Owl strikes by trains on this corridor has declined. Reports from my fellow workers that have assisted me with this project have shown that when the Train Driver takes evasive action eg turning the locomotive headlight off, the rail sitting Owls and Frogmouths have a greater chance of survival. Just to give you an indication of the number of birds sighted I worked a train from Pring to Newlands 150Km Start 22.55 Finish 01.45, 7 Feb 1999. Total birds on the line 9, birds flying near line 2, 1 bird struck by Locomotive. It is certainly gratifying to know that people will alter a routine to help our native wildlife. The mystery still remains as to why the birds settle on the rail line when more suitable roosting points are available in trees, telephone poles and fence posts etc. that provide a better location for hunting prey. Do they like the feel of cold steel on their talons?

Jon Wren, the Ayr/Bowen rep. contributed the above three items.

TOWNSVILLE REQUEST

David James posted the following on BirdingAus.

I'm quite puzzled/curious about the distribution of White-gaped Honeyeater in eastern Qld. Around Townsville they are locally common in two isolated restricted populations: (1) within the suburbs on the north bank of Ross River; and (2) in the eastern? drainages of Mt Elliot.

Aparently they occur south of Townsville in Ayr, but not Bowen. They don't seem to occur to the north of Townsville in the coastal forests and lowland or upland rainforests of the wet tropics. I've never seen them for instance around Ingham, Cardwell, Tully, Innisfail, Cairns, Daintree, Atherton, Malanda, Julatun or the Eastern Cape. Most people I've talked to haven't seen them in too many palces either.

The (previous) Atlas shows records in every block along the coast from about Bowen to Princess Charlotte Bay. I find that hard to beleive. Storr (1983, revised list of Qld Birds) has a more reasonable distribution in three populations:

(1) Gulf, (2) Southern Cape York S to Mareeba and E to Helenevale; and (3) Townsville to Inkerman. However, there is only one record from Hellenvale, 1948-49 (see Mclean 1995 Sunbird 25:69).

Something is fishy. Why such big gaps in the range? There's nothing obviously peculiar about their habitat preferences: mesic, riparian forests and gardens. No problems with "development". They seem to need permanent water. They can co-exist with other honeyeaters like Yellow and Yellow-spotted.

I'm interested to know were other birders have seen White-gaped in Qld, apart from in the far NW. I'm not after details, just districts and whether recent or long ago. Thanks in advance,

You can reply by email to dave-james@beyond.net.au

or post to:- David James, PO BOX 5225, Townsville Mail Centre 4810

WORLD BIRD COUNT

The following is an extract from the NTT World Bird Count office about the WBC, which took place in October, with some of our members contributing to the final total.

"Thanks to the participation and cooperation of so many people around the world, our birding event in 1998 has turned out to be great success, as you can see from the results shown below. We extend our deep gratitude to all of the participants, both individuals and organisations, who contributed to the outstanding outcome.

Number of reported bird species: 5,744 (5,935)

Number of participants: 112,161 (184,376)

Number of countries/regions from which birdwatching lists were reported: 94 (88) (Albania, Andorra, Antilles, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Belize, Bermuda, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Saud Arabia, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovak, South Africa, South Georgia Island, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, Tibet, Trinidad & Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe) (*the figures in the parentheses are those of the previous result)

According to the results, NTT will make a contribution of 5,000,000 Yen (Approx A\$67,000) to Bird Life International to help its conservation activities, you can see how & where the contribution will be used at (http://www.wnn.or.jp/wnn-n/w-bird/sumba/index_e.html)

As for more details of the results, please find them in the WBC page (http://www.wnn.or.jp/wnn-n/w-bird/index_e.html), in which more analytic results are to be provided one after another".

This is an annual event and one, which raises much-needed funds for Bird Life International - we will let you know when this year's event will be taking place.

NOTICE

1999 Congress and Campout

The 1999 BA Congress will be held on Monday 26 - Tuesday 27 September (informal arrival date Sunday 26) at the Berri Hotel, Berri, South Australia. The main theme will be 'Ecology and Management of Bird Populations'. Offers of papers to Dr David Paton:

Email: [<dpaton@zoology.adelaide.edu.au>](mailto:dpaton@zoology.adelaide.edu.au) or

Tel: (08) 8303 4742

Congress will be followed by the Campout at Gluepot Reserve, from Wednesday 28 September - Saturday 2 October. Participants may choose to stay on for the rest of the long weekend.

Full details and a booking form in the June *Wingspan*.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS FOR OUR REGION

Greg Bates, Phil Gregory, Mr T Lee, Ms C Malone, Dan Murphy, Rick Powell, Mrs J Powell, The Cairns Crocodile Farm, Brian Venables, Ms M Warnett, Ms D Williams

FRIENDLY REMINDER

Most Annual membership subscriptions became due at the beginning of the year and we hope you have all renewed otherwise you will be missing your *Wingspan* and Contact Call and all the exciting birding news for our area.

Reminders were a little different in 1927 as this piece reproduced from Emu shows. "*The R.A.O.U. threatens to become seriously embarrassed by the fact that many members have not paid their annual subscriptions for the current year, which were due nine months ago. It is recognized that this is almost entirely due to thoughtlessness, but such thoughtlessness ought not to be allowed to creep into a body whose affairs (including the publishing of a distinctive journal) are controlled by entirely honorary officers. The union has been put to very heavy expense for printing of late, and it cannot continue to function satisfactorily unless members pay more attention to their financial obligations. It is desired that this matter be treated as urgent.*"

Some of them must have paid up as the R.A.O.U. - Birds Australia is still going strong but these days a notice like that would not be deemed to be politically correct.

DON'T FORGET

You can receive this newsletter electronically- just let us know what format you can download. e.g. Word97, Word6, plain text.

Please let us know of any address changes so you don't miss the newsletter.

**Please send correspondence and newsletter reports to secretary at:
P O Box 2209, Cairns Qld 4870
or email : lkfisher@north.net.au**

THANKS

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