

Birds Australia
Conservation Through Knowledge

Birds Australia - North Queensland Group

Contact Call

December 2000 • Issue: Hoary-headed Grebe



2000 CRANE SPECTACULAR

Thankyou everyone who participated in our most successful crane count yet on October 7th. Forty-six local, interstate and overseas BA members and other birders - plus 30 keen staff and students from the School for Field Studies - counted Sarus Cranes and Brolgas at sixteen sites, including our first survey at Weipa (12 Brolgas).

3559 birds were logged in as they landed to roost for the night, a conservative number as several sites had more (uncountable) birds flying in after dark. On the Atherton Tablelands, 1155 birds were definitely identified to species as Sarus Cranes and 194 as Brolgas. Of the remaining 2210, at least 2030 could be assumed as Sarus based on the recent balance of species at the various roosts. This gives a Y2K best estimate for Sarus Cranes on the Tablelands of 3185 (1997 = 1630, 1998 = 1538, 1999 = 1678). Most of the increase is attributable to two sites, one is new and commands a view of five roosts on Lake Tinaroo not previously counted (321 birds). The other, an important chain of wetlands on a farm near Malanda, had over 1300 cranes (past highest number, 285) - probably equalling Bromfield Swamp at its best. Another interesting result was at Mareeba Wetlands, still a Brolga stronghold but with a marked increase in Sarus Crane this year.

None of this means the Australian population of Sarus Cranes is necessarily increasing, or that more Sarus are wintering on the Tablelands! We may just have been lucky that this year our early October count hit a peak in crane activity (or that the cranes have chosen to roost this year, in more accessible places). We do know that there are still roosts undiscovered out there.

Sarus Cranes are a "species to watch" in The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000. Thankyou again to everyone who helped this year with the recommended action – "Continue annual counts on the Atherton Tablelands".

Elinor Scambler
Birds Australia NQ Group
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EVENTS CALENDAR

November Sat 25th Christmas Party at the Fishers, Kamerunga Cairns. Ph 4039 0976 for directions

January – 26-28th Australia Day weekend get-together at Kingfisher Park, Julatten.

February Sun 11th - Redden Island Count (Cairns). Meet at 7.30am, Cinderella St, Machans Beach - the entrance before the toilet block - contact Keith Fisher

March ? Wave the Waders Goodbye. Identification morning on the Cairns Esplanade. Contact Keith Fisher. (Date dependant on suitable tide)

March ? Atlassing trip to Clohesey River area, near Kuranda – contact Ian Sinclair

April – Easter campout – venue to be decided

May ? Daintree River Trip

Field Trips may change after publication - contact local reps. for the latest info. This will give more flexibility, especially weather conditions. Extra events may also be arranged.

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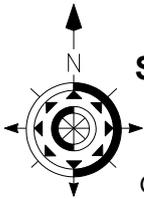
Western Queensland: Vacant

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Project Contacts:

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Sarus/Brolga Tableland Crane counts
Elinor Scambler Ph (07) 4095 3296
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Egret & Ibis Counts (Townsville)
Jo Wieneke Ph (07) 4771 4707 E-mail bowerbird@msn.com.au
or Glenda Jeffries Ph (07) 4773 1802 (Hm)
Counts are at Ross River every Thursday afternoon in conjunction with the RIVER group. Phone Jo if you'd like to help

BIRDS AUSTRALIA 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, including Cape York)

Regional Organiser: -

Graham Harrington ph: 07 4096 5051 email: treetop@north.net.au

SRO'S: -

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Eric Sticklen (Atherton Tableland/Cape York) ph: 07 4091 2300
Keith Fisher (Cairns) ph: 07 4039 0972 email: lkfisher@north.net.au

Southern Region (Comprising of Cardwell south and south of the Gulf Development Road including Mount Isa.)

Southern Regional Organiser:- (South of 18°)

Jo Wieneke ph: 07 4771 4707 email: bowerbird@msm.com.au
SRO'S:-
Ian Clayton (Townsville) ph: 07 4725 6489
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Jon Wren (Bowen/Ayr) ph: 07 4786 2614
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Marion Crouther (Mackay-west inc. Mt. Isa) ph: 07 4958 4613

BIRDS AUSTRALIA MEMBERSHIP

Subscriptions \$62 Concession \$46 Family \$99

This includes four issues of the full-colour bird magazine *Wingspan*, membership of Birds Australia - North Queensland Group and four issues of *Contact Call*.

Membership forms are available from the Secretary or send subscriptions directly to

Birds Australia
415 Riversdale Road
Hawthorn East, Vic 3123
Birds Australia Home Page - [Http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au)

TRIP REPORTS

WINDSOR TABLELAND - 22-23/9/00

Ian Sinclair

A group of over twenty people had an enjoyable weekend trip to Mt Windsor State Forest. After a drive of a couple of hours, we arrived at the old forestry barracks and were pleasantly surprised by the facilities that still remain there. The very keen immediately wandered off, whilst others had lunch and set up camp. People were sorted into groups and sent off in various directions, hopefully knowing where they were going.

The conditions for birdwatching were not too bad, although the wind was a bit of a problem. As is usual with rainforest birdwatching most were heard and not seen. Over 15 Atlas sites were done for the area, and although bird numbers were a little low, the data will be useful. What was surprising was the lack of species such as Brown Gerygone, Spectacled Monarchs (perhaps due to the higher elevation), and what was at times annoying was an over abundance of Grey Headed Robins! People also enjoyed good views of platypus, and also of the interesting range of plants that are found in Mt Windsor Tablelands including the rhododendrons. The drive up into the Tablelands is very impressive, with great views looking westwards.

Our thanks to DNR for allowing us to use the facilities; this made the trip much more enjoyable.

BIRDS AUSTRALIA CONGRESS & CAMPOUT

14-18/10/00 - Keith & Lindsay Fisher

Five members of BA-NQG attended the congress and campout. The congress was held over 3 days in Rockhampton, with the theme of "Vegetation change, habitat fragmentation and their impact on birdlife". This was the second such congress and campout held in Rockhampton, the first was held 76 years ago in 1924.

Many top class speakers presented papers dealing with vegetation changes within Queensland and NSW. The areas discussed included the Brigalow region which covers a huge area from St. George and Toowoomba in the south to Rockhampton and Townsville in the north. Other areas discussed were rainforest communities in Southeast Queensland, Queensland/NSW border country, southern NSW and landscapes of the tablelands, slopes and plains of south-eastern NSW. Speakers were from the Queensland Herbarium, CSIRO, various universities, EPA and also a grazier who gave his viewpoint. We went off to the Rockhampton Botanic Gardens on day one to check out the birds on the excellent wetlands there, just as they did in 1924. Well worth a visit if you are in Rocky.

The campout was well attended (approx 30 people) and was based at Ferns Hideaway on the edge of Byfield NP north of Yeppoon. Accommodation ranged from log cabins to camping. On all three days visits were made to the military training area in Shoalwater Bay where we atlased many sites. Lots of good habitat in good condition here, bird numbers seemed low, but we managed 180+ species. A campout dinner was held at Ferns restaurant on Tuesday evening. One morning we had morning tea with the Byfield Historical Society, they learnt about Birds Australia and we learnt about the Byfield area.

A very successful campout and congress, thanks to Henry Nix the main organiser, who was helped by several people based in Rockhampton (a full report will be in the next *Wingspan*).

BULLERINGA NATIONAL PARK- 28th Oct. -

4th Nov 2000 - Amanda Freeman

What a variety of landscapes are packed in to the relatively small area of Bulleringa National Park! For those that don't have it marked on their maps, Bulleringa is in between Mt Surprise and Chillagoe, smack bang in the middle of the very base of the pointy bit. Its sandstone gorges, however, could easily fool you into thinking that you were somewhere in central Australia.

Twenty-five people from BANQ and NatureSearch joined the Bulleringa survey for all or part of the time. The week was jam packed with bird, mammal, reptile and frog surveys but one focus of the trip was to record birds occurring at QPWS fire/vegetation monitoring sites. These sites were all Atlased twice. We also Atlased sites in all of the main land systems occurring in the park.

Ninety-nine bird species were recorded in the park during the course of the survey. For readers of Contact Call here are some of the feathered highlights.

Raptors were resplendent! The list comprised baza, square-tailed kite, black kite, whistling kite, brown goshawk, collared sparrowhawk, wedge-tailed eagle, brown falcon, peregrine falcon and – the piece de resistance – red goshawk. This made Greg Czechura's two flat tyres well worth it I'm sure.

A couple of surprises will fill in some gaps in known distributions. Varied lorikeets were seen by the tree full (not recorded in previous Bulleringa surveys) and thanks to Eric Bionic Ears Sticklen, yellow-rumped thornbills were recorded (not noted during previous Bulleringa surveys and north-west of their extent in the last Atlas).

Heavy rain during our first weekend was, fortunately, not quite enough to force us to abandon camp. It did, however, put a dampener (literally and figuratively) on our plans to find finches concentrated at waterholes. With water widespread, finch sightings were few and far between and we recorded only double-barred, black-throated and masked finches.

Many thanks to Ranger in Charge Jack Borgert for a first class orientation during our first weekend, Pete and Pam Blackburn for care of weary travellers and of course to all the other participants who made it such an enjoyable and worthwhile trip.

ENDANGERED SPECIES APPEAL

Birds Australia launched an Endangered Species appeal in Bird Week last month. In an effort to raise funds for conservation, research and education, one million appeals mailers have been produced.

We would like to do our part in North Queensland and help to distribute them. Would you be willing to spend a couple of hours doing a mail box drop in your suburb? If we can get 30 members distributing 100 mailers each, we will have done a great job.

We are also getting an article in the Cairns Post - hopefully Weekend Extra 25th Nov and we would like to do the letter box drops that weekend so people will know about the appeal and the work that is being done in our region. You could tell everyone about your letter box adventures at the Christmas party.

Please let Lindsay Fisher know ASAP if you can help.

SIGHTINGS



Sept. 1st Satin Flycatcher (M) & Channel-billed Cuckoo - Mareeba area. - PG.

Sept. 3rd Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo - Black Mountain Rd., Kuranda. - PG.

- Sept 7th Great billed heron (2) Mossman River - DR
- Sept. 7th & 9th Painted Snipe - Lake Moondarra, Mt. Isa. - BF.
- Sept 9th Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo (3), Upper Mowbray Valley -DR
- Sept 19th Bush hen (1) Port Douglas -DR
- Sept. 25th Pied Currawong - Karumba. (W of normal range) - IC.
- Sept 30th King quail (2) Rex Range south of Mossman - DR
- Sept 30th Satin flycatcher (male) Rex Range - DR
- Oct. 1st Dollarbird - 11k NE Weipa (1st for season here) - MB.
- Oct. 11th Painted Snipe - still present, Lake Moondarra, Mt. Isa. - BF
- Oct. 12th Magpie Geese - L. Moondarra, Mt. Isa. (rare for area) - BF.
- Oct. 15th Citrine Wagtail - Port Douglas, rubbish tip (seen with some British birds who were familiar with this species) - DR.
- Oct. 20th Common Starling - Fitzroy Island (off Cairns) - SG.
- Oct 20th Possible American Golden Plover - Cairns Esplanade, notoriously difficult to identify but the bird seen was very different to Pacific Golden Plover that was nearby - PG & JC.
- Oct. 21st Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher - Kingfisher Park (1st return for the season) - SK (via RS)
- Oct 22nd 3 Spotted Whistling-Duck were observed for approx 1 hour on a paperbark lagoon behind Chillli Beach in Iron Range N.P. Jane & Kevin Holwell.
- Oct. 27th 6 Spotted Whistling-Duck - lagoon near Iron Range (Cape York) - KU
- Oct. 28th Channel-billed Cuckoo - Mt. Isa (1st for season) - BF
- Oct 28th Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher Mt Charlton about 50 km NW of Mackay (1st for season here) - LT.
- Oct 28th 12+ Cattle Egret - Lower Freshwater Rd. Cairns. (numbers increasing in area - seen previously roosting at Yorkeys Knob lagoon I Sept.) KF & LF..
- Oct 29th Common Starling - Musgrave (500 km N/W Cairns), 2nd report from the far north this month - (hope it's not an invasion). - KU.
- Mid Oct. 14 Grass Owls & a Pectoral Sandpiper seen in Lakefield NP, Nifold Plains - PG & SK.
- Nov 1st Chestnut-breasted cuckoo (1), Black Mountain Rd, 19km north of Kuranda -DR
- Nov 2rd Whiskered Tern & White-winged Black Tern - Cairns Esplanade - JC
- Nov. 3rd Glossy Ibis (unusual) & a Peregrine Falcon carrying prey (Rock Dove or Common Myna), Cairns Esplanade-JC & KF.
- Nov 4rd 3000+ Plumed Whistling Duck & 1100 Magpie Geese - Hasties Swamp near Atherton - KF & LF.
- Nov. 7th 2 Grey Teal swimming along the Cairns Esplanade - they definitely looked out of place bobbing along on the ocean - Also here were 7 Marsh Sandpipers (unusual to see so many) and 2 Mangrove Robins were showing well at the northern end of the Esplanade in the mangroves - KF
- Nov. 10th 2 Dollarbird - Mt. Isa (1st for season here) - BF.
- Nov. 12th 1 Little Friarbird - Yorkeys Knob, Cairns (unusual on the coast in Cairns) - KF

from Ron Stannard & Carol & Andrew Iles at Kingfisher Park:

- 10/6 Red-necked Crake appeared around decking and became progressively tamer. Came regularly until 30/10. Now Crakes are calling all around at nightfall.
- 11/6 Four separate Golden Bowerbirds seen at intervals on road up Mt Lewis, feeding on berries overhanging road.
- 12/6, 2/7, 7/7, 16/7, 10/8, 22/8, 28/8 (R. Massom), 25/9 Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo(s) seen on Mt Lewis Rd and also regularly seen in Mowbray State Forest (Rex Range) eg 26/8, 13/9 and 27/10 (at least 4 individuals on latter occasion).
- Between 13/6 and 4/11 lake Mitchell has almost constantly had up to 4 Yellow-billed Spoonbills, 11 Glossy Ibis, 4 Black-necked Storks, a regular White-necked Heron, 4 Black-fronted Dotterels, 6+ Caspian Terns, 2 Brolgas (dancing 3/11: S. Tewinkel), and increasing numbers of Green Pygmy Geese (100 visible 25/8). Wandering Whistling Ducks were several hundred strong on 6/8. Cotton Pygmy Geese never got above 4 visible at one time. 5 Radjah Shelducks have been on the lake since at least early October.
- 17/6 Cassowary seen near Clearing on Mt Lewis Rd by guest here who was walking alone down the mountain.
- 25/6 2 Blue-faced Parrot Finches (one imm.) seen at bottom of Mt Lewis Rd, 2/7 one seen and 16/7 two (the last till end of October).
- 28/6 Male Red Goshawk flying 100feet away from observer (Andrew Iles) over sugar cane adjacent to Kingfisher Park.
- 30/6 Tooth-billed Bowerbird collected and later released after hitting patio doors of house in Highlands Drive, Julatten (c400m). Shows how low down these birds come in winter. One noted eating Lantana leaves 1km up Mt Lewis Rd with apparent relish.
- 2/7 Fernwrens found nest-building at 500m alt up Mt Lewis Rd. Seen feeding chicks 2/9.
- Golden Bowerbirds regularly seen through winter within 1km of foot of Mt Lewis (below 500m).
- 20/7 Black-breasted Buzzard seen over Mt Molloy and on 21/7, 24/7, 6/8, 9/8, 28/8 (over Abattoir Swamp), 25/9, and 19/10.
- 25/7 Australian Bittern reported seen and heard at Abattoir Swamp (Reg & Sue David).
- 2/8 First Zoothera Thrush on Kingfisher Park made its identification tragically easy by hitting a flyscreen in the kitchen during alterations. That one was a Russet-tailed and the first of several (4+) Zootheras to arrive and stay until 24/10 when last one was seen.
- 3/8 Immature Hobby sitting near Kingfisher Park in torrential rain.
- 5/8 Metallic Starlings observed at Kingfisher Park.
- 6/8 Adult Hobby observed catching dragonflies over Lake Mitchell.
- 11/8 2 Spotless Crakes at Abattoir Swamp.
- 22/8 Metallic Starlings back in force in local colony.
- 23/8 Little Eagle (dark form) near Abattoir Swamp.
- 1/9 Young Lesser Sooty Owl roosted all day in umbrella tree above nectar feeder. Consequently plagued by honeyeaters and lorikeets. Nevertheless it has since roosted there three times since.
- 3/9 Mt Carbine area: 10 Banded Honeyeaters, 3 Pallid Cuckoos, 5 Varied Sittellas, Bustard displaying.
- 7/9 Lake Mitchell: 1 Latham's Snipe. Mt Carbine area: 4+ Diamond Doves with Peaceful Doves and Crested Pigeons.
- 8/9 Male Satin Flycatcher at the Clearing on Mt Lewis. Male Red-backed Button Quail seen on road (Dawn Hannay). Tooth-billed Bowerbirds in full song from treetops, mimicking Bowers Shrike Thrush, Mountain Thornbill, Grey-headed Robin (!), Bridled Honeyeater, Spotted Catbird and Riflebird. I have subsequently heard them copy King Parrots and Barred Cuckoo-shrikes and

had one copy my own copying of a Bowers Shrike Thrush!) Male Golden Bowerbird had added fresh flowers and greenish white berries to his bower.

9/9 20km W of Mareeba on the Dimbulah road we counted 130 Sarus Cranes feeding in sprouting cane paddocks.

12/9 Mt Carbine area: Diamond Doves and Common Bronzewing.

15/9 2 Black-necked Storks walking in the orchard at Kingfisher Park!

20/9 Latham's Snipe and Pacific Baza at Abattoir Swamp (J. Christie).

21/9 First Spotted Turtle dove seen Julatten.

26/9 Rufous Night Heron seen in tree above creek during spotlighting walk at Kingfisher Park.

29/9 Mt Lewis Clearing: 3 Crimson Rosellas feeding in treetop (first anyone has reported there in the last 12 months), Barred Cuckoo-shrikes very obvious, 1 male Satin Flycatcher.

1/10 Mt Molloy: 1 Banded Honeyeater.

5/10 Mt Lewis: Darter on small dam (900m+ alt). There at least until 20/10.

6/10 Link Track, Kauri Ck., Lake Tinaroo: female Satin Flycatcher (and 57 other species in under 2 hours).

7/10 School Point, Lake Tinaroo: also 58 species contrary to low expectations due to pine trees, inc. male Satin Flycatcher, Tawny Grassbirds, Tawny Frogmouth, Rufous Night Heron, Boobook and Barn Owl.

12/10 1 Greenshank, 1 Black-tailed Godwit and 2 Pied Stilts on Lake Mitchell.

15/10 700+ Spangled Drongos flying South over Newell Beach. in 25mins from 9.15am. Flow continued, certainly noticeable during next 2 days we spent in Daintree area.

17/10 First Dollarbirds noticed, 2 at Rifle Creek, 2 at Vains Park, Mt Molloy. Also at Vains Park two adult White-faced Herons seen feeding two large, free-flying young birds.

19/10 First Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfishers calling on Kingfisher Park. First bird seen on 21/10. Noted how soon (24/10) the birds were visible low down this year.

20/10 Lesser Sooty Owl landed 5.30am 20/10 on our sloping first floor bathroom window! 20/10 night it landed on sloping open bedroom window! WHY????

19/10 Australian Pratincoles & Oriental Plover seen Maryfarms(PG).

19/10 Near Parkers Hut on Elderslie/Starcke Station Rd: 1 Black-winged Monarch seen (Greg Czechura) 15 06 82 by 145 04 90

20/10 4 Whiskered Terns and 1 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper on Lake Mitchell.

20/10 Mt Lewis Rd: odd imm. Grey Goshawk seen with irregular marble-sized white patches all over its back. 2nd time I've seen this bird.

22/10 Adult Grey Goshawk seen over Kingfisher Park with Boyd's Forest Dragon in its talons (Greg Czechura).

23/10 5 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers on Lake Mitchell (J. Newman).

1/11 A noisy night at Kingfisher Park with a Channel-billed Cuckoo calling on and off all night right outside.

2/11 8 Blue-faced Parrot Finches (A. Van der Berg) at Clearing on Mt Lewis.

and further notes from Carol:

Kingfisher Park's Lesser Sooty Owls succeeded in raising 2 young (now independent) in spite of the adult male being killed on the highway 2/9/00, less than a month after the chicks' first flight. Well done, Mum. Will she re-marry???

Square-tailed Kites near Mount Molloy have managed to raise one youngster to fledging despite a very hot controlled fire

scorching well above nest level when the chick/s was/were still fluffy.

On 22/7 we witnessed a Papuan Frogmouth divebombed and driven off by a Tawny Frogmouth, one bird uttering a loud "graak!" Sadly a Papuan was found dead (poisoned?) soon after in the same area.

Any clues as to why an Orange-footed Scrubfowl would be holding its wings out in front of it and sweeping them along the ground (gravel) towards it? No other birds around.

On 29/9 on Mt Lewis I watched a White-throated Treecreeper feeding and calling, being shadowed by a Mountain Thornbill. The treecreeper suddenly dropped and fluttered its wings and opened its bill like a baby begging for food. If this was a sign of aggression it made no other effort to chase the thornbill away. Any comments?

A Golden Bowerbird male on Mt Lewis has been observed (Stan Davies) "stashing" lichen in the fork of a tree near the bower and on 2 occasions I've seen Goldens retrieve bunches of red berries from hiding places. One was a female who collected a bunch from the top of a dead stump, and the other was a male at his bower who pulled a bunch from a hole in a tree, took it to a fallen log, ate a few berries then returned the remainder to its spot. Having seen a rival male shoot into the bower and steal lichen in the resident male's absence I can understand the importance of keeping supplies at hand.

Weekend in Chillagoe. This is a spot apparently under-birded: in 24 hours we added 15 birds to the QNPWS list available at the office there. They would like to know any further additions. If you go do visit Mungana Dam, behind the cattle yards. Species on 10/9 included Grey Teal, Hardhead, Green Pygmy Geese, Dusky Moorhen, Coot, Bustard, Brogas, Pale-headed Rosella, Apostlebird and somewhat surprisingly, Fairy Gerygone. Chillagoe itself and Chillagoe Homestay, where we camped, had Bustard, Crested Pigeons, Black-faced Woodswallows, Banded Honeyeater, White-winged Trillers and Papuan Frogmouth among others.

To prove that birds turn up anywhere, a night camped in a quarry 8km from Mt Garnet gave us Spotted Nightjar, Owlet Nightjar and Pacific Baza.

Pied Imperial Pigeons are not known to frequent Kingfisher Park (430m) but one was seen and heard here on 19/10.

Raising Red-browed Finches was a delightful task we engaged in some months ago. 5 orphans were brought to us, tiny but feathered and already sporting red tails. They thrived in an incubator, fed on soaked dried dog food and egg & biscuit then were moved to a cage where they could watch their wild brethren on the seed feeder. Once released they hung around the feeder and returned every two hours to cling to the flyscreens or the backs of chairs, begging for food from the syringe. They roosted in a line on the nearest branch to the buildings and the first person up would be assaulted by 5 fluffy birds landing all over them. When a Black Butcherbird swooped at them one day they took refuge in the hands of the person who'd been feeding them and refused to leave for 20 minutes. After that whenever frightened, while the wild birds would dive for the vegetation our lot would fly under the tablecloth of the nearest table! There's no way now of recognising our babies but we suspect that the birds which swim across the bird bath may be ours, a habit they learned bathing in a coffee jar lid in their cage. Previous to the release of ours the wild finches were only seen to dip their tails or one wing in the water.

sightings courtesy of Elinor Scambler:

18/7 12-15 Metallic Starlings, Lake Eacham (E Scambler)

19/7 Two Crested Shrike-tits Priors Creek, Atherton (Glenn Holmes)

21/7 Pied Monarch Priors Creek, Atherton (Landcare/ WTPPS 1995 planting behind the Gold Club 18th tee) (J. Holmes *et al*)

28/7 Black-necked Stork near Barron River bridge, Malanda/Atherton Road (P Gobert per E Scambler)

4/8 2 Channel-billed Cuckoos, Lake Eacham (E Scambler)

12/8 Mountain Thornbill Mather Road, Yungaburra (A Gillanders)

20/8 Lovely Fairy-wrens near water tank on Gillies Range (E S)

22/8 Glossy Ibis at Collins Swamp (Glenn Holmes)

23/8 8 Metallic Starlings Lake Eacham (E Scambler)

24/8 Bush-hen Petersen Creek, Yungaburra (E Scambler)

25/8 Blue-winged Kookaburra, Marks Lane (ES)

29/8 & 23/10 Brahminy Kite-Jim Chapman Bridge, Gillies H/way (ES)

30/8 Eastern Whipbird with dependent young, Hasties Swamp NP (J & D Fitzsimon)

3/9 White-bellied Sea-Eagles at Nardello's Lagoon have changed nest tree after at least 12 years in previous tree (Ben Constable)

3/9 Grey Whistler, Gillies Lookout (Ben Constable)

3/9 Bassian Thrush, Kauri Creek (Jack Leighton)

3/9 Peregrine Falcon, nr Lake Barrine (A Gillanders)

5/9 Black-necked Stork, Gallos's farm, Malanda-Atherton Road (B Walsh)

5/9 Red-backed Kingfisher, Millaa Millaa (G Holmes)

8/9 Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Yungaburra (house yard) (A Gillanders)

17/9, 7 Bustards, Kairi-Atherton Road (ES *et al*)

Sept. - Golden Bowerbird (imm), Hasties Swamp N.P. (E Sticklen)

25/9 40 cranes (mixed species), dam near Lakeland Downs (ES)

26/9 17 Golden-shouldered Parrots, Windmill Ck CYP (G Holmes)

26/9 >300 Brolgas, Marina Plains (E Scambler)

27/9 White-streaked Honeyeaters, Bloomfield Falls (G Holmes)

30/9 White-throated Nightjar, near Lake Eacham (D Crawford)

7/10 Spotless Crakes (2), Hasties Swamp N.P. (G Czechura)

Mid October, White-throated Nightjar, Yungaburra (A Gillanders)

19/10 White-browed Crake, Pelican Point (G Holmes)

22/10 Satin Flycatchers (one M, one F), near Lake Barrine (ES)

22/10 2 x Red-necked Crake, near Lake Barrine (ES *et al*)

26/9 Sharp-tailed & Marsh Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Eastern Golden Plover, Little Curlew, Curlew Sandpiper, Latham's Snipe, Red-necked Stint, Marina Plains, CYP (G Holmes *et al*)

Simon Grove reports:

On 20/10 I saw a lone European starling on Fitzroy Island. It was hanging around between the camping area and the clam farm. I didn't have my binoculars, but there was no mistaking it (I've seen a few million in my time) - characteristic shape and movement on ground and in flight, dark/black with bright orange beak, and that "squelch" call as it flew off.

Note: - None of these sightings have been verified please check with the observer before quoting them.

Please send sightings to the secretary - post or email OK.

Thanks to all the contributors to the sightings column including BF - Bob Forsyth, DR - Del Richards, DM - Dawn Magarry, IC - Ian Cowan, ICL - Ian Clayton, JC - John Crowhurst, KF - Keith Fisher, KU - Klaus Uhlenhut LF - Lindsay Fisher, LT - Les Thyer, MB - Michael Barnett, PG - Phil Gregory, , RS - Ron Stannard, SG - Simon Grove, SK - Simon Kennedy (vic), TJ - Tony Jorgensen.

TOWNSVILLE NEWS

On the regular monthly club outing on October 29th to Clement State Forest- about 50 kms north of Townsville, we saw a pair of Beach Stone Curlew well to the north of where the track comes on to the beach. They were in fact nearer to Balgal Beach. Two walkers with dog were not far away but the birds were clearly seen through 'scopes. We have recorded a pair here during a winter visit in 1998.

The next day on local TV Channel 7 @ 6.15pm there was a short interview with John Young re-BeachStone-curlews pleading for more care around dunes & immediate beach vegetation. We regret we had not planned a full day visit to go searching closer in case they had started nesting. Sadly there was ample evidence of 4WD tracks breaking down the dune adjacent to Wild Boar Creek (just North of Toomulla) plus discarded bait, fires, tarps and plastic particularly bait packets. In a no vehicles/camping area the signposts were seemingly there to be ignored! A worry for any chance of nesting for the birds.

WHAT ELSE HAS BEEN HAPPENING?

CAIRNS ESPLANADE NEWS -

Keith Fisher

Several reports of American Golden Plover on the Esplanade are so far unconfirmed. The majority of the waders present in October seemed to be Bar-tailed and Black Godwit, Grey-tailed Tattler, Great Knot, Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper along with a few Pacific Golden Plover, Terek Sandpiper and a Black-fronted Dotterel. 2 Grey Teal and 7 Marsh Sandpipers reported in the sightings were unusual. An Esplanade birdlist brochure is now available, No 7 in our brochure series.

The Cairns City Council now have two posters available, each one has 20 photos showing birds found along the Esplanade. They cost \$5.00 each. Several members of BA-NQG were invited along to the launch by the council and both Graham Harrington and myself gave short talks on the birdlife and the potential tourism opportunities.

ATLAS NEWS - Keith Fisher

It is surprising that there are many species found in our area which have had no atlas breeding records submitted. These are:

Chestnut-backed Button-quail*, Buff-breasted Button-quail* Flock Bronzewing, Pied Heron, Little Bittern, Letter-winged Kite, Grass Owl, Varied Lorikeet, Red-cheeked Parrot, Northern Rosella, Night Parrot*, Marbled Frogmouth*, Little Kingfisher*, Yellow-billed Kigfisher, Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo*, Red-bellied Pitta*, Black-winged Monarch*, Grey-headed Robin, Barred Cuckoo-Shrike, Mountain Thornbill, Fernwren, Carpenterian Grasswren, Lovely Fairy-wren, Red-headed Honeyeater, Green-backed Honeyeater, Bridled Honeyeater, White-streaked Honeyeater, Tooth-billed Catbird, Fawn-breasted Bowerbird*, Golden Bowerbird, Trumpet Manucode, Zitting Cisticola. * = Not recorded in first atlas.

Some birds are difficult but many are reasonably common so keep a look out for nesting activity or newly fledged birds.

Don't forget that incidental sightings are just as important as surveys. Potentially usable information, especially for the rarer or elusive species, will be lost if these records are not submitted. Many of the incidental sightings (such as raptors) quite often will not appear in surveys.

INTERESTING PLACES

CATHU STATE FOREST - K. & L. Fisher

Next time you are whizzing up and down the Bruce Highway take time out to visit the Cathu State Forest situated approx 51 km south of Proserpine and 72 km north of Mackay. A signpost on the highway directs you towards the Clarke Range, at the foot of Eungella NP and the camp site at 12.4 km. After 2.4 km you cross the O'Connell River and turn right following the gravel road which passes by old forestry huts a few hundred metres before the Jaxut camp area. There are several walks you can take from here traversing the riverine rainforest or the open woodlands. The open woodlands contain many eucalypts including Poplar Gum (*Eucalyptus alba*), Black Iron Box (*E. raverellana*) and Moreton Bay Ash (*E. tessellaris*). Plenty of variety of birds and look out for the Azure Kingfisher flying up and down the creek. The road continues beyond the camping area and starts to climb steeply up onto the Clark Range. 5.7 km beyond the camp you come to a lookout (824 m) with spectacular views to the Whitsunday Islands and Cape Conway. The rainforest along the road here is well worth investigating with a good variety of birdlife. Thanks to Ian Cowan for pointing out this area to us.

EUTHELLA - Glenn Holmes

A recent trip round Halloween for 3 days at Euthella showed that birders must seldom stray from the highway when travelling between Townsville and Mt Isa. This small property about 120 km north-west of Richmond is well vegetated, in contrast to the grasslands farther south. Correspondingly, the birding is more productive. Several species recorded there seem beyond documented limits according to Storr's Revised List of Queensland Birds and the Atlas of Australian Birds (both 1984). These included Striped Honeyeater, Brush Cuckoo, Grey Butcherbird, Brown Treecreeper, Pale-headed Rosella, Yellow-tinted Honeyeater, Banded Honeyeater and Olive-backed Oriole. Additionally, the presence of birds such as the Brown Treecreeper and Hooded Robin, that are both vulnerable to local extinction in many pastoral areas, indicates that the cell-grazing techniques applied on this property are beneficial to birds. Other birds seen included several parties of Ground Cuckoo-shrikes. This species is so ubiquitous in the Gulf region, that the area must qualify as the best place in Australia to see this bird.

BIRD IDENTIFICATION, OBSERVATIONS & NEWS

Margaret Streamer has this query for Contact Call readers:

I have what appears to be a male golden whistler who lives around about my house. He sings like a golden whistler, has a white throat, black head and black band beneath the white throat, wings like a golden whistler. But he lacks the yellow breast and abdomen. He only has a few yellow tufts just beneath the black band, otherwise he's a dirty white colour. I first noticed him about April and he hasn't increased his yellow plumage a jot. At first, I assumed he was a juvenile just getting his mature plumage. If this is the case, then how long does it normally take? He seems to think he looks pretty handsome as he spends a good deal of time trying to chase off his mirror image in my windows. Recently he seems to have scored a female friend. So does he have what counts where it counts? And this, presumably, is not a yellow breast. Has anybody else ever seen such a bird? Any info or feed back would be much appreciated. Email Margaret at marstream@ozemail.com.au

The Townsville crew have this query:

On our regular Town Common Walk we sighted a flagged Intermediate Egret. Left wing blue tab marked 267. Right lower tibia a yellow ring marked 6116. 12 people in the group and we took at least 10 mins to take the scope in to the Forest Track to check the numbers as accurately as possible. The Intermediate Egret was perched in a tall dead tree, along with White Ibis & Royal Spoonbills. We would like to know who is doing this study. Please contact Rosemary jockrosemaryp@bigpond.com

CHESTNUT BREASTED CUCKOOS

Del Richards

Published behavioural records of Chestnut-breasted cuckoos are few and far between because of its scarcity in regularly visited areas and its liking for mature rainforest. While guiding in the Mossman (NQ) district over a period of five years I have managed to find the species only one to five times per year. Those encounters had always been of single birds.

On August 3 in the upper Mowbray Valley I located three cuckoos in regrowth wattle adjacent to rainforest. All were in adult plumage and I was able to observe them well for twenty-five minutes. They were feeding on caterpillars as is typical of cuckoos. One of them, on procuring food, flew about 15m to feed a second adult. The receiving bird did not beg, but accepted the morsel without a fuss. They both returned to hunting. I thought of this as unusual, but as it was springtime, considered that the sequence was a pair bonding procedure.

Because of its liking for rainforest, the Chestnut-breasted cuckoo remains a species very difficult to observe. Coupled with the fact that it has dark colouration, it tends to sit motionless for minutes at a time. The range of calls of the Chestnut-breasted cuckoo are very similar to the closely related Fantail cuckoo although by comparison they tend to be abbreviated. Much of the time they are totally silent which makes locating them entirely accidental. Another difficulty is that in the tangled vegetation their calls are ventriloquial with some variation in volume.

While on the subject of cuckoos, in 1992 I mist-netted an adult fantailed cuckoo near Narrabri NSW. Upon examination I was surprised to find that it possessed a well developed brood patch – in a species that doesn't brood! Although their breeding strategy may separate them from other bird species, physically it seems that cuckoos may share many common attributes.

MANNIKINS AND MINERS

Del Richards

Late on Monday 30th October a fellow tour operator told me of these small birds "as thick as plague locusts" at a location just south west of Mt Carbine, NQ. Flocks of any small birds nowadays are unusual and thus important so I decided to investigate. I was at the location before sunrise and within fifteen minutes a flock of more than 500 Chestnut-breasted mannikins had gathered to feed. This was the largest number I had ever seen locally. The whole area had been fired about six weeks previously and was quite bare. Other species nearby were six squatter pigeons, apostle birds, 7 channel-billed cuckoos and apallid cuckoo. Close by I located a colony of noisy miners which are quite uncommon and surprisingly a pair of grey butcherbirds which may extend their local known range by about 40 kilometers.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS IN OUR REGION

Mr. D.K Brookes, Stella Martin and Family, Mrs. M. Merrall, Mr. D. Ramsay, Ms. C della Valle, Lee Lafferty & Family, Dr. J. Landsberg, Ms. B. Love, Nigel Weston, H. Mumme, Mr. J.K.

Andersen, Dr. R. Church, Mr. K. Goetze, Mr. M. Surman, Mr. D.R. Wells.

We look forward to seeing you all on some of our many activities.

THE BIRD BATH

I see a pool of water
A joy to behold
So cool and refreshing
When I jump in so bold
I ruffle up my feathers
And have another go
But I must be wary
And return to the trees
Though your patience
Will be rewarded
When I come back
You'll see!

Kerri Redding



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NOTICE BOARD

CAR STICKERS

BA-NQG car stickers, featuring a Pied Imperial Pigeon on a tropical green background are now available, help promote BA-NQG. A donation of \$2.50 each or two for \$4.50 plus postage will secure them for you. They will be available on field trips and from the secretary.

Please send items for Contact Call to
P O Box 2209, Cairns Qld 4870 or
Email: lkfisher@north.net.au

Contact Call is available by email, Word6, Word97 or RTF formats.

Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Birds Australia but are those of the author.

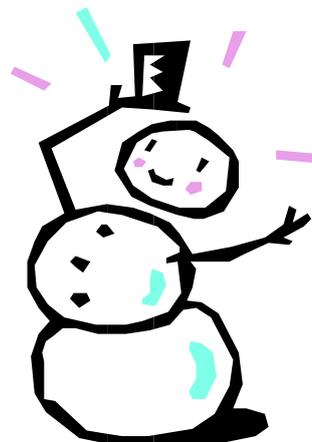
POSITION VACANT

Newsletter Editor

Looking to help out? Have fun putting your creative word processing skills to good use. It's an important job to keep our members informed of the birding happenings in our region. Plenty of assistance to get you going.
Contact Keith Fisher or Jon Nott

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.



Seasons
Greetings!