

# Birds Australia

Conservation Through Knowledge

Birds Australia Centenary 1901-2001

*Celebrating Bird Conservation*

# Contact Call

**Birds Australia—North Queensland Group**

**March 2002 Issue: Black-necked Stork**

Another year with the birds....

— Convenor's report



This year has come full circle very quickly and the **Annual General Meeting** is upon us once more.

All organizations, clubs and volunteer groups go through cycles of being very active or less active depending on membership and who has the time to drive these things. BANQ is going into one of these stages at present. The current executive has run its term and will not be standing for re-election. My six years as convenor has ended so this turn over will see a complete new committee elected. I realise the difficulties in making a commitment to being on the executive of such an organization especially for those who have heavy work schedules and / or family responsibilities. However we do desperately need some members to put their hands up and take this group forward from here. BANQ is currently sitting in a very strong position with over 220 members and quite a healthy bank balance. The group has been extremely active and I think has achieved some very good things over the past few years. It would be great to see some of you take up where we are leaving off and continue to make BANQ a strong and relevant organization both for its members and for bird conservation.

Positions vacant are **Convenor, Secretary, Treasurer, Conservation Officer.**

On other things, Hasties Swamp (Nyleta Wetlands) interpretation is ready and will be installed in the next few weeks. The toilet block has been finalised and construction will tentatively commence during March 2002.

Finally I thank all members for their support during my term as convenor. I also thank the Executive for their hard work and dedication. Now I would really like to see some more members getting involved in the future direction of BANQ. See you at the AGM.

**Jon Nott**



## Birds North Queensland Group—Events Calendar

### Easter 2002

*Atlasing on the Einasleigh River*, south of Mt Garnett. There are many different vegetation types to Atlas in and plenty of water for croc-free bathing! For details, contact Graham Harrington on 4096 5051 or Email [treetop@austarnet.com.au](mailto:treetop@austarnet.com.au).

### April 2002

**14th** - *Barron Gorge NP* walk. Meet 7:30am at the top of Douglas Track Road, Rainforest Estate, Kamerunga Cairns. A 45min walk around the rainforest and Stoney Creek finishing at the Fishers for morning tea.

**21st** - *Ingham Atlas* - The Orient and Tyto wetlands. Contact Jo Weineke 4771 4707.

**28th** - *Atlas Mt Quincan and Klaproth's scrub*. Compare the differences between Yungaburra SF with these Type 5b remnants. Meet at 8am at Ian & Rita's (RN280 Ball Road). Bring morning smoko. Contact Ian & Rita on 4096 6690

### May 2002

**4-6th** - *May long weekend campout*. Camping at Moorinya National Park and visiting the Lake Buchanan area. Details still being decided. Contact Helen 47713239 or Jo Wieneke 47714707.

**4th** - *All about Brolgas*. 6pm Dinner at the Malanda Hotel and 7:30pm talk by Matt Herring on his study of breeding brolgas in the Riverina district of NSW & Victoria. His project helpers were no less than 220 volunteers, including many farmers. Bookings required. Contact Elinor Scambler on 40953296. Want to stay at the Malanda Hotel? - phone 40965101 for bookings.

**5th** - *All about Brolgas Field Trip*. Mystery wetland destination targeting both brolgas. Contact Elinor on 40953296 for meeting arrangements.

**19th** - *Breakfast with the Birds* at Emerald Creek. Meet at 8am at Emerald Creek picnic area. Turn off the Mareeba-Kuranda Road towards Mareeba TAFE and follow the signs to Emerald Creek.

### Annual General Meeting - June 2002

**15th - 2:30pm ETTY Bay Caravan Park, ETTY Bay, South of Innisfail. Extraordinary General Meeting followed by the AGM.**

**A L L W E L C O M E .**

**More details in the enclosed flier.**

**Field Trips map change after publication. Contact local reps. for the latest information. This will allow for more flexibility, especially concerning weather conditions. Additional events may also be arranged.**

### Inside this issue:

**\*\* Annual General Meeting \*\* details enclosed**

- *Events Calendar 2002*
- *Atlas II continues*
- *Kingfishers at high altitudes*
- *Sclerophyll forests invaded*
- *Outback Twitchathon*
- *Trip Reports*
- *Around the Region*
- *Bird News - goshawks, magpies, cassowaries, drongos and cranes*
- *Sightings*
- *Northern Gulf Resource Management Group*
- *Notice Board*

## Atlas 2 continues



So far 241,000 surveys have been completed in 127,000 different locations throughout Oz. Queensland has recorded 42,800 Record Forms and 1300 Habitat Forms to date. While the main Atlassing has come to an end, BA is committed to ongoing Atlassing. We encourage you to continue to Atlas and are seeking funds to print forms, process your surveys quickly, and provide feedback to you about the project. You can continue to send your Atlas forms to the Regional Coordinators (listed below) or directly to BA in Victoria.

ONLY  
**\$69.95**  
Plus \$7 p&p

### Exclusive Pre-publication Officer *The New Atlas of Australian Birds*

The Early – bird fee is still available to those who order before it goes to publication (mid 2002). All income received as a result of the purchase of this book will be passed onto BA and held in trust until publication.

Contact us via e-mail at [sales@thebirdingshop.com](mailto:sales@thebirdingshop.com) if you have any enquiries.

Send your Atlas forms to the following coordinators:

### Atlas Coordinators

#### Northern Region (Cardwell north including Cape York) Regional Organiser—Graham Harrington (07) 40965051

- Stephen Garnett (Cairns) (07) 4052 3088  
Email: [stephen.garnet@env.qld.gov.au](mailto:stephen.garnet@env.qld.gov.au)
- Glenn Holmes (Atherton Tableland) (07) 4091 4364  
Email: [dasyornis@ledanet.com.au](mailto:dasyornis@ledanet.com.au)
- Lloyd Nielsen (Nth Atherton Tableland) (07) 4094 1549  
Email: [nielsenl@tpg.com.au](mailto:nielsenl@tpg.com.au)
- Elinor Scambler (Atherton Tableland) (07) 4095 3296  
Email: [dacelo@austarnet.com.au](mailto:dacelo@austarnet.com.au)

#### South Region (Cardwell to Bowen)

##### Regional Organiser—Jo Wieneke (07) 4771 4707

- Ian Clayton (Townsville) (07) 4725 6489  
Email: [birds&bush@ultra.net.au](mailto:birds&bush@ultra.net.au)
- Jon Wren (Bowen/Ayr) (07) 4786 2614  
Email: [maluras5@tpg.com.au](mailto:maluras5@tpg.com.au)

#### Southern Region (Bowen to Mackay, including Mt Isa)

##### Regional Organiser- Marion Crouther (07) 4958 4613

## 2001-2002 BA-NQG Management Committee

### Office Bearers

**Convenor**—Jon Nott (07) 4096 8230

Email: [nott@austarnet.com.au](mailto:nott@austarnet.com.au)

**Secretary**—Bill Bray (07) 4032 2698

Email: [b.bray@ Cairns.qld.gov.au](mailto:b.bray@ Cairns.qld.gov.au)

**Treasurer**—John Clarkson (07) 4092 2702

Email: [john.clarkson@dnr.qld.gov.au](mailto:john.clarkson@dnr.qld.gov.au)

**Conservation Officer**—Graham Harrington (07)40965051

Email: [treetop@austarnet.com.au](mailto:treetop@austarnet.com.au)

### Project Contacts

#### Beach Stone Curlew Study

Amanda Freeman (07) 4095 2148 (w/ends)

[procella@ozemail.com.au](mailto:procella@ozemail.com.au)

#### Gouldian Finch and Birds at Waterholes Survey

Klaus Uhlenhut (07) 4065 5181

**Redden Island Survey** Keith Fisher (07) 4039 0972

#### Sarus / Brolga Tableland Crane counts

Elinor Scambler (07) 4095 3296 [dacelo@austarnet.com.au](mailto:dacelo@austarnet.com.au)

#### Townsville Egret & Ibis Counts

Jo Wieneke or Glenda Jeffries (07) 4773 1802.

### Area Representatives

**Mackay:** Marion Crowther (07) 4958 4613

**Bowen / Ayr:** Jon Wren (07) 4786 2614

Email: [maluras5@tpg.com.au](mailto:maluras5@tpg.com.au)

**Townsville:** Jo Wieneke (07) 4771 4707

Email: [bowerbird@msm.com.au](mailto:bowerbird@msm.com.au)

**Cardwell / Ingham:** anyone interested??

**Innisfail / Tully:** Klaus Uhlenhut (07) 4065 5181

Email: [kirrama@4kz.com.au](mailto:kirrama@4kz.com.au)

**Cairns:** Keith Fisher (07) 4039 0972

Email: [lkfisher@austarnet.com.au](mailto:lkfisher@austarnet.com.au)

**Atherton Tableland:** Marion Buchanan (07) 4092 2702

**Mossman / Daintree:** Del Richards (07) 4094 1199

**Cape York Peninsula:** Michael Barnett (07) 4069 8916

Email: [mike.barnett@bigpond.com](mailto:mike.barnett@bigpond.com)

**Charters Towers:** Elna Kerswell (07) 4787 7718

Email: [elnakers@httech.com.au](mailto:elnakers@httech.com.au)

**Mount Isa:** Bob Forsyth (07) 4743 3210

Email: [isabirdo@austarnet.com.au](mailto:isabirdo@austarnet.com.au)

## Birds Australia Membership

Subscriptions: \$68 Single \$108 Family \$50 Single Concession \$87 Family Concession

This includes membership of the national organisation plus membership of the regional group, Birds Australia—North Queensland Group.

Members also receive four issues of the full-colour bird magazine *Wingspan* and four issues of *Contact Call*, the BA-NQG newsletter. Membership forms are available from the Secretary or send subscriptions directly to:

Birds Australia, 415 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn East, Victoria 3123

[www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au)



Birds Australia

BA-NQG car stickers, featuring a Pied Imperial Pigeon on a tropical green background are still available. 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 the Secretary.



Birds Australia

## Kingfishers Breeding at Higher Altitudes

During the summer of 1999 whilst birding in Lamb Range State Forest, I located a nesting pair of **Buff-banded Paradise Kingfishers**. The nest was in a typical mound in the head of Davies Creek (Falls). It was being visited frequently and contained young.

After studying a topographic map the estimated elevation was 950 metres above sea level. This summer Jack and Pat Leighton from Tinaroo discovered at least four pair of kingfishers at nests in a high part of the Lamb Range—estimated elevation—1000 metres plus!

This appears unusual and in discussion with other birders we wonder if the particularly low summer rainfall to date is a contributing factor.

There may well be some other factor which makes this higher altitude on the Lamb Range conducive to successive breeding of the Kingfishers—but this would seem to be the highest recorded breeding altitude.



Del Richards

## Birds lose ground as Sclerophyll forests are invaded... Stella Martin

Some **Eastern yellow robins** are having trouble finding food. This species inhabits eastern and south-eastern Australia, but those in the Wet Tropics, cut off from the rest by a dry corridor (the Burdekin Gap), appear to be evolving separately and are recognised as a distinct sub-species. These eastern yellow robins in the north frequent the tall open forests known as wet sclerophyll - a narrow band of forest which exists between rainforest and dry sclerophyll. They find much of their food by clinging sideways to a tree trunk, a metre or so above the ground, and plunging down when they spot something good to eat - usually an insect. For this strategy to be successful they need to have a clear view of the ground - but undergrowth is getting in the way. The wet sclerophyll is in danger of being swallowed up by its neighbour. In just 50 years, approximately half of this limited forest type has been invaded by rainforest. These trees, shrubs and vines form a dense understorey which conceals the eastern yellow robins' food. Eastern yellow robins do not frequent those sections of wet sclerophyll forest where rainforest has invaded - but as the rainforest front advances, the robins' habitat shrinks.

**White-throated treecreepers** are similarly affected since their feeding strategy (see page 4/5) also requires a clear view of the tree trunks. Both mature rainforest and uninvaded wet sclerophyll provide suitable conditions but these birds tend to avoid invaded wet sclerophyll where their view is obscured.

**White-cheeked honeyeaters** depend largely on nectar for food. Those in the Wet Tropics, which are also recognised as a sub-species, distinct from those elsewhere in Australia, rely particularly heavily on flowering banksias. In north Queensland, the stronghold of banksias (notably *Banksia aquilonia*) is the wet sclerophyll zone. However, they are unable to regenerate in rainforest and eventually disappear as it invades. **White-cheeked honeyeaters** also are losing ground. **White-naped honeyeaters** in north Queensland are largely restricted to wet sclerophyll forest although they are found in dry sclerophyll elsewhere in Australia. Feeding on eucalyptus nectar, they are at risk of losing their food source if rainforest prevents these trees from growing. Even rainforest birds depend on wet sclerophyll forests on a seasonal basis. **Bridled honeyeaters**, for example, feed on Banksia nectar in winter.

Much of this information came to light when **CRC Rainforest researcher Angie Chapman** did a study of the birds in the wet sclerophyll forests. She found a total of 100 species using the forest, at least some of the time. One third of these are either endemic to the Wet Tropics, or recognised as sub-species which are distinct from those elsewhere in Australia. While only a few are wet sclerophyll specialists, it would seem that many use this rare forest type on a seasonal basis. Many bird species are in danger of being affected should the wet sclerophyll forest disappear.



## Outback Twitchathon 27 & 28 July 2002

As many organisations are focusing on Australia's outback this year, Birds Australia has decided to focus on an outback Twitchathon on the weekend of 27/28th July 2002 (from 6am Saturday to 6pm Sunday). This event is in addition to the regular Twitchathon event on 26/27 October 2002.

Bearing in mind our birds, bird atlassing and conservation, Birds Australia sees the event as one in which participation is very worthwhile to draw attention to the work that we do, our aims and objectives and the outback properties we have purchased. This outback Twitchathon will be quite unique in that teams will be encouraged to participate under similar, existing Twitchathon rule but purely in any of the Australia's arid zones—no State boundaries. The definition of what parts of Australia comprise the arid zone is currently being ascertained and will be available in the next Contact Call (June).

What a fantastic way to see birds of the arid zones! It paves the way for people to go bird atlassing in area they have never visited, to take a few days break from city life / winter chills and/or raise money for our outback property—Newhaven Station. It is an opportunity for Birds Australia members and birdwatchers generally to get together in a wonderful outback environment, to make new friends and enjoy our birds under a social umbrella. We also see the event as a draw card to encourage the community to learn more about birds and our conservation work—a means to help the birds.

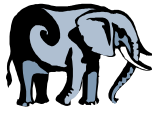
If anyone is interested in being in an Outback Twitchathon team, willing to sponsor a team or just interested in getting a bunch of birdwatchers to outback Queensland, please contact Frances Czwalinna (Outback Twitchathon Coordinator) for your Outback Twitchathon Kits at PO Box 1322 Crows Nest or (02) 9436 0388 or Email: [secretarybird@bigpond.com](mailto:secretarybird@bigpond.com)



## Trip Reports

### Birding in Kenya

From 21 December to 20 January I birded extensively in Kenya with three others, observing about 630 species in 5000 kilometres. Our mammal list exceeded 50 species.



From Nairobi we travelled to Lake Naivasha, Masai Mara, Kakamega Forest, Lake Baringo, Lake Nakuru, Samburu, Mt Kenya, Tsavo and the Mombasa/ Malindi coast.

This country has long been a birding mecca and in some places it caters well to the needs of birders. At sites like Baringo and Kakamega, local guides will solicit business. At the coast near Watamu, excellent guides can be sought for the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. At Baringo we engaged the services of Isaac, a 14-year-old entrepreneur that had several boys searching for the target species and reporting back to him. This was one of our highlights, as the children were cheerful despite their obvious lack of worldly goods.

In fact poverty is visible everywhere, often juxtaposed with the incredible wealth and probable indifference of the lucky few. In most places the infrastructure is decaying badly and even major highways are often best negotiated by four-wheel drive. We certainly stayed in a few establishments that I would not recommend unless you were prepared to pitch your tent indoors. Running water was usually a luxury, hot water almost unheard of.

Even so, we had an excellent adventure in the old sense and managed not to lose any items to thieves. Beggars with charm were a different story !!

*Glenn Holmes [travelled with Jenny H., Mike Craig, Isabelle Robichaud]*

### Kingfisher Park - 26-28 January 2002

The now traditional long weekend campout at Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge was well attended over the three days with field trips being run around the area. Mt. Lewis as usual was a highlight providing good weather and good birds. The **Blue-faced Parrot-Finches** were very obvious around the clearing at the 10km mark and were also seen along the dam track opposite the clearing. Other birds of note were **Atherton Scrubwren**, **Fernwren**, **Bowers Shrike-thrush** and the montane form of the **Grey Fantail** (*Keastii*). Interestingly a **Large-billed Scrubwren** was identified after much debate (a species that rarely occurs at this altitude here). A **ground thrush** was also seen scratching through the undergrowth but unable to be identified to species level (Bassian or Russet-tailed, both have been recorded here). A morning walk around Kingfisher Park gave stunning views of 4 **Bush hens** along the road and 100+ **Channel-billed Cuckoos** flying around the area. A lowlight was a dead **Platypus** alongside Bushy Creek (a subsequent autopsy found it had died by drowning), 68 species were seen on this walk around the lodge. An afternoon walk was less successful as a big rainstorm hit us! Saturday evening provided a smorgasbord of food (thanks to all the cooks) and an opportunity to catch up with friends. A bonus was a pair of **Prehensile-tailed Rats** *Pogonomys mollipilosus* peering out at us from a tree hollow alongside the eating area. A spotlighting trip around the area produced a pair of **Barn Owls**, the **Lesser Sooty Owls** proved elusive – heard but not seen. Other trips went onto a private property - The Lagoons and along the old railway track towards Mount Molloy at Rifle Creek. The Julatten-Mount Molloy area provides many habitats from upland rainforest to dry country woodlands and consequently a



good variety of bird species. Our thanks to Ron Stannard at Kingfisher for providing his legendary hospitality and also the **Red-necked Crake** whose antics around the office garden amazed and amused us.

*Keith and Lindsay Fisher*

### Plath Road-Atherton Tablelands - 17 February 2002

A combined field trip with the Cairns branch of the Bird Observers Club was held along Plath Road, which turns off the main Atherton - Ravenshoe road approx 13 km south of Atherton on 17/2/2002. 25 members joined forces to explore this area and were rewarded with some good sightings. Several **Pied Monarchs** were seen clinging onto tree trunks and branches along with **White-throated Treecreepers** and a **Crested Shrike-tit**. **Yellow-breasted Boatbills** were also of interest as was a large **cuckoo** that would not reveal itself to be identified, however **Shining** and **Little-bronze Cuckoos** were seen. Several **Spotted Pardalotes** showed off their well marked plumage as they foraged around in the foliage in company with **White-naped Honeyeaters** and an occasional **Eastern Spinebill** was seen feeding on the Banksia flowers. In the open country several **Channel-billed Cuckoos** were seen, including juveniles and a few **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**. A very interesting area and one that will require further exploration. From here several of the party headed back towards Atherton and called into Hasties Swamp to have smoko in the bird hide. Plenty of water here now but fewer birds than recent weeks. Four **Pink-eared Ducks** were present with two swimming around in front of the hide giving good views allowing us to see their pink ear patches. A report of a pair of **Grey Falcons** recently had us scanning the area thoroughly but to no avail. A very successful combined trip with the two groups, which we hope can be repeated for future field trips.



*Keith and Lindsay Fisher*

### Redden Island - 24th February 2002

Six enthusiastic members strolled around Redden Island conducting 3 surveys in a 2 hour period. Birds numbers were down on previous trips but the species diversity was good, with 43 species being seen. Of interest were a couple of **Channel-billed Cuckoos**, 1 adult and a juvenile bird perched in trees beside the mangroves. Channel-bills have been passing along the coast heading north during the previous week presumably on their northerly migration. A male **Shining Flycatcher** was in full voice in the mangroves and a **Mangrove Robin** was heard alongside the Barron River. **Yellow-bellied Sunbirds** were the most common species closely followed by **Yellow Orioles**. An **Osprey** was perched beside the Barron River and as we were leaving a pair of **Double-eyed Fig-Parrots** flew over. The regular surveys we have been conducting here since 1994 have yielded a species list of 150.

*Keith and Lindsay Fisher*

### IMPORTANT REMINDER

The Easter Trip to Calma Waters has been cancelled due to unpredictable weather conditions and unknown availability of campsites. Graham Harrington is organising another campout on the Einasleigh River. Please contact Graham for further details as soon as possible.



I had a three week trip to Boigu (18-26/1), Saibai (26-31/1 and 4-8/2) and Dauan Islands (31/1-4/2) in northern Torres Strait. Fantastic places, great people and excellent birds. Swamps were over flowing (and contain saltwater crocs) meaning access is extremely limited, mosquitos were in unbelievable numbers of Boigu, bad on Saibai and OK on Dauan. The entire population is vaccinated against Japanese Encephalitis and I was also told Malaria is now present on Saibai so one needs to take precautions. As was expected it was very hot and humid almost every day although a couple of days on Saibai and Dauan were overcast with a strong northerly breeze. Too many connections and contacts to detail the logistics of getting around the islands here, and too many birds to provide a full annotated list for each island so below are some highlights: **Spotted Whistling Ducks**: up to 20 seen daily on Boigu (a first for Torres Strait); **Collared Imperial Pigeon**: seen almost daily on Boigu and Saibai (~15 sightings on each island) but only ever in flight. Usually single birds but occasionally 2-3 together. Most often seen flying to or from PNG; **Gurneys Eagle**: a single bird over Boigu on 24/1. Soaring with **Whistling Kites**; **Singling Starlings**: up to 20 including juveniles seen daily at Boigu; **Papuan Flowerpecker**: adult female and juvenile (5/2/02) in street trees on Saibai; **Uniform Swiftlets (?)**: four dark swiftlets flying with 80 **fork-tailed swifts** over Saibai (7/2/02). Other species on each island Amongst others **Little Terns**, **Eclectus Parrots**, **Pied Herons** and **Oriental and Little Bronze Cuckoos** were seen on all three islands.

**Boigu** - 99 species of which about 25 have not previously been reported. Notable species included **Dollarbird**,

Birds are pretty scarce at this time of the year, but when I drove out to look at the flooded Burdekin River last Saturday (9/2/02), there was a newly filled dam that had attracted half a dozen **Yellow-billed spoonbills**, many **Whistling wandering ducks** (I think - a fair way off, so could have been plumed), two **Whistling kites** and a pair of **Masked plovers**. By the roadside, the calls of **Cisticolas**, **Tawny grassbirds** and finches were constant, but very hard to spot in the long, lush, green grass. I did clearly see a tawny grassbird and two **Double-barred finches**. They seemed as excited as the hundreds of locals who had driven out to look at the 1 metre of water, loaded with debris, that was across the road bridge. The current in the river when in that sort of flood is quite swift and logs travelled downstream at a great rate. The greatest volume of water in living memory fell into the Lolworth and Fletcher Creeks catchments, north west of the Towers, resulting in 4 families having to be evacuated from their homesteads. Ernest and Robyn Bassingthwaight have a whole film taken of their rescue. Some of you will have met them last year. This flow will flood the lagoons and reed beds at Toomba Station, as well as Red and White Falls and Reeves Lake. Once it dries out a bit and becomes more



## Torres Strait... Rohan Clarke



**Mangrove Golden Whistler, White-browed Crane, Little Kingfisher, Peregrine Falcon, Swinhoes and Latham's Snipe** (together), **Great-billed Heron** and **Red-cheeked Parrot**. Quite a few waders and tern were also seen including a flock of 151 **Little Terns** roosting on the town water supply.

**Saibai** - 95 species of which about 23 have not previously been reported. Notable species included **Northern Fantail, White-browed Crane, Little Kingfisher, Swinhoes Snipe, Brown Goshawk, Collared Sparrowhawk, Cattle Egret** and **Zitting Cisticola**. **Dauan** - 41 species of which about 21 have not previously been reported. Notable species included **Wandering Tattler, Noisy Pitta, Black Butcherbird** and **Cicadabird**. Also an interesting flush of herons not previously reported from the island. Following strong northerly winds one morning I recorded **Pied Heron, Great Egret, Nankeen Night Heron** and **White-faced Heron**.

Rohan is currently seeking lists of species recorded by other observers from any of the above islands (complete or incomplete, with or without counts, from any year). He is investigating methods of monitoring the near threatened species present on these islands by obtaining as many trip lists as possible and then using the reporting rate (presence or absence) as an indication of relative abundance. He can be contacted at Department of Zoology, La Trobe University, Bundoora Vic. 3083, by phone (03) 9479 1672 or email [R.Clarke@zoo.latrobe.edu.au](mailto:R.Clarke@zoo.latrobe.edu.au) Any assistance would be gratefully acknowledged.

## Charters Towers... Elna Kerswell

accessible, I'll go for a drive and see what is happening in the bird world out that way. The long grass will be a problem.

One day in early January, I had a **Buff-banded rail** wandering around my fence line. I was quite amazed as I'm a long way from suitable habitat. It hasn't returned, though I keep looking hopefully.

Had a wonderful trip late last year to Perth and return. We tried to identify every bird that came within *cooee*, mostly with success. Most common raptor, especially across the Nullabor, was the **Australian Kestrel**. Some **Wedge-tailed Eagles**, not seen as often as the kestrels. We saw the latter all the way from here, (in inland areas as well as some coastal areas).

HIGHLIGHTS - seeing 300 **Black-tailed native-hens** near Hawker, just south of the Flinders Ranges; seeing close-up, a preening **Gang gang cockatoo** in the Grampians; a mother and juvenile **Lyre Bird** at a picnic ground in the Blue Mts; two **White-fronted chats** drinking at a roadside lagoon right in front of the car, near the Fitzgerald National Park in West Australia. Wonderful to have the time to stop to look for and to study our feathered friends in so many different habitats.

## Mt Isa... Bob Forsyth

The Mt Isa Sewerage Ponds are again full of activity with several unusual species being recorded by Bob Forsyth and Darlene Kneen. These include: at least 3 **Ballions crane** (1/11/01); **Spotless crane** (3/11/01) a first for the area?; **Painted snipe** (10/11/01); **Australian Spotted Crane** (13/11/01) possible range extension?; **Buff-banded Rail** (13/11/01); & **Black-tailed Native-hen** (14/11/01) the first sighting for several years.

### Goshawk Update - Cairns

On 27th November 2002 I found our young **Grey Goshawk** with an **Orange-footed Scrubfowl** pinned on the ground. The Jungle fowl escaped squawking hotly pursued by the Goshawk - an ambitious attempt but given 10/10 for effort. On 18/12/01 we were surprised to learn from our neighbour that there were another two fluffy chicks in our resident Goshawk's nest. They appeared to be about 2/3 weeks old. So what we thought were the previous youngsters persistent calls for food were obviously also the female calling for food for the two new chicks. They have since fledged but still in the neighbourhood and calling - usually in the early morning or late afternoon.

On recall, the last sighting of the first brood's chick was 14/12/01 when I saw him snatch food from the adult female flying back to the nest. She chased him around the garden till he eventually took shelter in the thick foliage of a mango tree.

*Dawn Magarry, Whitefield*

### Are magpies getting a bad wrap?

Magpies are believed to have seriously negative impacts on other birds as they have been observed harassing, killing, and even eating other bird species. In New Zealand, much of this incriminating evidence, however is anecdotal and it is uncertain if magpies are directly responsible for change in abundance or distribution of other species. Conservation groups in New Zealand, such as Forest and Bird, have call for the magpie to be classed as a pest species by the Dept. of Conservation so that a mgt strategy can be established. Perhaps because of the lack of strong scientific evidence implicating the magpie as a threat to other birds, the Dept of Conservation has been reluctant to do this.

Five Regional Councils in NZ are controlling magpie numbers in blocks of land and measuring the response of other bird to this treatment. Although still in the early stages of the trial, the results look promising and increases in native species, such as keruru, and introduced species like thrushes, blackbirds and skylark have been reported. At the University of Waikato we are conducting research to establish how and who magpies interact with other bird, to provide possible explanations for what is being observed from the Regional Council magpie control trial. As a prelude to the research we are hoping to tap into the huge amount of information from the public by collating any observations of magpies attacking other birds throughout Australia and NZ. If you have seen a magpie interacting with other birds, then we would be most grateful if you could let us know about it.

Please send your information to *Dai Morgan, c/o Dept. of Biological Sciences, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton NEW ZEALAND. Email: [dm30@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:dm30@waikato.ac.nz)*



### Cassowary Update



The Department of Natural Resources and Mines and Environmental Protection Agency have collated **Cassowary** sighting records over the past 6months in order to gain knowledge of the ecosystems needed for the survival of the cassowary. This information has been mapped as 'Essential Cassowary Habitat' and 'General Cassowary Habitat' and is now being used in the Vegetation Management Planning process. Thanks to everyone who has added to this database.

*Helen McLaughlin*

### Cassowary Corner - Kuranda

Things have been very active along Black Mountain Road, Kuranda. The adult male **Cassowary** who has his territory based around here disappeared for July 01 and reappeared with 3 tiny striped chicks in late August. He was very shy about bringing them in initially, and we did not see him for a couple of weeks until September 10 when he began to bring the chicks on a daily basis, coming in early morning and late afternoon, and spending the day in the shade of our veranda or in bushes nearby. The chicks often nestle right up to the father, hiding their heads under his filamentous tail bustle. When they peep out is can look like a two-headed bird. The huge female 'Missy' has been an occasional visitor throughout, a couple of times a week when just passes through. The chicks are now at waist height and have lost their mint humbug stipes. They have a plaintive "peep peep peep" type call which is generally used as a general contact and keep in touch vocalisation, but they also have a variation of this when one gets separated and lost from the group. This chicks will probably remain with Dad for about 11 months, then he will abruptly lose interest and abandon them. They may hang forlornly around for a few days, but eventually he come and chases them off and they have to find their territory.

The Kuranda area is an important Cassowary area with the birds raising 7 chicks since June 1998 with another male a few kilometres away having a similar breeding record and currently has 4 chicks.

*Phil Gregory*

### Strange Drongos?

A **Drongo** nested in a *Euodia* species in a Paluma garden recently. The nest was about 6m above ground level in an outer clump of leaves. Two things were strange about this nest: 1. One of the birds cleared off the moss from the trunk of the tree from about 600mm above ground level to just under the first branch (4m); & 2. All the leaves on the western side of the tree were snapped off. The tree is not a large one—rather tall and thin. This left hundreds of leaves on the ground. The leaves were not diseased but all were snapped off, not pulled off. It was a successful nesting but the young were not seen to leave the nest.

*Roy Mackay*

### Hybridization in Cranes!

Whilst visiting Forsayth in early January I spoke to the local mail contractor that was a new resident in town and had some interest in birds. He mentioned that at Townley Station west of town brolgas visited annually to breed. Amongst them were a **Brolga** and **Sarus crane** which were first noted to breed together three years ago. Such instances are probably very rare. Weather was hot during our visit and the area was still awaiting storm rain. Early in the morning we heard some trumpeting of cranes along the Ethridge River but did not observe any.

*Del Richards*

## Interesting sightings .....

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION	OBSERVER	COMMENTS
Orange-footed Scrubfowl	Jan-Aug 00	Suburban yard in Kirwan, Townsville	Craig Hughes, identified with Len Ezzy	Was sighted mound-building in yard when it disappeared (potentially domestic cats)
Rufous Owl	Nov 01	Black Mountain Road, Kuranda	Michael Hunter	First sighting here?
Spotless crane	1/11/01	Lake Moondarra Clear Water Settling pond	Bob Forsyth	
Crested Pigeon	15/11/01	Desailly Ck, Hurricane St. No of Mt Carbine	per Andrew & Carol Iles	Near northern end of range
White-headed Pigeon	18/11/01	Behana Creek Gorge	Ian Cowan	Unusual on the coast
Barn Owl	18/11/01	Yarrabah Rd, south of Edmonton	Ian Cowan	Unusual on the coast
Apostlebirds	22/11/01	6.5km south of Mt Isa	Bob Forsyth	Recent arrivals in the area—12 birds observed
Barn Swallow	15/11/01 & 3/12/01	Newell Beach, north of Mossman	Del Richards Andrew & Carol Iles	21 swallows observed (Del) 30 swallows observed (Andrew & Carol)
Eastern Yellow Robin	18/12/01	Gallery forest near Maryfarms, Sth of Mt Carbine	Andrew & Carol Iles	Unusual location
Oriental Cuckoo	19/12/01	The Spit, Blacks Beach, Nth Beaches Mackay	Desley Williams, Ian Sutton, Maureen Cooper	Sitting in a tree sighted through the spotlight at 8pm
Great-billed Heron	26/12/01	Bushy Creek. Causeway on Julatten to Mount Molloy Rd	Andrew & Carol Iles	
Latham's Snipe	28/12/01	Bushy Creek. Kingfisher park	Andrew & Carol Iles	
Beach Stone Curlew	Sept-Dec 2001	The Spit, Blacks Beach, Nth Beaches Mackay	Desley Williams, Maureen Cooper, Ian Sutton, Fay Griffin	Sept01 broken shells—goanna nearby; Oct01 new nest site; Oct01 egg missing; Currently incubating the seasons' remaining third egg.
Little Curlew	1/1/01	Lake Mitchell (Quaid's Dam)	Andrew & Carol Iles	
Little Whimbrel	2/1/02	North end of Esplanade	Phil Gregory	Sighted on the grass at northern end.
Laughing Kookaburra	4/0/02	Forsyth	Del Richards	Western edge of distribution?
Southern Cassowary (adult)	4/1/02	3km west of Paluma	Graham Pope	Most residents have not seen cassowaries around Paluma for a couple years.
Southern Cassowary (adult)	7/1/02	3.5km west of Paluma	Bill Pyne	
50 Magpie Geese	7/1/02	N.Cairns Esplanade	Ann Sutherland	
Red-rumped swallow	9/1/02	Cape Tribulation Ferry Rd/Daintree Rd	Keith Fisher	1 bird on powerlines, Rohan Clarke also saw it on 13/1/02
6 Little Whimbrel	13/1/02	Quaid's Lake	Phil Gregory	
8 Blue-faced Parrot-finch	13/1/02	Mt Lewis	Phil Gregory	
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	13/1/02	Quaid's Lake	Phil Gregory	
2 House Swifts	13/1/02	10km south of Mt Molloy	Rohan Clarke	with 100+ Needletails & 100+ Fork-tailed swifts
Oriental Cuckoo	13/1/02	McLeod River & Luster Ck, Nth of Mt Molloy	Rohan Clarke	1 McLeod River and 2 Luster Creek
Great Billed Heron	17/1/02	Junction McCready's & Apsley Creek, Blacks Beach Mackay	Fay and Glen Griffin	A juvenile was sighted by Fay and Desley at the same site in 26/4/2001
Pallid Cuckoo	19/1/02	Machins Beach, mouth of Barron River	Keith Fisher, Niven McCrie	1 bird in bushes at back of beach
Spectacled Warbler	2/2/02	65km SW of Nebo	Glenn Holmes	
Red-chested Button-quail	3/2/02	Valkyne—Sth west of Nebo	Glenn Holmes	1 only
Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher	3/2/02	Mt Charlton, NW of Mackay	Glenn Holmes	
White-gaped Honeyeater	4/2/02	Spruce's crossing, Proserpine	Glenn Holmes	Southern edge of range (records further south at Mackay, Eungella)
White Goshawk	11/2/02	Kenny Road, Upper Barron	Glenn Holmes	
Beach Stone Curlew	19/2/02	Prospect Street Complex, Mackay city	Telstra workers & reported in Mackay Mercury	Workers found a pair of curlews with chicks under their smoko table. The birds have tried to nest in this location for the past five years, this being their first successful breeding.
Pied Heron	20/2/02	Cairns hockey oval, north end of Esplanade	Keith Fisher	Foraging on the grass with 38 Masked Lapwings
Pair Grey Falcons	28/1/02	Hastie's Swamp, Atherton	Peter Lloyd	
Adult Great Billed Heron	30/1/02	Barnes Creek Bridge, Mackay	Maureen Cooper and Ian Sutton	Bird photographed and featured on local news
3,500 shorebirds	5&6/2/02	Blacks Beach, Mackay	Desley Williams, Ian Sutton, Fay Griffin	1700 Common Terns, 1000 Little Terns and waders
Little Button Quail	3/3/02	Farm dam 20km past Keelbottom Ck on northern side of Harvey's Range Road.	Len & Chris Ezzy and Jo Wieneke	Potential range extension (coordinates available from Len)



## Welcome to new members.....

Mr M.Jeffrey, MOSSMAN; Mr A.McLeod, AIRLIE BEACH;  
Mr G.Garnett, TOWNSVILLE; Ms N.Parish, CAIRNS;  
Mr J.Beveridge, PROSERPINE; ; Mr N.St John-Wood,  
FOREST CREEK; Dr B.Congdon, CAIRNS;  
Miss L.Holborow, CLONCURRY

**We look forward to seeing you all on some of our many activities or drop us a line about your recent birding adventures.**

*Check out these websites*

Birds Queensland (previously Old Ornithological Society)

[www.birdsqueensland.org.au](http://www.birdsqueensland.org.au)

Kuranda's Cassowary House - [www.cassowary-house.com.au](http://www.cassowary-house.com.au)

Year of the Outback - [www.outback2002.com](http://www.outback2002.com)

## Classifieds.....

**Padaminka Wildlife Reserve**—184 acres of bushland under a conservation agreement with QPWS. 155 bird species for the year.

Camping and bush kitchen, caravan sites, Free BBQ, Self-contained cottages, single rooms with wheelchair access. Affordable rates. Tag-along-tours welcome. Only 15 minutes from Mackay, easy drive to Eungella and Kinchant Dam.

**Contact Maureen Cooper**

**P.O. Box 113, Walkerston, 4751.**

**Phone (07)4959 3770.**

**Email: [padaminka@mrbean.net.au](mailto:padaminka@mrbean.net.au)**



**Rose Gums Wilderness Retreat**

Private self-contained timber chalets with spa, fireplace and spectacular mountain views—great bird watching (150+ species). Look for specialties such as Blue-faced Parrot-finch, Red-backed Button-quail, Lesser Sooty Owl, Victoria's Rifle Bird and King Parrot.

**Land Road, Butchers Creek, Malanda  
Atherton Tablelands  
Phone Jon and Peta Nott (07) 4096 8360  
[www.rosegums.com](http://www.rosegums.com)**

## Northern Gulf Resource Management Group... Ian Fox

Since 1998 a group of stakeholders have been developing a regional natural resource management strategy for the northern Gulf region. The recently released strategy outlines aims and targets for achieving sustainable natural resource management in the northern Gulf region. Forward planning for the group has resulted in the development of a business plan centered on key projects including: land manager education programs; biodiversity conservation planning; the development of fire projects in partnership with the Cooperative Research Centre for Tropical Savannas; and the management of devolved grants for fencing sensitive riparian areas.

Birds Australia – North Queensland Group (BANQ) has been represented on the Northern Gulf Resource Management Group (NGRMG) since its inception and has contributed to the development of the regional strategy and the business plan. NGRMG is now seeking a partnership agreement with all of its stakeholder members. Once signed, these will assist the group's applications for natural resource management funding devolved from federal and state Governments.

The BANQ representative is Ian Fox. For further information on the NGRMG and its activities, or if you have an interest in becoming the BANQ representative on the group, contact Ian at [foxham@austarnet.com.au](mailto:foxham@austarnet.com.au) or after hours on (07) 40914193.

## Notice Board

Birds Australia is pleased to announce that applications for the **2002 Stuart Leslie Bird Research Award** are now open. Established in 1997, this national Award funds the research work of postgraduate students in Australia, enabling them to participate in essential fieldwork and attend scientific conferences. Applications close 29th March 2002. See the BA web site for details [www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au).

### Position Vacant - Project Development Officer

BA's "Birds in Backyards program" is employing a part-time officer (20hours/wk) for six months commencing June 2002. Duties include: extend the development of the Sydney-based program into a national program and to provide BA southern NSW and ACT group committees and office staff with executive support and

advice. Closing date is 25/3/02 Contact [rosella63@bigpond.com](mailto:rosella63@bigpond.com) or phone (02) 94360388.

The **E-mail mailing list** has been running for several years and has proved to be useful in reminding people of upcoming field trips and announcements in between Contact Call issues. Over this time many members email addresses have changed, but these changes have not always been passed on to us, consequently we have been getting up to 12 emails returned each mail out. If you would like this service to continue please notify Keith Fisher or head office in Melbourne of any address changes or alternatively if you don't want messages let us know and we'll remove you from the list. The email mailing is an extra service for those of you with access to email and is a cost effective way of letting you know what's going on in BANQG.

Please send items for June 2002 Contact Call by Mid May to: Helen McLaughlin, 44 Bishop Street, Belgian Gardens 4810 or Email either Helen or Ian on [helen.mclaughlin@nrm.qld.gov.au](mailto:helen.mclaughlin@nrm.qld.gov.au) or [ian.sinclair@nrm.qld.gov.au](mailto:ian.sinclair@nrm.qld.gov.au).