



# ConTact Call

**Birds Australia—North Queensland Group**



**March 2003 Issue: Letter-winged Kite**

*Looking after Australia's native birds since 1901*

## International focus in 2003.....

*The Birds Australia North Queensland Group has been approached by Birdlife International to participate in an international bird conservation project which aims to identify Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Australia. IBA's are areas of global significance to bird species. The criteria used to select them are based on the presence of one or more of the following; globally threatened species, restricted range species, biome-restricted assemblages or congregations. The IBA concept is ambitious but is one with which BirdLife is having great success. IBAs began in Europe and have been so successful there that each country in the European Union is now obliged to protect their IBAs. Subsequently IBAs have been identified in Africa, North America, South America, Asia and the Pacific although Africa is the only region to have completed the identification process.*

*Exactly how Birds Australia North Queensland Group will be involved in this project has yet to be decided and there are a couple of issues that the committee has to clarify before committing the group. However, I am optimistic that this has the potential to be a long term project that the group can be involved in that will have significant gains for bird conservation in the region. For those interested in finding out more about IBAs, the Birdlife International internet site at [www.birdlife.net](http://www.birdlife.net) has all the details. Keep an eye out in the next newsletter for further developments.*

**Alastair Freeman**

## Birds North Queensland Group—Events Calendar March—June 2003

### March 2003

#### Sunday 16th - Cairns Esplanade

Meet opposite the Tradewinds Hotel at 10:30 am. For information, phone Keith Fisher on 40390972

### April 2003

#### Sunday 6th - Meunga Creek Gorge, Cardwell.

Weather permitting. RSVP recommended. Please contact Helen McLaughlin on 47713239 for meeting arrangements.



#### Easter campout - Mt Zero

Explore the wet sclerophyll forests of the mountains. Including trips to surrounds. RSVP's needed. Weather permitting. Contact Jo Wieneke for details.

### May 2003

#### Saturday 3rd to Monday 5th May

#### Campout at Padaminka Nature Reserve

Join the Townsville Region Birds Observers Club at Padaminka Wildlife Reserve (Mackay) for a interesting weekend. RSVP's needed. Book direct with Maureen Cooper of Padaminka on 4959 3770.

#### Sunday 18th May

#### Goldsborough State Forest

Meet at the picnic/camping area at 8:30am. Contact Keith for further details.

### Saturday 31st May & Sunday 1st June.

#### Lake Barrine AGM 2003

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the RAOU campout in 1953, the AGM will be held at Lake Barrine. Bunkhouse accommodation and meals will be available at the School for Field Studies Centre for Rainforest Studies. Formal dinner at the Lake Barrine Tea House (\$25). RSVP's and booking required. More details on page 8. Contact Amanda Freeman on (07) 4095 2655 .

### June 2003

#### Saturday 7th - Monday 9th Queen's Bday wend Blackbraes NP

Help survey North Qld's newest National Park and add to the already impressive list of 140 bird species. Bush camping available. RSVP's needed. Contact Helen McLaughlin for more details.

#### Saturday 28th June

#### Beginnings day on the Tablelands

Bird watching for beginners at Emerald Creek Falls. Contact Graham Harrington for further details.

**Watch this space for a possible atlassing trips to Cedar Bay National Park and the South-west Gulf of Carpentaria. See June newsletter for details.**

**Field Trips may 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:

- Atlas report nearly here!
- 2002—the year that was
- Christmas Party at Mt Zero
- Observations by an incidental birder
- Trip Reports - Serpentine Lagoon, Cape York, Kingfisher Park Oz Day, Redden Island
- Around the Region - Townsville and Charters Towers
- Owl Survey on the Tablelands
- BA Information Sheets
- Unusual Sightings
- GluePot Wins award
- AGM—Lake Barrine

Birds Australia now have a "Calendar of Events" link on their web site. Check it out at:

[www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au). BANQG will endeavour to keep this site updated with regional events.



The specific name ('written') underwings. It is similar to and more owl-like plumage.

## Letter-winged Kite

refers to the black M or W marking across the the Black-shouldered Kite, although with softer The Letter-winged Kite is a gregarious kite of tree-lined waterways and adjacent grasslands of the eastern arid zone. Its flight is slow and harrier-like, with gliding on raised wings. Following occasional wet seasons and a return to normally dry conditions, birds irrupt into atypical habitats and localities, including open areas on the coast and even offshore islands. Some extralimital breeding occurs during rat and mouse plagues, in habitats structurally resembling its normal habitat. The Letter-winged Kite usually roosts communally by day in well foliated trees. The Letter-winged Kite is not nationally threatened, although it is of special concern. Its core range and population are small and subject to habitat degradation, which exacerbates the effects of regular droughts. Breeding colonies are also threatened by the increase in numbers of feral cats, which occupy the nests and are suspected of eating the young. Rodenticides might cause secondary poisoning during mouse plagues, when the Kites invade agricultural areas. *Taken from Stephen debus "The Birds of Prey of Australia - A Field Guide".*

## Atlas 2 contacts

### **The Atlas Report is due to be out in March 2003.**

Please continue to send your Atlas forms to the following coordinators:

#### **Northern Region (Cardwell north incl. Cape York)**

##### **Regional Organiser—Graham Harrington 4096 5051**

PO Box 680, Malanda Q4885

- Keith Fisher (Cairns) (07) 4039 0972  
PO Box 2209, Cairns Q4870
- Glenn Holmes (Atherton Tableland) (07) 4091 4364  
PO Box 1246, Atherton Q4883

- Elinor Scambler (Atherton Tableland) (07) 40953296  
MS1318 Gadgarra Road, Yungaburra Q4872

#### **Southern Region (Cardwell to Bowen)**

##### **Regional Organiser—Jo Wieneke 4771 4707**

22 Bishop Street, Belgian Gardens, Q4810

- Jon Wren (Bowen/Ayr) (07) 4786 2614  
PO Box 868 Bowen Q4805
- #### **Southern Region (Bowen to Mackay, including Mt Isa)**
- ##### **Regional Organiser- Marion Crouther 4958 4613**
- PO Box 1, Dalrymple Heights Q4757

## 2002-2003 BA-NQG Management Committee

### **Executive Committee**

**Convener**—Alastair Freeman Ph: 4095 2655  
Email: [procella@ozemail.com.au](mailto:procella@ozemail.com.au)

**Convener Elect**—Jo Wieneke Ph: 4771 4707  
Email: [howerbird14@bigpond.com](mailto:howerbird14@bigpond.com)

**Secretary**—Keith Fisher Ph: 4039 0972  
Email: [lkfisher@austarnet.com.au](mailto:lkfisher@austarnet.com.au)

**Treasurer**—Amanda Freeman Ph: 4095 2655  
Email: [procella@ozemail.com.au](mailto:procella@ozemail.com.au)

**Conservation Officer**—Graham Harrington Ph: 4096 5051  
Email: [treetop@austarnet.com.au](mailto:treetop@austarnet.com.au)

### **Project Contacts**

**Beach Stone Curlew Survey** Amanda Freeman (Ingham north) 4095 2655 and Paul O'Neill QPWS Rockhampton (Ingham to Bowen) 4936 0547.

**Redden Island Survey** Keith Fisher 4039 0972

**Tableland Crane Count** Elinor Scambler 4095 3296  
Email: [dacelo@austarnet.com.au](mailto:dacelo@austarnet.com.au)

**Townsville Egret & Ibis Count** Jo Wieneke 4771 4707 or  
Glenda Jeffries 4773 1802.

**Cape York Atlas Surveys** Graham Harrington 4096 5051

### **Area Representatives**

**Mackay:** Marion Crowther Ph: 4958 4613

**Bowen / Ayr:** Jon Wren Ph: 4786 2614  
Email: [maluras5@tpg.com.au](mailto:maluras5@tpg.com.au)

**Townsville:** Jo Wieneke Ph: 4771 4707 and Helen  
McLaughlin Ph: 4771 3239

**Charters Towers:** Elna Kerswell Ph: 4787 7718  
Email: [elnakers@httech.com.au](mailto:elnakers@httech.com.au)

**Ingham / Cardwell:** vacant

**Innisfail / Tully:** Tony Jurgensen 0408 190 605 (>6pm)  
Email: [raj@naturelover.com.au](mailto:raj@naturelover.com.au)

**Cairns:** Keith Fisher Ph: 4039 0972

**Atherton Tableland:** Ian Sinclair Ph: 4096 6690  
Email: [ian.sinclair@nrm.qld.gov.au](mailto:ian.sinclair@nrm.qld.gov.au)

**Mossman / Daintree:** Del Richards Ph: 4094 1199

**Cape York:** Sue Gould Ph: 4069 8415 (wk)  
Email: [susanfgould@yahoo.com](mailto:susanfgould@yahoo.com)

**Mount Isa:** Bob Forsyth Ph: 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 our 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

You can now join directly through our web site: [www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au)

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 from the Secretary.



# The Year that was.....2002

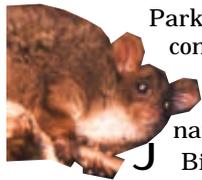
A varied and active calendar of events was held throughout the year with campouts, daytrips and speakers. Campouts and day trips focused on bird surveying for the BA atlas, education and reports for Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). The AGM was held in Mourilyan south of Innisfail in June.

## Major achievements last year included:

J Ongoing surveys were conducted at Redden Island, Cairns, Kalproth's scrub, Serpentine Lagoon, Atherton Tablelands and Cape York sites.

J Other atlas trips were to Kingfisher Park, Julatten, Plath Road - Atherton, Barron Gorge National Park, Moorinya National Park, Bowling Green Bay National Park and Cairns Wetlands.

J Two campouts were held at Blackbraes National Park where atlassing in vegetation types was conducted and reports was produced for Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). Total bird species for the national park has increased to 120 species.



J Bird identification sessions were conducted on Cairns Esplanade and at Emerald Creek Falls, Mareeba.

J Crane counts continued on the Atherton Tablelands organised by Elinor Scambler and in Townsville the Egret and Ibis rookery counts were organised by Jo Wieneke.

J Amanda Freeman continued collection and compilation of **Beach Stone-curlew** survey data.

J Information table at "Ecology 2002" (annual conference of the Ecological Society of Australia and the New Zealand Ecological Society), Cairns and Mareeba Wetlands Bird Expo.

J Annual Christmas Party was held at Hidden Valley with trips to Mt. Zero holding (west of Paluma).

J Monitoring bird numbers in revegetation sites on the Atherton Tablelands.

J Nyletta Wetlands (Hasties Swamp) Atherton, involved interpretive work and brochure production with QPWS for the bird hide.

J Producing new and updating existing information brochures for the region continued. These are, Birds of Cairns Gardens; Redden Island, Cairns; Binoculars and Telescopes; Atherton Tablelands Birds; Townsville Birds; North Queensland Birdlist; Cairns Esplanade Birdlist; Yorkeys Knob Golf Course Lagoon, Cairns and Uningan Reserve, Weipa.

## Conservation issues in the region

J Input from BA-NQG resulted in changes to a planned development in the industrial suburb of Townsville which will impact on a resident pair of **White-bellied Sea-Eagles** nesting on site.

J BA-NQG provided expert advice to QPWS and the Atherton Shire Council on the most effective way to deal with a population of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** that were damaging an important rainforest reserve (Type 5b rainforest) outside Atherton.



J Through the year BA-NQG provided updated and improved bird lists to QPWS for

Blackbraes and Hinchinbrook Island National Parks. Still in the compilation stage is a report and bird list for Jardine River / Heathlands National Park and Resource's Reserve.

J BA-NQG continued to have an input into the Northern Gulf Resource Management Group Inc.

J BA-NQG provided input into the Cairns Esplanade Management Plan and has continuing involvement in this process.

J Input into management issues to keep habitat on Mt. Lewis for **Blue-faced Parrot-Finches** with QPWS.

J Letters from BA-NQG have been sent to the Wet Tropics and Einasleigh Uplands vegetation management committees urging that the conservation of bird habitat be considered when dealing with tree clearing applications in these bioregions.

## Fundraising

D uring the year \$12000 was raised for HANZAB via the sale of a print generously donated to the group by the noted wildlife artist Bill Cooper.

## Directions for 2003

F ield trips and activities have been organised for the coming year including; further survey trips to Blackbraes National Park and Mount Zero station. All the ongoing activities will continue.

A highlight for the year will be celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RAOU campout at Lake Barrine during the BA-NQG annual general meeting in May. One of the activities during the weekend will be a re-survey of Lake Barrine, the results of which will be compared with those from the original campout. Other activities which have been planned for the new year include a "Bird watching for beginners" course in June and a birding open day at Nyletta Wetland in July.

As well as fieldtrips and activities, BA-NQG will maintain its interest in conservation issues that have significant impacts on the bird fauna of the region. Further input will be provided to regional vegetation management through advice provided to Vegetation Management Committees. The group will continue to monitor the ongoing development on the Cairns Esplanade and its impacts on migratory waders.

A major potential conservation project for 2003 for BA-NQG will be the groups' involvement in the development of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the region. If the proposed project is accepted by the committee this will be a significant ongoing commitment for BA-NQG.

## Thanks

T he current committee would like to thank the previous committee for all their efforts. They would also like to acknowledge the support that has been received from QPWS with bird surveys at Blackbraes National Park and Heathlands. In particular, the committee extends its appreciation to Bill and Wendy Cooper for their support of HANZAB through the donation of prints and administration of the sales.

*Keith Fisher, Secretary BANQG. 2002 Report to Head Office*





This year saw 15 birders converge in the wet tropics to enjoy the festive season and witness the birds of newly acquired Mt Zero Holding. Those not from the Townsville district had the privilege of seeing many new birds and for those locals, there was also some rarities witnessed.

Following a rendezvous at Hidden Valley Cabins on Saturday, we headed to Puzzle Creek on Mt Zero holding for the first of our investigations - the lack of running water was the obvious reason for its relative silence. However, the group still managed to find some obliging **Red-browed Finch, Grey Fantail, White-throated Treecreeper, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Golden Whistler, Eastern Spinebill** (immature), **Crimson Rosella, Satin Flycatcher, Whipbird, Eastern Yellow Robin** (nesting), **King Parrots** as well as **Bridled, Scarlet and White-naped honeyeaters**. We then headed further into the wet sclerophyll forest along Taravale Road. Highlights from this investigation included **White-cheeked Honeyeater, Superb Fruit-dove, Brown cuckoo-dove, Barred Cuckoo-shrike, Victoria's Riflebird, Pied Monarch, Topknot pigeon, Dollarbird**, and the rare sighting of a **Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher** in a dry gully.

Following this excitement, we all headed back to the cabins for a refreshing drink and a feast fit for kings. There were plenty of stories to share and, of course, wine to make them extra interesting!



From the Cabins we first headed to nearby Puzzle Creek Gorge for a morning adventure (of course some rose earlier than others!). Although very quiet in this section of the creek, the group

still managed to see the **Nankeen Night Heron, Pale-headed Rosella, Leaden Flycatcher, White-faced Heron** and even a Swamp Wallaby. The group continued with an interesting visit to the home of the Eastern Pebble-mound Mouse *Pseudomys patrius*. With the help of some expert eyes, several mounds were found, but the only sign of the real thing was a lonely Yowie impersonator!. Of course, only the keen birder kept focused and saw a pair of **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes** building a nest in a nearby tree. Due to the lack of water the group decided to turn to the Paluma rainforest for a change in tempo. Birthday Creek Falls certainly lived up to expectations and the group had great views of the male **Golden Bowerbird** and numerous **Tooth-billed Bowerbirds**—a first for many. **Grey-headed Robin, Superb Fruit-dove, Wompoo Pigeon, Noisy Pitta, Barred Cuckoo-shrike, Azure Kingfisher, White-throated Treecreeper, Cicadabird, Black-faced Monarch** and **Rufous Fantail** made for an extra interesting morning. The weekend was completed (although some stayed longer) with a Devonshire tea at Ivy Cottage Tea House (for an up close and personal view of the famous **Victoria's Riflebird** and **Macleay's honeyeater**).

*Thanks go to Ian and Bonnie from Hidden Valley Cabins and to Atticus Fleming of Australian Wildlife Conservancy for allowing access to Mt Zero. Mr Ernest Dunwiddy has now taken over as manager for Mt Zero and we are looking forward to visiting again over Easter to continue surveying the bird.*  
Helen McLaughlin, Townsville

## Observations by an Incidental Birder

My birding is incidental to other activities in the bush (shooting pigs). In a sense this increases rather than diminishes the opportunities for observation, since it takes me into places where we might not normally be bothered looking for birds. These other activities also provide access to places unlikely to be visited by birders.

The following observations (from April 2002 to January 2003) may be "old hat" to some, but could be considered "odd" for others:

1. Large numbers of **Oriental Cuckoos** (10 or 20 seen within half an hour) in paperbark country behind Ross River Dam (RRD) in April (I'd seen these only once prior to this). Again quite a few **Oriental Cuckoos** in Oonoonba (hiding in raintrees) from November until early January. We also saw **Brush, Fantailed, Pallid and Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoos** over the same period at Oonoonba.
2. **Banded Lapwings** (a flock of 6 or 8) seen for the first time behind RRD about April on the cleared area along a powerline. Later a pair turned up several kilometres west of this spot on an open flat in front of a stock watering dam. These nested and raised four chicks.
3. In April, numerous **Masked and White-browed Woodswallows** (first time for me) seen behind RRD in a cleared area under a powerline. This area had been



burned immediately after the first rain but before the big wet week in February. The woodswallows were accompanied by **White-winged Trillers, Budgerigars, Cockatiels**, and **Rufous Songlarks** (first time seen on the coast).

4. **Black Honeyeaters** at Oonoonba, first seen 18/11/02, last seen 09/12/02 in a flock of a couple of dozen.
5. **Diamond Doves** seen on two properties behind the dam just after the first rain in December (just before Christmas). These have also been reported near the Townsville airport
6. A single **Australian Pratincole**, later two, and eventually four along the bitumen road beside the wall of RRD, in December. I suspected that I had seen a pratincole there back about July. Sightings ceased after the Water Board burned the grass on the dam wall. I also saw **Australia Pratincoles** at Collinsville on irrigated pasture in December.
7. Suspicion of a **Black Falcon** along the dam wall while the fire was burning, but couldn't stop for a decent look. I've once before seen a presumed **Brown Falcon** along here which was very dark underneath.

*"The Armed Birdwatcher"  
Bill Holmes, February 2003*

The **Brown Cuckoo-Dove** - locally we are familiar with this rainforest species with its unusually long tail which they use rather effectively as a counter balance whilst feeding at the extreme of branches of forest trees. I also have encountered them on gravel roads in rainforest and I imagine they are picking up grit to assist with their digestion process. Lately on two occasions I have witnessed them in what suggests courtship flights. Both times only a pair was present. The courtship flight was short - about 60 metre - similar in wing movement to the introduced Spotted-Turtle Dove. The first time that I saw this behaviour, the pair flew together in a horizontal circle back to its original perch.  
Del Richards

## Trip Reports

### Serpentine Lagoon 3rd November 2002

Serpentine hadn't seen rain for quite some time and a groups of Townsville birders were optimistic of some pre-wet season species. On arrival a mob of 30 brolgas flew over us, making for a great start to the morning. A total of 82 species for the 3 hours included 4 **Black-throated Finch** (a first for the site), **Lemon-bellied Flycatcher**, **Latham's Snipe**, **Diamond Dove**, **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**, **Rufous Fantail** and nesting **White-breasted Woodswallow**.

*Helen McLaughlin*

### Cape York - Iron Range 14-24th November 2002

This trip to Iron Range was in conjunction with the Australian Bird Study Association (ABSA) who had established a co-operative bird banding station in 1990. Since then, visits have been bi-annually collecting morphometric and longevity data on a range of rainforest species. I assisted where I could, but was more interested to atlas some of the BA-NQG red/green atlas sites in the area. This I managed to do around Lockhart River and to the south as far as the now abandoned Lockhart River Mission, 80km south (by road) with permission from the Lockhart River Council. Like everywhere else the drought had taken



hold, the rainforest was looking very stressed, and fires had burnt most of the non-rainforest vegetation. The bird numbers were well down on previous years and migratory species like the **Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher** were late in arriving, with only a couple of birds sighted. The **Red-bellied Pitta** had not arrived due to the lack of rain but I heard they started to arrive the week after we left, typical! All the other Iron Range specialities were observed with the **Yellow-billed Kingfisher** and **Northern Scrub-robin** particularly hard to locate. **Green-backed Honeyeaters**, looking and behaving more like gerygones, were common along the Little Claudie River and a **Southern Cassowary** was sighted on three consecutive days. Species seen breeding included **Yellow-billed Kingfisher**, **White-faced Robin**, **Yellow Oriole** and **Black Butcherbird**.

Longevity records for some of the species re-caught were quite surprising; the oldest was a **White-faced Robin** at 15+ years and several other birds were 14+. These were **Emerald Dove**, **Little Shrike-thrush**, **Lovely Fairy Wren** and most surprising to me a **Dusky Honeyeater**, a species I would have thought was mobile following flowering events and not sedentary. Other species over 12 years old were **Yellow-breasted Boatbill**, **Spectacled Monarch** and **Magnificent Riflebird**. All birds were given sugar water and fed March Flies, of which there was no shortage! Atlassing was also conducted along the Portland Roads road and again a lot of the country was burnt. Portland Roads had a very large figtree in fruit and was attracting many species including several **Fawn-breasted Bowerbirds**. A pair of **Grass Owls** were spotlighted at night along the Lockhart River Road near Kings Park; the ranger told us they had taken up residence in the only remaining patch of unburnt grass in that area. In all 34 sites were surveyed for the Birds Australia Atlas database, including 20 red/green spot sites. *Keith Fisher*

### Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge, Australia Day Weekend, 25th-27th January 2003

The annual pilgrimage to Kingfisher Park at Julatten was, as has been the case in previous years, a successful weekend. Birdwatching, socialising, eating and

slide talks were the order of the day. With looming dark clouds on the Saturday afternoon, we decided to head for Mt. Lewis, stopping at the base, midway to the clearing and the clearing at the 10km mark. At the bottom, excellent views were had of the **Double-eyed Fig-Parrot** and **White-throated Treecreeper** whilst most of the other birds kept to the tops of the trees. Mid-way up we had the dark form of the **Grey Fantail** flitting around with a **Rufous Fantail**. The clearing further up produced at least six **Blue-faced Parrot-Finch**, **Atherton Scrubwren**, **Chowchilla** with young, **Bower's Shrike-thrush** and **Tooth-billed Bowerbird** along with a rain shower. It was starting to get dark on the way down but good views were had of at least a dozen thrushes, both **Russet-tailed** and **Bassian** were identified after much debate.

The evening's entertainment was provided by Graham Harrington and occasionally assisted by Jo Wieneke who showed slides on their trip down the Canning Stock Route in September 2002. The slides ably showed the varying countryside interspersed with some of the birds along the way and gave us an insight into the vast distances involved in traversing this stock route. During the night, 87mm of rain was dumped on us, which helped get some of the creeks in the area flowing again.

Sunday morning started with a bird walk around Kingfisher, which found 68 species, and 22 **Channel-billed Cuckoos** in one tree. The afternoon was spent on a private property around Rifle Creek; here the biggest surprise was a **White-headed Pigeon**, a species rarely seen in the area. Other birds included **Shining Flycatcher** and **Barred Cuckoo-shrike**. In the evening, Amanda and Alastair Freeman entertained us by showing slides of their recent trip to Costa Rica, including shots of Poisoned Arrow frogs; it certainly looked like a great place to visit.

Monday morning we took a walk in the Mowbray State Forest where we had good looks at **Wompoo Fruit-Dove**, **Grey Whistler**, **Pied Monarch** and male and female **Victoria's Riflebird** amongst many others. On the way back to Kingfisher Park some of the group saw a **Square-tailed Kite** sitting in a tree with its wings held out, like a Darter, drying them. So ended an interesting weekend with a species list of 128, and many new birds for some of the group, especially Bob Forsyth from Mt. Isa who was on overload! Thank you to Ron Stannard for hosting the group at Kingfisher and all the others who contributed to a very enjoyable weekend. *Keith Fisher*

### Redden Island Survey 16th February 2003

The dedicated few enjoyed a pleasant stroll around Redden Island. A pair of **Pheasant Coucals** greeted us by the entrance as they called to each other from the top of two trees. Several **Sacred Kingfishers** were flying around, a species which had been absent for a few months and overhead **Fork-tailed Swifts**, **White-throated Needletails** and **White-rumped Swiftlets** zoomed over. A pair of juvenile **Dollarbirds** was calling from a tall eucalypt looking for attention and a **Large-billed Gerygone** called melodiously from the nearby mangroves. Finally at the end of the walk we nearly passed by a yellow **budgie** on the ground, which took off into a nearby tree and did not want to be caught. We ended up with a total of 30 bird and six butterfly species for the island. The morning was finished off with a visit to the Barron River power station to try to find a **Grey Wagtail** that was seen the day before, but alas, it was not found. *Keith Fisher*





### Townsville - Jo Wieneke

At last the dry spell has broken and Townsville has had some welcome rain. This came a few days after World Wetland Day Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> was celebrated in Townsville with the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Wetlands Forum, held at Reef HQ. An interesting and enlightening program of talks ranged from a global perspective of tropical wetlands to the role of local government in wetlands protection. An equally diverse range of speakers included Max Finlayson from the National Centre for Tropical Wetland Research, Imogen Zethoven from the World Wide Fund for Nature, Jon Brodie from ACTFR, and Keith Phillips from Hinchinbrook Shire Council. Though there have been massive losses of wetlands and a huge increase of pollutants in run-off to the GBR, it was heartening to hear about positive actions – steps to control weeds in waterways, and suggestions for improving best farming practices and drought proofing. Guided canoe and vehicle tours of Ross River Dam were held on Sunday morning. The Dam – now titled Lake Ross was before the recent rains, the only large water body in the area. The sight of thousands of waterbirds covering nearly the whole dam showed what an important dry season refuge it is. There were huge numbers of **Black Swans, Pelicans** and **Magpie Geese, Hardhead, Black Duck** and **Grey Teal** as well as a few **Green** and **Cotton Pygmy-geese** and **Great-crested Grebe**. Members of the canoe tour confirmed John Young's sighting of a **Musk**

**Duck** well out of its usual range. The Dam is still well below its capacity and much more rain is needed. Townsville Town Common's Jacana Hide which burnt out in 2001, has recently been rebuilt. And, in a joint project with QPWS, DPI & CSIRO, a five year trial using cattle to control para grass has started with 50 cattle fenced within a 60ha paddock. Two more plots totaling 230ha are planned. Permanent vegetation monitoring plots have been established to document the effects of grazing, with mammal, bird and frog surveys also undertaken.

### Charters Towers - Elna Kerwell

A trip to the Charters Towers weir at New Year revealed a greater than usual variety of birds: best sighting - the 6 **Nankeen Night Herons** that flew in just on dusk, to sit below the wall, where the water trickled over. Others included **White-faced heron, Pacific Heron, Double-banded Plover, Glossy Ibis, Little Terns, Eurasian Coot, Pacific Black Duck, Australasian Grebe, Cotton Pygmy-geese, Hardhead, Australian Pelican, Darter,** and **Masked Lapwing** - all these on or near the water. There are also reports of a good number of waders on Lake Toomba, even before it rained. I've been told that there were **Australian Pratincoles** feeding on one of the cricket ovals in Charters Towers, last December, but didn't manage to confirm this.

## Owl survey conducted on the Atherton Tablelands

**You will have noticed that an owl survey form has been included with this edition of Contact Call.**

The Barron River Catchment Management Group, supported by the Qld Parks and Wildlife Service and the Qld Dept of Natural Resources & Mines, have received funding for a project which aims to raise awareness about owls, in particular their value as predators of rodent pests on farms. An important component of this project is to establish 30 owl nest boxes on farms in Atherton Tablelands area.

We are conducting a survey of owl sightings on the Atherton Tablelands in order to gain insights into owl hotspots and habitat preferences. We will use this information to better focus our efforts at nest box presentation and to encourage community awareness about owls.

If any of your members can contribute details of sightings of owls on the Atherton Tablelands, or any other information or anecdotes that they feel are of interest we will be very happy to receive them on the survey forms enclosed. Please feel free to photocopy these forms for others who want to participate, or ring us to talk about this project.



*Scott Burnett, Research Officer, QPWS Atherton*

## Birds Australia—Information Sheets available

These information sheets will soon be available from your Area Representatives:

1. Forest, Flames & Feathers - Helping native birds with food & shelter after bushfires.
2. Special Interest Bird Groups - Aust. Raptor Ass., Aust. Wader Studies Group, Australasian Seabird Group & BA Parrot Ass.
3. Birding What Does It All Mean.
4. Birding - Getting Started.
5. Nest boxes for Natives - Replacing lost hollows to shelter native birds and mammals.
6. BA Bird Observatories - Conservation, Education, Research & Recreation.
7. The Active BA Family - Donor program, volunteer work & employment.
8. Bird Hides for Birders and Builders - Getting close to birds - in comfort & without scaring them away.
9. Guidelines for Recreational Birding
10. Pest Parrots as Pets? No! - Why exporting our pest cockatoos is not such a good idea.
11. Banding, Marking & Flagging - Learning about

12. bird movements, lifestyles & longevity.
12. BA Habitat Reserves - Purchasing, preserving and managing critical parts of our environmental heritage.
13. BA Publications - Information - Education - Entertainment.
14. Birds - Pests and Problems - What to do about some birds which can cause problems for you or your property.
15. Helping Birds in Trouble - When you can help birds in trouble - and when you should leave them alone.
16. Twenty Simple Things - Some easy ways you can help our native wild birds.
17. Atlassing: Mapping our Birdlife - Exploring our land & waters to record where our birds are & what is happening to them.
18. Learning More About Birds - Exploring the rich world of ornithology to add depth & understanding to your birding.
19. Sharing Our Beaches With Birds - Bird-friendly beach behaviour & bird protection guidelines.



## Interesting sightings .....

Species	Date	Location	Observer	Comment
Isabelline Wheatear	16?/11/02	Mt. Carbine, north of Mount Molloy on the Peninsula Dev. Road.	Dale Herter, Alan & Betty Grenon from USA and Neal Chartier from Canada	1st for Australia - most unexpected, last seen 25/11/02. Twitchers came from all over Aust.
Oriental Cuckoo	20/11/02	Mount Molloy	Del Richards	Adult
Grass Owl	01/12/02	Lower Louisa Creek, Townsville	Len and Chris Ezzy	Single bird, uncommon here.
Swinhoes Snipe	06/12/02	Lake Mitchell between Mareeba & Mount Molloy	Del Richards	1 bird
Striated Pardalote	06/12/02	Shannon Vale, near Mossman	Del Richards	2 birds unusual at this location
Great-crested Grebe	08/12/02	Lake Barrine, Yungaburra	Dawn & Arnold Maggary	100+, unusually high number at this location
Painted Button-quail	08/12/02	Paluma Road - lower end, north of Townsville	Len and Chris Ezzy	Three feeding beside and on road.
Beach Stone-Curlew	11/12/02	Mouth Crystal Creek, north of Townsville	Len and Chris Ezzy	Four observed.
Diamond Dove	12/12/02	Townsville Airport	Jo Wieneke	Unusual in this area
Red-rumped Swallow	16/12/02	Mossman	Del Richards	1 bird, earliest local record
Brown Songlark	16/12/02	near Julatten	Del Richards	North of normal range
Pied Wagtail	28/12/02	Kairi, Atherton Tablelands	Alan Gillanders	Rare
Cotton Pygmy-goose	29/12/03	Skyrail Lagoon, Smithfield, Cairns	K. Fisher, K. Shurcliffe & D. Houghton	Uncommon on the coast - 3 pairs
Pied Heron	29/12/03	Northern Treatment Works, Cairns	K. Fisher, K. Shurcliffe & D. Houghton	Uncommon around Cairns
Sarus Crane	31/12/02	Emerald Creek Rd, Mareeba	Keith & Lindsay Fisher	6 Sarus mixed with 15 Brolgas, late for Sarus
Beach Stone-Curlew	01/01/03	Yorkeys Knob, saltflats beside golf course	Dawn & Arnold Maggary	3 birds, possibly 2 adults + 1 Juvenile.
Peregrine Falcon	01/01/03	Peninsula Rd., Mary Farms - S of Mt. Carbine	C & I Iles, K & L Fisher	1st yr. bird, uncommon in area
Plum-headed Finch	03/01/03	33km east of Richmond	Bob Forsyth	Extreme edge of range
White-winged Fairy-wren	03/01/03	33km east of Richmond	Bob Forsyth	Extreme edge of range
Oriental Cuckoo	06/01/03	Green Island, 27km NE Cairns	Keith Fisher	Adult Female Rufous (hepatic) morph
Black-naped Tern	06/01/03	Green Island, 27km NE Cairns	Keith Fisher	Breeding on channel marker towers, 6 chicks on platform.
Wandering Tattler	07/01/03	Ross Creek breakwater, Townsville	Len and Chris Ezzy	Excellent views, separate from Grey-tailed Tattler
Yellow Wagtail	08/01/03	Cattana Wetlands, Smithfield, Cairns	Dawn & Arnold Maggary	1 bird
Square-tailed Kite	11/01/03	Lake Mitchell between Mareeba & Mount Molloy	Del Richards	1 bird
Lesser Frigatebird	14/01/03	Sweers Island, Gulf of Carpentaria	Lyn Battle via Bob Forsyth	Uncommon over island
House Swift	16/01/03	Wyanbell Valley	Del Richards	20+ in large mixed flock of swifts
Eastern Grass Owl	16/01/03	near Port Douglas	Del Richards	3 birds
Lesser Frigatebird	17/01/03	80.5km E of Camooweal & Pamela St, Mt Isa	QPWS via Bob Forsyth	Blown inland by tropical depression
Yellow Wagtail	18&19/01/2003	Ross River Dam	Bob Murphy, confirmed by Townsville Region BOCA	3 birds, 2 non-breeding plumage & 1 immature, feeding along bank.
Black-necked Stork	22/01/03	Cairns Airport	Keith Fisher	6 birds from 2 families
Papuan Frogmouth	30/01/03	Kamerunga	Keith & Lindsay Fisher	1 calling, heard once i11/1/02 & 20/1/01.
Beach Stone-curlew	01/02/03	Cairns Airport	Keith Fisher	2 groups, 2 + 4
Musk Duck	01/02/03	Ross River Dam	John Young	Well north of normal range, has been confirmed
Masked Owl	02/02/03	Rollingstone	Glenn Holmes	1 dead.
Latham's Snipe	03/02/03	Yorkeys Knob golf course lagoon, Cairns	Dawn & Arnold Maggary	Good record for this time of year
White-browed Crane	03/02/03	Yorkeys Knob golf course lagoon, Cairns	Dawn & Arnold Maggary	Persisting despite habitat clearance
Lesser Sooty Owl	09/02/03	Kamerunga	Keith & Lindsay Fisher	1 calling, heard in 2001 on 16/1 & 1/3
Brolga	07/02/03	Warruma Swamp	Keith Fisher	12 foraging.
Yellow Wagtail	10/02/03	Kairi, Atherton Tablelands - Favier Road	Glenn Holmes	6-8 birds
Singing Bushlark	11/02/03	Kairi, Atherton Tablelands - Favier Road	Ben Constable & Glenn Holmes	uncommon
Brown Songlark	11/02/03	Kairi, Atherton Tablelands - Favier Road	Ben Constable & Glenn Holmes	North of normal range
Stubble Quail	11/02/03	Kairi, Atherton Tablelands - Favier Road	Ben Constable & Glenn Holmes	Edge of range
Wood Sandpiper	14/02/03	Lake Mitchell between Mareeba & Mount Molloy	Del Richards	1 bird, uncommon
Grey Wagtail	15/02/03	Barron Gorge Power Station, Cairns	Glenn Holmes	200m north of bridge.
House Swift	15/02/03	Clifton Beach, Cairns	Glenn Holmes	Rare- 1 bird.
Red-browed Finch	16/02/03	Cromarty Siding Road	Jo Wieneke	Small flock, unusual in this area
Little Kingfisher	21/02/03	Mundy Creek, Belgian Gardens	Jo Wieneke	Unusual at this time of the year
Swinhoes Snipe	? Feb	Brandon, near Ayr & Lake Tinaroo	Glenn Holmes	



**NOTES:** \* December Contact Call incorrectly recorded the Observers details for the Pied Honeyeater and Black Honeyeaters on Townsville's Town Common. Stephen Guerrato reported both these sightings. Please accept our apologies for the incorrect notation

\* Thanks to the contributors to this sightings column, plenty of interesting birds over the last few months but it would be impossible to beat the Isabelline Wheatear which must be the most unexpected to find its way to our region. Please check with observers before quoting any of these sightings. Please send any sightings to Keith Fisher - post or email OK

## Welcome to new members...

U M & A Acton, TOWNSVILLE;

U Mr R Atkinson, MACKAY;

U Mr B Baldock, WEIPA;

U Mr DE Bent, AIKENVALE;

U Mr P David, CARMILA ;

U Mr A & T Forsyth, ;

U Mrs IG Hemsley, TOWNSVILLE;

U Ms BM Mainprize, TOWNSVILLE;

U Mr I Nozaic, SMITHFIELD;

U C Parsons, MOUNT PLEASANT;

U Mrs D Robertson, PORT DOUGLAS;

U Dr RM Thorpe, TOWNSVILLE;

U Ms M Streamer, YUNGABURRA;

U Ms L Valentine, TOWNSVILLE

*Thank you to those members who renewed their membership during the last period.*

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

### Check out these websites

Birdlife International: [www.birdlife.net](http://www.birdlife.net)

Hidden Valley Cabins: [www.hiddenvalleycabins.com.au](http://www.hiddenvalleycabins.com.au)

Australian Wildlife Conservancy:

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

### Gluepot Wins State Award

The Yellow Pages South Australian

Tourism Awards 2002 aims to recognise and promote excellence in the State's multi-billion dollar tourism industry.

**Gluepot Reserve was announced as the winner of the Ecotourism Category.** The awards evening was attended by over 900 people and the award was presented to the Reserve by the SA Minister for Tourism, Hon Dr Jane Lomax-Smith MP. The Reserve was judged as the most outstanding entry in the Ecotourism category, and our competition was from the likes of Yookamurra Sanctuary and Warramong Earth

Sanctuary. The Reserve received an A3 parchment certificate and a brass plaque.



### 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.

## Notice Board

J BA Central Queensland Group has recently formed in Rockhampton. Congratulations to Nan Lepinath (President), Allan Briggs (Secretary), Robin Stewart (Deputy-Convenor) and Leonie Daws (Treasurer) who are having their first meeting on March 1st.

J Cheetham Saltworks, Bowen has been part of the wader monitoring program since 1984. BANQG recognise their commitment to bird conservation. Please note that access to the site is now via the Main Office in Don Street. All visitors must sign in and out and are provided with a Visitor Badge while on site. A policy of non-smoking while on site is also in place. Visitation can be arranged through contacting the Cheetham Saltworks on Ph 4786 1266.

J Townsville QPWS, along with EPA, Townsville City Council, Conservation Australia Volunteers, the Defence Force as well as other volunteers were involved in the removal of 3.5 tonne of material (equaling 350 litres of oil) from

Shelley Beach, Pallarenda. With the potential to effect hundreds of seabirds, luckily only a few were effected, which was quickly contained.

J BANQG have recently been involved with the development of industrial land in Garbutt, Townsville. BANQG, together with TRBOCA and WPSQ, were able to show Townsville City Council the importance of protecting habitat for the White-bellied Sea-Eagle's nest and associated Poplar Gum habitat. Through our involvement and persistence, we were able to have some vegetation, including riparian habitat protected. Unfortunately the development would not redesign the buildings and we are unable to save the nest tree and nearby trees. However the company has paid for the relocation of the nest (and some branches) onto an artificial pole closer to Louisa Creek where it is hoped that the Sea-Eagles may use the nest in the future. Thank you to all involved. It is important that the community are involved in development when birds and their habitat are at risk.

## Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the RAOU Campout at Lake Barrine

T his year our AGM will be held in conjunction with a "re-enactment" of the campout held at Lake Barrine on the Atherton Tablelands in 1953. There will be a bird survey at Lake Barrine (let's see what's changed with regards to the bird fauna) and a 50's theme to mark the occasion. Of course we will squeeze an AGM in, and there will be other walks and a speaker or two. The "re-enactment" and AGM will be held over the weekend 31st May (Friday evening) - 2nd June (Sunday afternoon) 2003. Although there isn't sufficient accommodation at Lake Barrine these days, we will be nearby.

A late afternoon boat trip around Lake Barrine (Sponsored by Lake Barrine Tearooms) has also been organised on Saturday 31st. Cost: 8\$ adults 5\$ children donation (proceeds to go to Birds Australia—possibly the HANZAB funds). Nibbles provided.

The AGM will be held at the School for Field Studies Centre for Rainforest Studies only 8km from Lake Barrine. Bunkhouse accommodation and meals will be available on site for around \$50 per person per day. The Centre for Rainforest Studies has walking tracks through it's 64ha property adjoining the World Heritage Area and 150 bird species have been recorded on site. For further details and to book a bunk contact Amanda or Alastair Freeman on (07) 4095 2655 .



### Quiz to prep you for the re-enactment:

**What is a bald coot? A native companion? A blue-faced lorilet?**

Please send items for June 2003 Contact Call by Mid May to: Helen McLaughlin, 44 Bishop Street, Belgian Gardens 4810 or Email Helen on [helen.mclaughlin@nrm.qld.gov.au](mailto:helen.mclaughlin@nrm.qld.gov.au).