



Birds Australia
Conservation Through Knowledge

Contact Call

Newsletter of the Birds Australia
North Queensland Group



Birds Australia
North Queensland Group

*March 2006 Issue:
Red Goshawk*

From the desk on Lord Howe Island...

I am writing this from Lord Howe Island. A pair of Buff-banded Rail is raising its three chicks in the immediate vicinity of the Research Centre where I am staying. This species is abundant on the island and it seems to me, compared with on the mainland, the birds are rather bold, often foraging well out in the open. It is wonderful to have such a great bird about, though of course, on Lord Howe, this species is grossly over-shadowed as far as public image is concerned by another rail, the Lord Howe Island Woodhen. Anyway, "my" five Buff-banded Rails come onto the verandah, or even indoors, looking for scraps, the Lord Howe version of the Silvereye feeds in the Lord Howe version of *Dodonaea viscosa* outside the kitchen window, and the Lord Howe version of the Pied Currawong calls from the nearby trees. It's a great birding place.

While here I have also had the opportunity to read Sean Dooley's *The Big Twitch*. Lord Howe features briefly in the book, while north Queensland (as well as a number of north Queensland bird watchers) receives a good deal of attention. It should help us appreciate even more the excellent birding that north Queensland provides. The book's rather philosophical Epilogue discusses the reasons why Dooley undertook an exercise that even he writes about as bizarre. For me, this prompted a consideration of why I or others watch birds or take such an interest in birds. To be sure, we are not all the same – our motives and interests differ. Compared with many faunal groups, birds are well known – it is rare for a new species of bird to be discovered (discounting taxonomic revision of existing groups) whereas it is relatively easy to find insects that previously have not been described. Birds are also highly visible (how many nematode watchers do you know?), they look good, they make an amazing variety of sounds, and we can identify with them as fellow vertebrates. These features no doubt have helped make them a centre of attraction. However, there is also the fact that birds are important components of the ecosystems to which they belong. They are seed-dispersers, seed-feeders, insectivores, predators, carrion-feeders, herbivores and prey. Birds are readily monitored indicators of at least some aspects of the health of the ecosystems of which they are a part. Regardless of why we do what we do, it is useful to record what we observe, where and when, as a basis for assessing the status and trend of the species, communities and ecosystems. There used to be fifteen land birds native to Lord Howe Island. Nine are now extinct, but it is impossible to now ascertain all the ecological consequences of those extinctions? Only detailed study could have determined the precise roles the White-throated Pigeon, Vinous-tinted Blackbird and other extinct species played. Perhaps the introduced Common Blackbird is doing what the native blackbird did, but who is filling in for that amazing pigeon.

My assessment? It's fine to watch birds for aesthetic reasons, as a (far superior) substitute for stamp-collecting, as a competitive sport, or just because, like Mt Everest, they are there; but it is also important that we work to understand how they fit into ecological systems and how they change with them. An understanding of ecological function, and aesthetic appreciation can both contribute to a basis for better management of our environment.

Oh, I enjoyed the book, by the way.

Tony Grice, Convenor

BA North Queensland Group—Events Calendar March - June 06

April 2006

Anzac Day Weekend - Beach Stone-curlew survey

Members are welcome to submit their observations of any Beach Stone-curlew to the Birds Australia Atlas. Atlas details on page 2.

Sunday 23rd April - Klaproths Scrub

Meet at 8am, Ball Road, Malanda. Contact Ian Sinclair for more details on (07) 4096 6690.

Sunday 23rd April - Serpentine Lagoon, Townsville

Meet at Wulguru Mobile Service Station at 7am for a morning's bird watching. Long pants and mozzie repellent are suggested. Contact Jo Wieneke for more details on (07) 4771 4707.

May 2006

17 & 18th NQ Field Days, Townsville.

The Expo of the North is on again in Townsville. For more information contact Leanne McCann on (07) 4721 2125.

July 2006

9-14th - International Wetlands Conference, Cairns

The Conference "Catchment to Coast" will be held in Cairns. Details at www.catchments.org.au. Topics include aquaculture, estuarine environments, migratory species, hydrological / geological processes, ecosystem-based management and management of protected areas.

October 2006

Saturday 7 October 2006—NQ Crane Count

An annual BANQG research activity, across the Atherton Tableland, Upper Herbert, Townsville-Giru, Ingham, Gulf country, Cape York. Write this in your diary now. Email Elinor Scambler at cranesnorth@austarnet.com.au, write to PO Box 59, Atherton Qld 4883 or check out www.ozcranes.net for details.

Inside this issue:

- *Birddata now online*
- *Crane Count 2005*
- *Australia Day campout*
- *News—Avian Influenza, Gouldian Finch, Siam Weed*
- *Book Review—The Big Twitch*
- *Around the Region—Townsville's Crane Count, Mt Isa, Cotton Pygmy-Goose*
- *Noticeboard*



Red Goshawk
David Iawn
© Birds Australia 2003

The Red Goshawk is one of the world's rarest birds of prey. This bird occupies a range of habitats in northern and eastern Australia, including coastal and subcoastal tall open forests and woodlands. However, within these habitats Red Goshawks are sparsely distributed. Habitats required by Red Goshawks for breeding are very specific. They will only nest in trees taller than 20m, and these must be within 1km of water. In northern Queensland, clearing of coastal and subcoastal vegetation for agriculture is likely to cause further declines of this species. It is estimated that fewer than 1,000 Red Goshawks remain. According to the Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000, the Red Goshawk is considered vulnerable.

Red Goshawk

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Birddata update ...

Birddata is Birds Australia's new web site for the Atlas of Australian Birds www.birddata.com.au. Birddata can be used to enter new atlas data, map bird distributions and download bird lists. Birddata is funded by the WildlifeLink program of the Tony & Lisette Lewis Foundation. We have recently added around 15,000 vetted records to the server. Atlassers may now find new sites appearing on their map, and in their list of existing Atlas sites. We have had reports that some versions of Norton Internet Security (NIS) block the display of Birddata maps. If you have experienced problems with this software please let us know (include your operating system and NIS version numbers). When BA members and atlassers login to Birddata they unlock features that are not available to the public.

Remember that username: membership number and password: Surname. Your password is case sensitive and users are able to change their initial password if they wish.



Regards, Andrew Silcocks & Cameron Williams.

You can of course, still send your Atlas forms to the north region coordinators listed below:

Bowen to Cardwell Regional Organiser

Jo Wieneke (07) 4771 4707

22 Bishop Street, Belgian Gardens Qld 4810

Cardwell to Cape York Regional Organiser

Graham Harrington (07) 4096 5051

PO Box 680, Malanda Qld 4885

2005-2006 BA-NQG Management Committee

Executive Committee

c/o PO Box 37 Belgian Gardens QLD 4810

Convenor—Tony Grice home phone: (07) 4725 7201

Email: tony.grice@csiro.au

Deputy Convenor—currently vacant

Secretary—Helen McLaughlin home phone: (07) 4771 3239

Email: helen_marty2000@hotmail.com

Treasurer—Harry Cassidy home phone: (07) 4057 5278

Email: harrycass40@hotmail.com

Committee members

Jo Wieneke (Townsville) John Frois (Cairns)
Elna Kerswell (Townsville) Alan Gillanders (Atherton)

Committee-elected Positions

Conservation Officers—Graham Harrington (northern) & Jo Wieneke (southern)

Newsletter Editor—Helen McLaughlin

IBA Coordinators—Alastair Freeman & Graham Harrington

Project Contacts

Beach Stone-curlew Survey Amanda Freeman
4095 2655 or aafreeman@qldnet.com.au

Crane Count Elinor Scambler 4095 3296
Email: 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

Regional Contacts

Townsville: Jo Wieneke Ph: 4771 4707

Cairns: vacant

Atherton Tableland: Mark Newton Wk Ph: 40484747
Email: mark.newton@nrm.qld.gov.au

Mossman / Daintree: Del Richards Ph: 4094 1199
Email: info@finefeathertours.com.au

Cape York: Sue Gould Ph: 4069 7585
Email: susanfgould@yahoo.com

Mount Isa: Bob Forsyth Ph: 4743 3210
Email: isabird0@bigpond.net.au



Birds Australia Membership

Subscriptions (as at 1 April 2006): \$75 Single \$55 Single Concession \$119 Family \$96 Family Concession Library \$55

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.

Check out the website for local and national events



Birds Australia



Birds Australia

North Queensland AGM

This year's North Queensland Annual General Meeting will be held on the Queen's Birthday long weekend at Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge.

This year's theme will be the effects of Cyclone Larry and feature local stories and impact on bird populations.

When: Saturday 10th June 2006 at 1pm

Where: Kingfisher Park, Mount Kooyong Road, Julatten. Accommodation to the booked directly with the Lodge (details on page 8).

Election of Convenor, Deputy Convenor, Secretary, and Treasurer, as well as up to eight committee members. Positions of Conservation Officer and Newsletter Editor are also available.

Nominations should be in writing and sent to the Secretary before the meeting. Full details of the meeting will be posted in the June newsletter.

Members Day & AGM—Darwin NT

Saturday 27th May 2006

Charles Darwin University, Mal Nairn Auditorium
(Building 35),
7 Ellengowan Drive Casuarina NT

Information will be presented on a variety of northern Australian birds including: **Gouldian Finch, Magpie Goose, Flock Bronzewing Pigeon, Carpentarian Grasswren, Purple-crowned Fairywren, Gerygones vs Little Bronze-cuckos**, as well as issues such as land management, mine rehabilitation, birds and fire and Important Bird Areas.

Accommodation: Attendees must arrange their own accommodation & transport.

Dinner: Saturday 27th May 2006 at 7pm.

The evening will feature Indonesian Food and a presentation on Papuan Birds.

And afterwards: Top End Twitchathon, Sunday 28th May 2006, 6am start; 6 pm finish. Prizes & informal dinner.

To register: A full brochure including a provisional program can be found on the Birds Australia website.
www.birdsaustralia.com.au

North Queensland Annual Australia Day (Extra) Long Weekend

A few people arrived at Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge (KPBL) on Wednesday 25th and a few did not due to Bushy Creek flooding the Mt. Molloy road. The following day saw us walking the grounds of KPBL and the adjacent creek early in the morning, where we had good views of the many **Channel-billed Cuckoos** flying around. Later in the morning, despite threatening rain, we managed to travel up to the Mt. Carbine Dam and get good views of the **Freckled Ducks** who have been resident here for about 6-8 months. Many other waterfowl species were present including displaying **Great Crested Grebe** and near the Mt. Carbine oval we were treated to a pair of **Australian Hobbies** displaying and putting on a good show of synchronised flying above an **Australian Bustard** who took no notice of them. Along the road back to KPBL we stopped to check out an **Australian Kestrel** perched on powerlines and found a tree full of **Red-tailed Black Cockatoos** as well as many honeyeaters feeding amongst the eucalypts.

The following two days had us dodging the rain and visiting Mt. Lewis, Wessels Road (near Abattoir Swamp), Mt. Carbine again, Luster Creek on the Peninsula Road, a local forest road near Euluma Creek Road and the Wetherby Road loop via the swamp to Mt. Molloy, where we indulged in

The trip up Mt. Lewis proved to be quite an way up so some of us cleared it during a heavy watching us get soaked know who they are!). rain had stopped and we could walk the road **Parrot Finches**, juvenile **Double-eyed Fig**-the wet tropic endemics. The way down the again we set to work, breaking the axe (no way with a vehicle.

*Julatten
25th to 29th
January
2006*

the superb bakery. adventure. A tree was blocking the road on the downpour (those that sat in the vehicles By the time we reached the clearing at 950m the birding. Highlights were several **Blue-faced Parrots** being fed by adults along with many of mountain was also blocked by a fallen tree so names mentioned) and pulling the tree out the

A stroll along a local road had us looking at Red-legged Pademelon and a stunning yellow Green Tree Snake who sat up for photos to be taken. The Wessels Road area provided great looks at Varied Sittellas and a Cicadabird low down.

Several members managed to eventually get out of a rain soaked Townsville and joined us for another trip to Mt. Carbine Dam, again the **Freckled Ducks** starred. We called into Luster Creek on the way back to KPBL to check out the Rufous **Owls**, which had been recently seen there but no luck. However plenty of other good birds including **Barred Cuckoo Shrikes** at eye level and **Eastern Yellow Robin** were here. An evening spotlighting trip turned up a **Masked Owl** before the rain cut short the night.



Blue-faced Parrot-Finch
Andrew Plant
© Birds Australia 2003

Saturday evening we continued on a tradition of communal dinners, which was up to the usual high standard. Thanks to all the cooks. Following dinner we were entertained by Dawn & Murray Frick from Bundaberg who showed us a presentation on their laptop computer of bird photos accompanied by their calls. A big thank you to Dawn & Murray for putting in the time for us.

Sunday dawned with the rain pouring down and everyone except Bob from Mt. Isa packed up and left. We managed to see 130 species (heard another 12) over the 4 days, which considering the weather was pretty good.

Keith & Lindsay Fisher

News in Brief from Birds Australia - National Office

Rio Tinto funds Important Bird Area (IBA) Project

The three-year IBA Project is being funded by the Rio Tinto Sustainable Minerals Foundation. This project is part of a global program by Birdlife International and will identify, monitor and support Australia's IBAs. Further information: Guy Dutson, Email: g.dutson@birdsaustralia.com.au

New Projects and Project Officers

Introducing.....Guy Dutson, Important Bird Areas, Chris Tzaros, Orange-bellied Parrot Recovery, Dean Ingwersen, Threatened Bird Network, Mark Antos, Bird Atlasing in NRM Regions, Grainne Maguire, Co-existence of nesting shorebirds and recreationists, Andrew Dunn, Uses of Atlas, Glen Ehmke, Oil Spill Response and Nest Record Scheme

Change to the recreational waterfowl hunting policy

In a recent policy change, BA now unconditionally opposes recreational waterfowl hunting and calls for this activity to be banned in all States and Territories where it continues to be allowed. Council also believes that a strong message should be sent to governments that activities such as

recreational waterfowl hunting should no longer be considered appropriate interactions between Australians and their natural environment. Further information: Graeme Hamilton, Email: ceo@birdsaustralia.com.au

Increase in the cost of Membership subscriptions

The cost of BA Membership will rise by 10% from 1 April. This is the first increase for four years and the level of increase allows us to keep pace with CPI rises during that time.

MoU with the Bird Observers Club of Australia

On Wednesday 8th February, President Alison Russell-French and Bird Observers Club of Australia President Tim Landsberg signed an historic Memorandum of Understanding between our two organisations. The MoU recognizes the unique history and identity of the two organisations, as well as the considerable overlap in our areas of interest especially in bird conservation and education. Contact Richard Hunter, BOCA ceo@birdobservers.org.au and Graeme Hamilton, BA ceo@birdsaustralia.com.au

Newhaven Reserve—Partnership with AWC

First of all I would like to express my thanks to those of you who wrote to me or to CEO Graeme Hamilton to express your views on the proposed partnership with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC). The vast majority of respondents supported the proposal. For those of you who wrote to say you did not support the proposal I hope my subsequent letter help to explain the reasons behind Council's decision. After my letter to you in September, Birds Australia and the AWC signed a Heads of Agreement which, while not legally binding, contained all of the agreed conditions for the transfer of Newhaven. Council's objectives, among others, were to ensure Newhaven continued to be managed as a conservation reserve, and that Birds Australia continue to be strongly involved in research and conservation activities and in determining Newhaven's future. Following signing of the Heads of Agreement we entered into a due diligence period during which we were able to look more closely at AWC's suitability as a partner, and they were able to look more closely at Birds Australia and Newhaven. During this period Council's Treasurer Andrew Ley and Graeme Hamilton met AWC Board Directors and Staff at Newhaven.

Council asked Graeme Hamilton to investigate AWC's ability to manage Newhaven as a conservation reserve, and their overall suitability as a partner for Birds Australia. In conducting his investigation Graeme sought expert legal and financial advice and canvassed a range of opinions from other conservation organisations and government officers.

The investigation found that AWC is capable of managing Newhaven's unique conservation values from a legal, a financial and an operational standpoint. Their performance in managing their existing properties, the skills of their staff, and their standing with various State and Federal Conservation Departments were all taken into consideration.

At its November meeting, Council unanimously accepted Graeme's due diligence report and agreed to enter into a legally-binding contract to transfer Newhaven to AWC. Key elements of the Contract are:

- A commitment by AWC to the level of funding Newhaven's operating budget, implementation of

the Heads of Agreement and the agreed Management Plan,

- The establishment of safeguards over future ownership of Newhaven, including an option for Birds Australia to reacquire the property
- A commitment by AWC that they will enter into an agreement with the Australian Government to manage Newhaven as part of the National Reserve System.
- The contract was signed on 12 December and is expected to come into effect by the end of February.

It is reasonable for Birds Australia members and supporters to ask: "what will be our involvement at Newhaven after the transfer to AWC?" Please be reassured that Newhaven will continue to be an important place for Birds Australia. We will work in partnership with AWC to ensure that Newhaven is managed as a showpiece private conservation reserve. We will continue to raise funds for bird research and conservation work there; indeed one advantage of the new partnership is that it frees up resources which can now be more effectively used for bird research. Our members are welcome to visit and to be volunteer Rangers.

Beyond Newhaven, the partnership with AWC brings a range of exciting opportunities to collaborate with them on other projects of mutual interest. We are already involved with them in a project to understand the reasons for the decline of seed-eating birds in northern Australia, including the **Gouldian Finch** work at Mornington Station (WA). Some of our **Black-eared miners** from Gluepot have made their way to supplement the small population on AWC's Scotia Sanctuary. AWC's acquisition of Brooklyn Station in far north Queensland opens up a range of fascinating possibilities for study of the diverse bird fauna of that area.

In a number of ways AWC's interests, approach, and funding base are complementary to those of Birds Australia and so I am confident that in partnership we will be able to achieve much more than we would do by working independently.

I look forward to taking the opportunity to update you on the partnership with AWC in the near future.

Alison Russell-French, President, Birds Australia



Gouldian Finch
Steve Paton
© Birds Australia 2003

The effects of Cyclone Larry

I have only found two dead birds. A male **Scarlet Honeyeater** which I grieved over and a **Common Myna** which ...



Scarlet Honeyeater
Nan Lepinath
© Birds Australia 2003

During the storm birds went to ground. As the winds eased I went out to survey the damage and disturbed the following birds from the ground in dense vegetation; 5 **White-headed Pigeon**, a **Barking Owl**, 2 **Macleay's Honeyeater**, 3 **Dusky Honeyeater** and a **Bush Thicknee** which was in ferns and covered by fallen leafy branches. At about 10.30 when the winds had dropped to gale force we saw two birds fly along our patio. They were a **Lewin's Honeyeater** and an immature **Metallic Starling**. They stopped in a little bush with berries where they fed for some time, no more than a metre above the ground and mostly out of the wind. By 11.45 the winds were light and birds and butterflies were everywhere. From huge female Cairns Birdwings to Orchard Swallowtails to tiny Blues, Darts and Skippers, the butterflies lightened our spirits as we looked at a couple on months work cleaning up the garden. A few flocks of **Topknot Pigeons** flew over heading west towards the storm. The birds in the garden were very hungry and confiding. Around mid-afternoon I was clearing a fallen *Grevillea* with my chain saw while a **Dusky Honeyeater** fed about two metres away on the branch I was cutting. Later I was working in amongst fallen wattle leaves to about knee depth when I was surrounded by a flock of gleaning **Fairy Gerygones**. **Scarlet Honeyeaters** fed to within a metre of myself and three enthralled children. I

was able to approach one of the preening **Barking Owls** until there was less than three metres between us. Even the black tree-ants were not biting. The only animal showing aggression was a male Blue-banded Eggfly. These are the most agro of all butterflies; I once saw one chase off a **Willy Wagtail!** The **Noisy Friarbirds** have left, being replaced by the more usual **Helmeted Friarbirds**. A **Black-faced Monarch** has taken to feeding on our patio, taking the insects attracted to the lights at night. In the afternoon the bird returns to try its luck for spiders driven by the heat from their hiding holes under the roof. The two nights after the storm the **Barking Owls** may not have left the yard as I slept fitfully and heard their quiet chortling very time I surfaced. They have now moved on and are roosting down by the creek I believe.

A **Peregrine Falcon** spent some of the second day sitting in the top of one of our denuded Tallowwoods. The local pair of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** has been seen at my possum and tree-kangaroo site on three occasions. I hope they are eating carrion. Green Ringtail Possums camp out on Branches during the day and have been taken by Wedgetails in the past. Now there is almost nothing to hide their presence. **Frigate Birds** and **Lesser Crested Terns** have been spotted on the Tablelands and a friend in Julatten had a **Pied Imperial-Pigeon** feeding at his place three days before the cyclone. These birds rarely make it to the Tablelands.

*Reprinted courtesy of Alan Gillanders, A
lan's Wildlife Tours, Yungaburra.*

*Visit Alan's website for more information or subscribe to his
free newsletter at <http://users.qldnet.com.au/~spotlighting/>*

Over-looked on Mount Webb

Not since 5 or 6 years ago have **Black-winged Monarch** been recorded as summer visitors to the Mt Webb area, approximately 50km NNW of Cooktown. It was with much anticipation that I visited the McIvor River causeway on 21 November 2005 on the McIvor-Isabella Road, approximately 10km SW of Mt Webb area. The purpose of this trip was to locate the **Black-winged Monarch**. This was met with immediate success when three birds (all adults) were seen in a matter of a few hours—great views were had of this beautiful bird, and interestingly, no **Black-faced Monarch** were seen in the immediate area. Due to time constraints, we only spent a few hours here. Of interest were the abundance of **Macleay's Honeyeater** around the (McIvor) causeway, a species that reaches from what I can establish, its northern limit here. Two weeks later I had another opportunity for a quick survey of this area, so I took it, keen to see if the **Black-winged Monarchs** were still there and not on passage. Sure enough on 3 December 2005 five birds were seen at the same causeway on McIvor River. With me on this subsequent trip was my birding associate Adam Arnold. At one point, a pair of each species were quarrelling, and being the slightly larger of the two, the **Black-winged Monarch** succeeded in driving the **Black-faced Monarch** away from a territory in the river bed. Very interesting to see these two species interact. Once again there were approximately 20-30 **Macleay's Honeyeater** in this area. We decided to head towards Mt Webb to check on the **Black-winged Monarch** and to see if we could record the **Macleay's Honeyeater** to the north

of the McIvor. We made two stops between the McIvor River and Mt Webb and at the first, only 4km east of the causeway, got 4 or 5 **Black-winged Monarchs**, 10 **Macleay's Honeyeater**, but no **Black-faced Monarchs**. At the following stop at the Morgan River crossing, another pair of **Black-winged Monarchs** and a single **Macleay's Honeyeater** were seen

Then at Mount Webb, near the national park entrance a further 6 **Black-winged Monarch** and a pair of **Macleay's Honeyeater** were present. What an amazing few hours! (GPS readings are available for those interested). This may be a major summer breeding population in the McIvor River—Starke areas. All the stops we made were along the roadside.

This brings me to the conclusion that maybe the **Black-winged Monarch** has indeed been overlooked over the years in this area. I would be very interested hearing from members of any old or new observations of the **Black-winged Monarchs** from the area together with: northern records of **Macleay's Honeyeater** and **Pied Monarch**, records of **Friiled Monarch** between Princess Charlotte Bay and Cooktown, records of **Chestnut-breasted Cuckoos** in McIvor-Mt Webb area, records of **Fig Parrots** north of Cooktown and southern records of **Tawny-breasted Honeyeaters**. This area has been under-surveyed and I hope to make regular quarterly visits to this country to gain a better understanding of its birds.

Martin Cachard, Cairns. Hm Ph 4058 1251



Black-winged Monarch
Annie Rogers
© Birds Australia 2003

Letter from Weipa

So far (*Ed: article written in Feb*) the “wet” season has been not very wet. Everything is green, there has at least been enough rain for that but many of the little places that normally would be full of water at this time of year are dry and the creeks are only just flowing. An unusual sight around town before we got any rain was **Magpie Goose** in peoples yards. There were theories flying around about the cause - all wild speculation.

A few birds have been on the move. We have been visited by flocks of **Yellow-tinted Honeyeaters** and the occasional **Weebill** out in the tall forest. The wet season is the only time of year that we have recorded them here. Along the shore we have had mixed flocks of waders including **Black-tailed Godwits**, **Bar-tailed Godwits**, **Lesser Golden Plovers**, **Greenshanks**, **Red-necked Stints**, **Grey-tailed Tattlers** and **Red and Great Knots**, the latter with remnants of breeding plumage. We have also seen flocks of **Needletails** and **Fork-tailed Swifts** sometimes in mixed flocks.

Michael Barnett found an infestation of **White-browed Crakes** and **Purple Swamphens** at Napranum STP. These two species are only rarely recorded here and usually only one at a time. They were here for at least a few weeks that we know of but are now gone again. To see them in large numbers was thrilling. Another seasonal visitor has been **Buff-banded Rails** in long grass behind the beach.

There has been breeding activity as well including **Mangrove Gerygone**, **Leaden Flycatcher**,



Australasian Grebe, **Striated Heron**, **Bar-shouldered Dove**, **Pied Butcherbirds** and **Black-necked Storks**, **Black-backed Butcherbird**, **Spangled Drongo**, **Yellow Oriole**, **Figbird**, **Little Friarbird**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Magpie-lark**, **Pied-Imperial Pigeon**, **Blue-winged Kookaburra**, **Rainbow Lorikeets** and **Dollarbirds**, **Forest Kingfisher**. Thanks to Mike Barnett for assistance on breeding activity. He is an excellent nest spotter!

In other news...

- ◆ There has been no progress on having the Weipa **frigatebird** roost set aside as a conservation area although Comalco advises that the issue is “still on their radar screen”.
- ◆ Mike and I have recently had a small paper published in *Australian Field Ornithology* on the first breeding record of **Spotted Whistling Ducks** in Australia.
- ◆ Just in the last week there has been a flock of six **Palm Cockatoos** working their way around the beaches feeding on the ripening seeds of *Terminalia catappa*. It is exciting to see them in these numbers as they have only been seen here one bird at a time for a few years now.
- ◆ And finally, a few **Peregrine Falcons** have been exerting a little selective pressure on some of the slower birds around town.

Would love to hear from, and meet any other Cape York members out there. Perhaps we could organise a weekend get together sometime this year.

Sue Gould, Weipa

Mossman—Daintree wrap-up

Over the past two weeks we have had frequent sightings of a pair of **Great-billed Herons**. These are certainly not first or unusual sightings for us but we did make one particularly unusual observation. Late one day, after a week of loud, seemingly incessant calling coming from the creek environs we heard the birds in the vicinity of our wetlands. A few minutes patience in the hide was rewarded. There was more calling from behind the islands and then both Herons appeared on the grassed bund wall, one running after the other which then flew a short distance into a tree landing only about 3m above the ground. The second bird stood on the ground watching the first, called a couple more times then walked off in the opposite direction. Then the first bird came out of the tree and after standing around for a few minutes during which time we heard a few more short croaky calls it walked along the wall back towards the other bird. As both birds have evidence of breeding plumage it would seem that we were observing some pairing or mating ritual.

Courtesy of Barbara Maslen and Allen Sheather, WILD WINGS AND SWAMPY THINGS, Daintree

The presence of **Freckled Ducks** at Mt. Carbine was perhaps the most news worthy occurrence locally. Five birds were sighted in early June, and by mid-July the count had reached thirty-nine individuals and a small group remained until the end of January. Extreme heat wave conditions prompted **Little Friarbirds** to desert their nests at Mt. Carbine in December. In complete contrast **Eastern Yellow**, **Pale-yellow Robins** and **Lemon-bellied Flycatchers** bred as late as November. Surprise records for the year were the **Masked** and **White-browed Woodswallows** near Maryfarms in April. **Restless Flycatchers** appeared over several weeks in the winter. Also qualifying were **Red-chested** and **Painted Button-quail** at 700 metres on Mt. Lewis!

Del. Richards, Mossman

Other interesting observations included Cattle Egrets, Brush Turkeys and Willy Wagtails scavenging carcasses for maggots BH. Sacred Kingfishers appeared early this season with several reports.

Please note that **Jo Wieneke** is the new coordinator for **Interesting Sightings**:

Please send any unusual or interesting sightings to Jo at bowerbird14@bigpond.com.

Contributors: AA- Alex Anderson; BANQG - records for weekend camp at Julatten, BB- Ben Blewitt; BH- Bill Holmes; CJ- Chris Jakku; DM&AW- Dawn Magarry & Angela Ward; DR- Dell Richards; JS- John Seale; L&CE- Len and Chris Ezzy; LN- Lloyd Nielsen; SG- Sue Gould; TG- Tony Grice; JW- Jo Wieneke.

Interesting sightings

Species	Date	Location	Observer	Comment
Little Kingfisher	2.12.05	Bohle River	L&CE	1km upstream of Bruce Highway
Pallid Cuckoo	3.12.05	Serpentine Lagoon	L&CE	Pair calling/copulating
Square-tailed Kite	9.12.05	Pages Rd	L&CE	Base of Hervey Range
Oriental Cuckoo (hepatic)	12.12.05	Near Lake Eacham	CJ	Window -kill
Barred Cuckoo-shrike	16.12.06	Near Crystal Crk Bridge	L&CE	Building nest
Black-tailed Native Hen	10.12.05	Burdekin Falls Dam	L&CE	Cattle dam and tank 22km sth of dam
Grey Goshawk	12.12.05	Crystal Creek Bridge	L&CE	
Azure Kingfisher	12.12.05	Paluma	L&CE	By creek near village
Great Crested Grebe	14.1.06	Weipa	SG	First record for area
Banded Lapwing	Oct 05 til Jan 06	30km south of Townsville	BH	Max number 11.
White-throated Nightjars	27.11.05- 17.01.06	South and south-west of Townsville	BH	No records in Atlas in this area in Nov-Jan
Emu	Dec & Jan	30km southwest of Townsville	BH	5 Juveniles
Green Pygmy-goose	1.1.06	Above Aplins Weir, Ross River	TG	
Bush-hen	7.1.06	Gleasons Weir	TG	2 birds
Freckled Duck	28.1.06	Mt Carbine	BANQ	Flock of 15 birds
Channel-billed Cuckoo	28.1.06	Julatten	BANQ	Flocks totaling 50+
Masked Owl	28.1.06	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	BANQ	
Sacred Kingfisher	5.2.06	Mundy Creek, Belgian Gardens	JW	First record of season
White-winged Black Tern	8.2.06	Hodel Road, Giru	JW	Early in season
Grass Owl	11.2.06	Louisa Creek	L&CE	Near Blakeys Crossing
Lesser Sooty Owl	12.2.06	Barron Falls Boardwalk	DM&AW	
Ruddy Turnstone	14.2.06	Mouth of Crystal Creek	L&CE	14 birds
Beach Stone-curlew	14.2.06	Mouth of Ollera Creek	L&CE	2 birds
Ruddy Turnstone	14.2.06	Mouth of Ollera Creek	L&CE	11 birds
Orange-footed Scrubfowl	16.2.06	Anderson Park, Townsville	L&CE	Unusual in Townsville
Sacred Kingfisher	18.2.06	Mt Molloy	LN	1 juvenile, earliest record
Cockatiels	19.2.06	Kelso Borrow Pits	L&CE	2 birds
Black-breasted Buzzard	22.2.06	West Normanby River	DR	14km east of Lakefield
Sacred Kingfishers	24.2.06	Endeavour River 2 birds & Finch Bay 1 bird	DR	
Oriental Cuckoo	27.2.06	Centenary Lakes	BB	
Pacific Baza	27.2.06	Barron River Bridge, Henry Hannam Dr, south of Mareeba	BB	6 birds
Lovely Fairy-wren	28.2.06	Forestry Road, Bluewater	L&CE	1 Male
Black Bittern	29.2.06	Ibis Dam, Irvinebank	JS	
Common Bronzewing	29.2.06	Vulcan Dam Rd, Irvinebank	JS	
Shining Flycatcher	1.3.06	Mundy Creek, Townsville	JW	Female plumage
Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher	1.3.06	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	K&LF	Young birds out of nest
Banded Lapwing	4.3.06	Woodlands, Townsville	BH	Pair with 3 young chicks
Dollarbird	7.3.06	Near JCU Townsville	AA	15+ birds pre-migration

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Thanks

Birds Australia—North Queensland is very grateful for the support given by **Member for Townsville**, the Honourable, **Mike Reynolds** for the printing of this edition of *Contact Call*



Contact Call is now produced on 100% Australian paper: 50% recycled fibre and 50% plantation fibre !!



At **Kingfisher Park** we provide accommodation in Self-Contained Units and two Bedroom Villas, Bunkhouses, Camping and powered Caravan Sites within a rainforest sanctuary. Being central to a variety of habitats ensures many different bird species as well as mammals and reptiles. Local expertise and maps are provided.

Keith & Lindsay Fisher

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Email: sootyowl@bigpond.com

Web Page: www.birdwatchers.com.au

HELP - The Committee has misplaced a large blue plastic envelope (possibly from the Yungaburra Markets). Inside this envelope are several plastic brochure holders for our display boards. Could everyone please look out for that envelope as these are very expensive to replace. Please contact the Secretary to arrange a pickup. **THANKS.**

FOR SALE - Nikon T-ring; and Kowa TSN photo adapter tube 850mm. This equipment is as new. Price for both \$350 ono. Enables photography using Nikon camera through Kowa spotting scope. (Our scope is a Kowa TSN 821-M). To make enquiries or an offer please call Sue Gould (07) 4069 7585 or email susanfgould@yahoo.com.

The DVD "All About Budgerigars" (45mins) is now available. This Australian production is the only one available worldwide that tells the complete story of the Budgerigar. It's discovery by the naturalist John Gould, told in dramatised sequences, wild budgies in the Outback in huge flocks, nesting, hatching and feeding chicks, the development of it's multitude of colours, how it became the world's favourite pet, care and feeding etc.etc. It can be ordered by emailing bobhawkins@myplace.net.au or writing to PO Box 160 Merrylands NSW 2160. Copies are \$32 each including P&P sent anywhere.

Thank you. Robert Hawkins A.C.S. / Producer

Mount Isa Birding - Details of Bob Forsyth's popular birding locations can be found in the Gazetteer section of www.birdsqueensland.org.au. Find out where to find those Yellow Chats (at least 3 dozen) at Lake Moondarra!!

Welcome to our new members...

- ✦ Danni Lambert, TOWNSVILLE;
- ✦ Dr D Gillieson, TRINITY BEACH;
- ✦ Ms Ann Mansfield, KURANDA;
- ✦ John and Karen White, MOSSMAN;
- ✦ Adam Arnold, CAIRNS;
- ✦ Luke Marnane, ATHERTON;
- ✦ Mr J Munro, CAIRNS;
- ✦ Yu Ota, CAIRNS;
- ✦ Andrew Simmonds, CAIRNS;
- ✦ Jun Matsui, CAIRNS;
- ✦ Tim Dickson, TOWNSVILLE;
- ✦ Ronald Sletten, TOWNSVILLE;
- ✦ Sue Brown, CAIRNS.

Welcome to all our new members.

Please join us on any of our outings.

Check out Birds Australia website "Calendar of Events" at www.birdsaustralia.com.au. BANQG keeps the site updated with regional events. Field Trips may change after publication. Local contacts can provide you with the latest information. This will allow more flexibility, especially concerning weather conditions. Additional events may also be arranged.

Please send items for June 2006 Contact Call by mid May to:

Helen McLaughlin, Secretary, PO Box 37, Belgian Gardens 4810 or Email Helen at helen_marty2000@hotmail.com