

# Birding in Cairns

*A few days around Cairns can be very rewarding with a range of habitats and a good variety of birds. Here's a few places to visit...*

## 1 Cairns Esplanade

Cairns Esplanade is renowned worldwide as an easy place to observe shorebirds in comfort, at close range. Depending on the time of year you may see 30-40 species (Sept-May for migrants). Check out tide times, viewing is best on an incoming tide in the evening. Look in the mangroves at the North end of the Esplanade for Collared Kingfisher, Mangrove Robin, Shining Flycatcher and Black Butcherbird.

## 2 Flecker Botanic Gardens & Centenary Lakes

Centenary Lakes consists of two lakes, one freshwater the other saltwater, alongside Greenslopes Street, North Cairns. Several walks take you around the lakes and a boardwalk traverses a lowland swamp forest to the botanic gardens along Collins Avenue. The boardwalk is best walked in the very late evening or at dawn for a chance to see or more likely hear Red-necked Crake. The backwaters of the freshwater lake are worth investigating for Black Bittern and Little Kingfisher. Double-eyed Fig-Parrots and Brown-backed Honeyeaters also occur here in the trees around the lake. The gardens are good for Yellow Oriole, Black Butcherbird and Olive-backed Sunbird.

Maps, self guided botanic walk and bird list available from the new information office, in Collins Avenue.

## 3 Mt Whitfield Conservation Park

Adjacent to the botanic gardens, off Collins Avenue, is Mt. Whitfield Conservation Park. There are two walks: the Red Arrow loop (1 hour) and the longer Blue Arrow, (3-4 hours) which take you up onto the Mt. Whitfield Range. Lookouts along the way give great views back to the city and across the airport to the coast. The birds you may see include the Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Noisy Pitta, Grey Whistler and Yellow Oriole. From November to March Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfishers nest in the termite mounds along the Blue Arrow walk.

## 4 Cairns General Cemetery

Bush Stone-curlews often rest up during the day amongst the headstones. Turn off the Captain Cook Highway into James Street (Shell garage). Head west, then turn north into Little Street and park in Arthur Street. Woodland west of the cemetery is worth checking for summer migrants, such as Oriental Cuckoo.

## 5 Jack Barnes Bicentennial Mangrove Boardwalk

This boardwalk is situated along Airport Avenue, the access road to Cairns International Airport. An information brochure about the boardwalk is available from Cairns Regional Council. There is a car park on the right hand side as you approach the Airport. Two walks start from here, the northern one traverses low mangroves via a 700m loop to Middle Creek, with platforms overlooking the water. The southern route is 600m ending in tall mangrove forest. The southern walk is more open and it's sometimes possible to see such species as Collared Kingfisher and Shining Flycatcher. Mangrove Robins can sometimes be heard near the end. Look out for Lovely Fairy-wrens in the smaller dense species of mangroves. Both walks have interpretive signage. Don't forget the insect repellent!

## 6 Redden Island

In Machans Beach North of Cairns Airport, on the Barron River, this 68ha island is accessed by a low level bridge over Redden Creek, on Marshall St. Follow the road over the bridge and park at the end of Cinderella St, before the amenities block. Walk through the gate: the paths take you through woodland and mangroves. Surveys have identified 155 species, including Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove, sometimes seen in the open woodland, and Double-Eyed Fig-Parrots. Great-billed Herons may be in mangroves on Redden Creek by the bridge. Returning to your car continue along the road to the Barron River mouth, good for shorebirds - make sure it's not a high tide. Many wader species have been recorded here including rare migrants such as Double-banded Plover. Finally, check the rock wall for Wandering Tattler.

## 7 Yorkeys Knob - Golf Course Lagoon

Wattle Street, where this lagoon is situated, forms part of the Half Moon Bay Golf Course. Currently it is home to several pairs of Darter who have nested here along with Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants. Usually several pairs of Green Pygmy-geese can be found and Crimson Fiches are often in the grasses surrounding the lagoon. Occasionally Little Kingfisher and Black Bittern make a visit. Other good birds to have turned up here are Pied Heron and Yellow Wagtail. At the end of Wattle Street there is a path on the left, between the Golf Course and the mangroves. Follow around and check out the tidal flats on the left for both Beach and Bush Stone-curlew and other shorebird species. Further along in the mangroves Great-billed Heron has been recorded.

## 8 Lake Morris, Copperlode Dam

Situated in the Isley Hills behind Cairns. Turn off the Brinsmead-Kamerunga Road and take the scenic 16km road, stopping at lookouts to bird the surrounding bush. The Kiosk at the end of the road overlooks the dam. From here walk down to and across the dam wall where the road climbs steeply and goes into rainforest. Southern Cassowary has been seen here as well as Pied Monarch and Yellow-breasted Boatbill. Surveys have identified a total of 120 species in this area. Finish the visit at the kiosk with coffee and cake!

## 9 Southern Treatment Works - Woree

Situated in Kate Street off the Portsmouth Connector Road. No access, but can be viewed from the street. Pied Herons and Black-necked Storks are sometimes seen here. Weekends are usually better as there is no disturbance from the workers.

## 10 Cattana Wetlands - Smithfield

These wetlands are situated about 15km North of Cairns, accessed from Dunne Road near Smithfield. They cover about 80 hectares and include a series of lagoons, swamps, grasslands and rare Feather Palm forest. There are a series of walking tracks, picnic areas and bird hides overlooking the lagoons. There is also an elevated boardwalk through the palm forest.

# WHO ARE WE?

## BirdLife Northern Queensland

is a branch of the national organisation BirdLife Australia, formed in 2012 by the merger of Birds Australia and BOCA.

BirdLife Northern Queensland organizes both scientific and social activities. These include bird surveys, outings, workshops and presentations with guest speakers. The regular field trips and campouts cater for all levels of expertise from beginner to professional and emphasise fun as well as worthwhile conservation projects.

Members receive a quarterly newsletter *Contact Call* detailing local activities and also enjoy *BirdLife Australia* magazine dealing with national bird issues.

You can join BirdLife Australia and help the conservation of Australian birds at [www.birdlife.org.au](http://www.birdlife.org.au)

## Cairns Birding

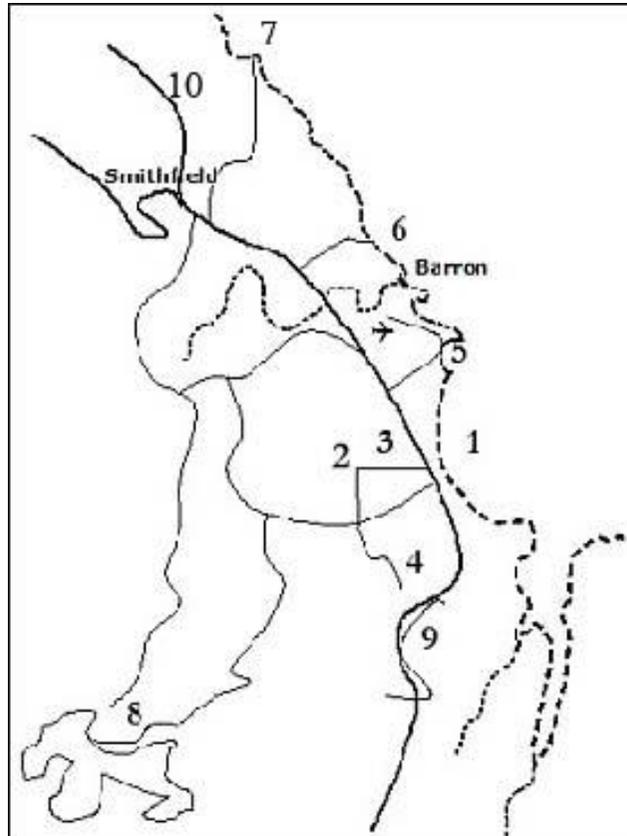
On arrival in Cairns, many birders head straight up to the Daintree or Atherton Tablelands. But it is well worth spending a couple days in and around Cairns first of all. A good number of Northern Queensland species can be found in the city itself. For some birds, such as waders, the Cairns Esplanade is one of the best locations in Queensland for convenient viewing. Regular monthly bird walks are arranged around the Centenary Lakes area, which makes for a great introduction to the birds of the area.

Produced for BirdLife Northern Queensland from the original text by Keith and Lindsay Fisher ([sootyowl@bigpond.com](mailto:sootyowl@bigpond.com) & [www.birdwatchers.com.au/](http://www.birdwatchers.com.au/))

Updated September 2013

© BirdLife Northern Queensland

# Cairns Birding Map



- 1 Cairns Esplanade (Bird Checklists Nos. 7 & 11)
- 2 Flecker Botanic Gardens & Centenary Lakes
- 3 Mt Whitfield Conservation Park
- 4 Cairns Cemetery
- 5 Jack Barnes Bicentennial Mangrove Boardwalk
- 6 Redden Island (Bird Checklist No. 2)
- 7 Yorkeys Knob - Golf Club Lagoon (Bird List No.8)
- 8 Lake Morris, Copperlode Dam (Bird List No. 12)
- 9 Southern Treatment Works - Woree
- 10 Cattana Wetlands (Bird List No. 33)

# BIRDING in CAIRNS

Birding Information No 13



**BirdLife  
Northern Queensland**



Email [northernqld@birdlife.org.au](mailto:northernqld@birdlife.org.au)

Web [www.birdsaustralianq.org](http://www.birdsaustralianq.org)

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

Facebook Birdlife Northern Queensland