

The Drongo

Number 152 November 2018



Janet Robino

Cobbald Gorge

Cape York

Bunbury

Backyard Bird Count



FROM THE PRESIDENT

The last few months were pretty busy with education activities. Five school education sessions were conducted. The aim of these programs is to show the kids how to identify birds and use binoculars. Many of the local schools now participate in the Aussie Backyard Bird Count. Birdlife Townsville attended three Townsville City Council Community events to promote awareness of birds and the need to look after their habitat. Following a special request for a repeat visit, Norm Rains went to Ronald McDonald House - the kids and their families got involved with the Aussie Backyard Bird Count.

October was the usual hectic time:

Library Displays - Advised by Librarians that the displays were very successful and generated much public interest;
Shopping Centre Information Stands - Very successful - 18 Calendars sold and 200 interested persons spoken to about the Aussie Backyard Bird Count;
Black-throated Finch annual survey;
Aussie Backyard Bird Count;
National Twitchathon - Two teams competed in the 12 hour Big Day Race - Townsville Tattlers (165 bird species) and Varied Villers (128 Bird species). Congratulations to both teams. There is still time to donate to your team - check out directions in Wal's email.

Thank you to everyone who participated in all these important activities:

The Torresian Imperial Pigeon Watch and Count is held throughout November. Check the Activities Page on the website for details.

The December Challenge Count is on Saturday 1 December and Sunday 2 December. This count is done Australia wide and gives a very good picture of what is happening to birds around the country. The idea is to count species and number of birds in a designated area within a 40 km radius of the GPO. If you do not have a designated area, send us an email. There are still some areas that need to be allocated. If you have not taken part before, you may feel more comfortable assisting someone else. Record the area, date, time and bird list. Please forward completed lists to contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au by Friday 14 December. Wal Threlfall and Ivor Preston need to collate the results and get them down to BirdLife Australia well before Christmas.

Don't forget the Christmas Party! In response to the feedback from last year, the party will be at the same venue. Meet 6.30 pm for a 7.00 pm start in the Function Room at the Sun Hotel, Mundingburra. Meal and drinks at own expense. Prizes to be won and Trivia by Nina -- Menu will be circulated closer to the date. RSVP Contact: Wal Threlfall 0429111055

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all.
Janet Robino

YOUR COMMITTEE

President: Janet Robino
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Michael McMAster
Mark Horvath
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Norm Rains
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Annette Sibson

Newsletter Editor Annette Sutton amsgreat@gmail.com

Deadline for next Drongo is January 31st. Please send articles as Word documents, photos as attachments.

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Birdlife Townsville.

A MORNING TO REMEMBER

I hadn't been to the Town Common in months - holidays, visitors and illness had taken up my time and energy. I was still recovering from the latest bug and beginning to question and doubt my ability as a birder and photographer.

One evening I dragged my husband (also still recovering from the bug) out to the Common on a search for a Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove that had been seen there earlier. We didn't see the dove, but I was heartened by the water level and the variety of birds that were there. The cute baby snake was a bonus!



Exploding Ducks

So I set the alarm for early the next morning and headed out at first light. Fingers crossed that I didn't have to wait long for the gate to open. As it turned out the gate was wide open when I arrived at 6.20, yay...

First stop was Payets' Tower. I could see mist still covering the grass and water so by-passed the tower and climbed the dirt hump for a closer look. A Brahminy Kite was busy hunting in the grass so up came the camera, the colours were beautifully soft and muted. I was smiling. Then there was a White-faced Heron hunched on its roost tree, lovely silhouette in that soft light. More smiling.

I drove on to the Melaleuca viewing spot. Brolgas were calling, the Tawny Grassbirds were loud and a pair of Red-backed Fairy-wren were hunting in the grass in front of me. I stood as still as I could, watching the long grass for movement. I've yet to photograph a Tawny Grassbird, I was successful that morning but you have to know where the bird is to see it. (And use a fair amount of imagination.) But closer than I've been before! Note to self - wear bug spray to prevent sudden movement!

On to Pandanus viewing spot. Ooh look, there's a big flock of ducks - just there! Quietly out of car, camera in hand. Creep up, start photographing so I can check them later for species. Mmm why are they getting restless, I haven't moved. Oh they are exploding...cue continuous shooting.. oh I see, a Swamp Harrier...yay I needed one for my Quest. Oh look at those three birds, what are they...keep shooting Annette, camera struggling for focus, keep shooting, luckily those birds can't quite decide where to go, keep shooting. Finally put the camera down, frowning - what were those birds? Mmmmm, look at photos, big smile at shots of exploding

ducks....yay.... peer at the three birds, long straight beaks, mmm, nooooo, couldn't be. Secret giant grin..... will check when I get home...

I walk up the road a few metres and find a couple of obliging Golden-headed Cisticola, line them up for happy shots. Shaking my head and still secretly grinning..

A fellow in a Ute stopped beside me and asked if I'd seen anything exciting...my answer - no. (uncertain about my id).

I head on up to the concrete hide, stopping along the way for the Black-shouldered Kite that is hunting by the side of the road. Fire off a few shots before it disappears.

I wander into the hide, watch the lovely scene in front of me while smacking at the mozzies. Why didn't I bring the bug spray?

Ooh look a Black-necked Stork, I watch it fly to a grassy clearing then stalk around with its wings held out to clear off the Magpie Geese. They oblige and move off. Only the sleeping Pelican remains, the stork proceeds to hunt. Bossy bird!

Well best see if I can find a Fruit-Dove, I need that for my Quest. I wander about not looking as well as I could, thinking about rushing home to download my photos to really see what I got. Oh, a small green bird departing to the right. Oh look at that small tree, it's loaded with fruit (figs). What else is in there? Can't see any Fruit-Doves in amongst the Trillers, Cuckoo-shrikes, honeyeaters. Oh there goes a small green bird again, to the right! I wander off to the right and spy a Rose-crowned Fruit dove dead ahead. Fire off a few shots and bingo, one more for my Quest.



Latham's Snipe

Home I go, only stopping for a bird on the side of the road, mm, interesting, take a few shots from the car out the passenger side window. Can I get closer? Out the car, in front of the car, watch as the bird flies into dense cover. Look at photos, grinning openly now.. how awesome was that, a Grey Goshawk! Whoot what a morning...

I was buzzing with excitement by the time I got home.

On checking my photos I got even more excited... Latham's Snipe were the three long beaked birds that rose up with the exploding ducks. Speechless - how lucky can I be. Who can I tell, am I really

right? Call Sam (husband) over to show him, he's happy for me.

Needless to say I'm really happy and will continue as a birder and photographer...



Grev Goshawk

Now I have to calm down and do the grocery shopping - ho hum!!

Annette Sibson

SHOREBIRDS

We have thousands of shorebirds down here in the Burdekin Delta at the moment and my husband said that if anyone wants to have a boat trip to see them they are welcome to call us (0429608108) or leave a message in our email, however we can only take two at a time.

I am attaching a couple of photos a huge flocks of mixed birds. They will include Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Red-necked Stints, Lesser and Greater Sand Plovers etc.



There have been Grey-tailed Tattlers, Terek Sandpipers, Broad-billed Sandpipers, Knots, Plovers etc., also lots of Terns.

Denise and Graham Holder

CAPE YORK IRON RANGE

I have just returned from a holiday with Janet and twelve others from Cairns to Weipa, with a tour group, "Close-up Birding Adventures", led by "Chook", a colourful, versatile, entertaining guide, ably assisted by his wife, Tracey.

We stayed between one and three nights at various places on the way, the most outstanding being Lotus Bird Lodge and the Moreton Telegraphic Station, at both of which, we were the last visitors for the season, which meant all the furniture and soft furnishings had to be shifted to high ground because of expected floods in the areas.

Obviously with fourteen people in the group, not everyone was in the correct position to see each bird when it was sighted. This did not phase "Chook". He had those that missed out to the front next sighting, to make sure everyone had a good view, and would not leave until they had.

The roads were mainly dirt, but usually graded fairly recently, although some areas are having bitumen laid. Nifold Plains was the worst for corrugations, and we used what they called a "chicken track" which ran along one side for most of the way. Here we stopped and had views of flocks of Star Finches.



During the following days we saw, Golden-shouldered Parrot, Black-backed Butcherbird, Yellow-tinted and Red-headed Honeyeaters, Tropical Scrubwren, Magnificent Riflebird, Palm Cockatoo, Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, Frilled-neck Monarch, Trumpet Manucode, Green-backed Honeyeater, Yellow-legged Flycatcher, White-faced Robin, Eclectus Parrots (male and female), White-

streaked H.E., and the main target bird, the Yellow-billed Kingfisher. We had two sightings at different areas, as once the bird is sighted it will sit for a long time in the one spot without moving once!

We went night spotting once at Iron Range, and had fabulous views of the Marbled Frogmouth, and also saw a Large-tailed Nightjar sitting on the road.

There were numerous other birds that I have not named, as they can be seen in other places, but those I have mentioned are best seen in the areas we visited.

Something that really amazed me was, as we were about to cross the Wenlock River at Moreton, the bus was stopped to look at a sign high on a tree which read, "This is sixteen metres", where the flood had reached several years before. Chook and his wife were managers during the wet for several years, but the year they were there it only reached fourteen metres!!!

What a wonderful experience with a great group of people!

Barbara Reidy

CAMERA WOES

Barbara Reidy and I headed up north to go on a trip to Cape York. We had a coffee stop at Etty Bay and were entertained by a walk-by of a Cassowary.



We spent the night at Babinda. A friend rang to tell us there were Fig-Parrots at the Boulders, so off we went and were rewarded with some wonderful views. The big adventure started the next day as we joined twelve other keen birders for an eleven day trip to Cape York. We were pleasantly surprised to see John and Marg from Melbourne who we met at the 2017 Eungella Bird Week and the Photography Campout at Mungalla earlier.

First overnight stop was Cooktown. I was having a great time trying to get photos of some lovely birds. The Papuan Frogmouth was sitting on a nest in Cooktown Botanical Gardens and the Large-billed Gerygone was busy building a nest only about ten metres away. And then disaster struck! On the second day of the trip I had a little stumble and was saved from colliding with a large tree trunk by my camera case coming between me and the tree. Unfortunately, my camera was in the case and the shutter became stuck. Understandably, I was pretty disappointed. Chook and Tracey Crawford chased all over

Cooktown but not a camera of any sort could be found. As there was absolutely nothing I could do about it, I determined the loss of a camera was not going to ruin a trip I had looked forward to for so long. In a way, I could see it as a positive thing as I spent much more time just enjoying looking at all the great birds we saw.



Double-eyed Fig-Parrot

I finally got to see the Yellow-billed Kingfisher. It is a real poser. Once you find it, it just sits in the one spot almost begging to be photographed. At Chook's suggestion (or almost demand), I had a go at taking a shot on my phone through the scope. I must say, I'm pretty impressed with the result. I then had a bit of a play with this method on the Esplanade at Cairns and was not disappointed with the results. I'm now going to investigate getting an adaptor to fit the phone to the scope to see how I go.



Janet Robino

MUSEUM MUSINGS

The things a dead bird can teach us ...

This week I had a thrill when I received a text from a local vet to say they had a 'Rosa Bourke's Parrot' if I was interested.

Was I ever, and wondered, "Where has it come from? " Maybe it was captive bred or well out of range? " " Do folk need a permit for breeding native species?" Then doubt crept in..."Probably a Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove" I decided.

On collection it seemed as if it was indeed a Bourke's Parrot. Its little head, sticking out of the wrapping shouted Bourke's as did the tail, emerging from the other end of its wrapping. At home I carefully unwrapped it only to discover that it was very pink...read **mainly** pink and a bright pink at that. `

"Must be a hybrid of some sort," I reported to the Vet. I had asked if it was OK for me to contact the owner to seek more information and when the vet responded that it was, she also said that the owner advised her that she had purchased two Bourke's parrots ten years ago and this was one of the offspring.



Bourke's Parrot

Ian Montgomery

I compared 'My' bird with the info in Simpson & Day and it didn't fit. Knight and Pizzey was also unable to shed light on the correct ID.

Then Shirley Cattle and family from Rollingstone called in at MTQ, bringing in a Large-tailed Nightjar found dead on the road. It turned out that Shirley's granddaughter, Kristel, is a breeder of caged birds and declared that the little bird was in fact a Rosa Bourke's Parrot! A natural mutation in caged Bourkes.

I went looking for more information on these interesting birds and thought you might be interested in what I found.

Taxonomy - *Neopsephotus bourkii*, formerly known as *Neophema bourkii*.

The Bourke's parrot was originally classified within the genus of *Neophema* which fully consists of grass parakeets. However, in the mid-90s the Bourke's was reclassified into and is the only member of the genus *Neopsephotus*. The reasoning behind this reclassification was because the Bourke's parrot was unable to hybridize with any of the other *Neophemas* species; they are different in colouration and live a [nomadic](#) lifestyle throughout the arid regions of Australia. The Bourke's parrot is still however referred to as a type of grass parakeet. Wikipedia

Description: (Birds in Backyards)

Bourke's Parrot is a small parrot which is mostly grey-brown above and pinkish below. It has a prominent area of white around the eyes, giving a spectacled appearance. The male has a blue forehead band, with blue also on the bend of the wing, and a paler shade of blue on the flanks,

side of rump and under the tail. The female Bourke's Parrot is similar, but duller. The Bourke's Parrot is also known as the Blue-vented, Night, Pink-bellied or Sundown Parrot; Blue-vented, Bourke or Pink-bellied Parakeet; and Bourke or Bourke's Grass-Parakeet.

Distribution: (Birds in Backyards)

Bourke's Parrot is widespread across arid and semi-arid areas of the inland, from north-western New South Wales and south-western Queensland to the mid-coast of Western Australia, and from the Devil's Marbles in Northern Territory south to Port Augusta, South Australia.

Habitat: (Birds in Backyards)

Bourke's Parrot is found in mulga and other acacia scrubs, and in native cypress and other open eucalypt woodlands.

Seasonal movements: (Birds in Backyards)

The movements of Bourke's Parrot are not well-known. Although thought to be nomadic, it is likely that they are resident in some areas.

Feeding: (Birds in Backyards)

Bourke's Parrots feed mainly on the ground, and only occasionally in trees. Pairs, or small groups of four to six, feed on seeds of grasses and herbs. They need to be near a source of water, which they visit usually at dawn and dusk.

Breeding: (Birds in Backyards)

Bourke's Parrots form monogamous pairs. They nest in a hollow, usually vertical, of a dead tree or stump. The eggs are laid on decayed wood in the bottom of the hollow. The female incubates the eggs, leaving the nest once a day to be fed regurgitated seeds brought by the male, and both parents brood the young.



Bourke's Parrot

Annette

Caged Birds: The Bourke's parrot is a popular aviary bird. Due to their peaceful nature Bourke's parrot may be kept in captivity with a number of other species including finches, doves and other small parakeet species, however it is suggested that only one pair of Bourke's parrots are kept in a single aviary due to the males being territorial during breeding season. (Wikipedia)

Native animal pets- Department of Environment and Science

People have kept animals such as cats and dogs as pets for centuries. Keeping native animals as pets can also be a source of great enjoyment. You can keep and buy some native animals but you may require a [licence](#). Some native animals (e.g. mammals) cannot be kept as pets.

In Australia, most nature conservation agencies believe the best place for our native animals is in the bush, not in a cage. Keep wildlife wild!

But those same agencies recognise that people are fascinated with our native wildlife and that some common species can be successfully domesticated. Many people appreciate native animals and the need to protect wildlife more when they get close to native animals.

You are allowed to keep some species of native animal, provided you follow the rules.

Anyone wanting to keep native birds, reptiles and frogs should become familiar with the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and Nature Conservation (Wildlife Management) Regulation 2006.

Generally, you are not allowed to capture wild animals. Penalties apply.

However, you can enjoy watching the native animals, which live in your backyard, provided you do not attempt to confine those animals in any way.

Birds

Provided you lawfully obtain native birds and keep them under proper conditions, you can keep many species including budgerigars, cockatiels, Bourke's parrots, star and zebra finches, brown, king and stubble quail, and diamond and peaceful doves without getting a licence. These are called exempt birds. When you buy a native bird, keep a record of the source of that animal so you can prove it was legally purchased.

Some other birds, called controlled birds, may be kept for personal enjoyment without a licence but you are not allowed to buy or sell more than 10 controlled birds in a 12 month period. Examples are Pale-headed rosellas or Bar-shouldered Doves. If you want to keep other native bird species, you will have to apply for a licence from the department. You will only be allowed to keep certain species.

Mutations - Mutations of Australian Parrots

(ASNSW Avicultural Review Vol 8 No 9 September 1996) ([Printable Version - PDF file](#) - Free Adobe Reader [download](#))

by Stan Sindel

Stan mentions his idea that the various mutations probably occur in the wild but generally don't survive. He lists a number in this paper, including the Rosa mutation in Bourke's and mentions that many of the ones he cites are museum skins. So maybe this little body is destined for a museum slot after all.

Cheers

Beth Snewin

PALLARENDA

This morning, I spent a lovely few hours wandering around the Pallarenda Conservation Park – the Old Quarantine Station. I was armed with a map specially made for me by Len Ezzy..... once a cartographer always a cartographer. As those who know Len would know, it was a very detailed map with little symbols for where particular birds would most likely be found.

Unsurprisingly, the first bird to greet me when I parked the car was an Australian Brush-turkey. And he was definitely not on his own. There were several hanging around the parking area and the buildings. I only saw one once I left the buildings behind. Walking along a well-mown track along the fence line, I was treated to a great display of several Forest Kingfishers catching and devouring frogs.



Lovely Fairy-wren

The only finches I saw was a large group of Nutmeg Mannikins. I'm not sure how many Grey Fantails were there as they followed me all along the track. At one particular spot I could see six at the same time. There were also four White-eared Monarchs, several Leaden Flycatchers and three large groups of Red-backed Fairy-wrens.



Fairy Gerygone

The main target bird was the Lovely Fairy-wren which so many people have had wonderful views of. Well the lovely little things must have seen Len's map because four of them were exactly where their symbol was. A little way up the track and there was the Rufous Fantail and a few Fairy Gerygones. Yep! Right where it was indicated on the map. I didn't manage to find the Spectacled Monarchs that Len and Chris had found but I certainly couldn't feel disappointed.

As well as all those wonderful birds, there were plenty of other birds including six different raptors.

To finish off the morning I decided to stop off to try to see if the Barking Owl was showing himself opposite the Police Academy. He was! In the big Fig Tree next to the tree with the nesting hollow in it. He was fast asleep but was unfortunately rudely awoken when a Council truck backed up right under the tree to spread some mulch. He gave the workers one disgusted look and went back to sleep.

It was a very pleasant way to while away a beautiful cool winter's morning.

Janet Robino

AS YE SOW

It seems like an eternity since I had about eighty mango trees crowded into my back couple of acres, and while I acknowledge that these trees paid for the land in their early production years, in the end they outgrew my enthusiasm for sunburn, green-ants, hot weather pruning, lazy pickers, very early morning risings, long days, daylight bloody saving, poor returns and increasing costs. My last "mango season" returned production costs plus sufficient to hire a bulldozer. The rest, as they say, is "history".



Dusky Honeyeater

For a number of years after clearing the mango block, I let the land go fallow during which time it was invaded annually in the "wet" by every type of weed known to man and which required lots of continuous effort on my part to manage by slashing, mowing and some targeted chemical treatments. During these years I noticed how well some self-sown native trees did on this part of the property, and rather than slash or mow them out each year, I left a few undisturbed until eventually I decided to revegetate that part of the block totally with native species. This decision was strongly influenced by my belief that nature abhors a vacuum and will do its best to cover bare ground and provide diversity in plant and animal life in spite of the efforts of mankind to the contrary.

There was plenty of information on re-vegetation available at that time, as there is today, which made my task relatively simple---all I had to do was dig some holes, provide a reliable water supply for the first few years, and

keep the competitive weeds at bay—if only!! Also I had been involved with the Landcare movement from its inception in the early 1990's and picked up heaps of valuable information over time from that source. I left many of the local self-sown trees, mainly Moreton Bay Ash, in place and planted lots of others in a random fashion, all natives, including both trees and shrubs, leaving only sufficient room through the plantings for an eventual meandering driveway. This is an ongoing project as I will bring in more fill-in plants, including some native and naturalised grasses, to create a three-tier food garden (ground, shrub and tree) for native birds and animals for at least part of the year.



Eucalyptus phoenicea

Now, after five years, I have quite a number of flowering/fruited plants of the following genera: Eucalyptus, Callistemon, Corymbia, Acacia, Bauhinia, Lophostemon and Ficus.



Little Friarbird

Some plants have done it hard because of ill-treatment by male wallabies demonstrating their virility to a heap of mostly uncaring females, while others suffer each year from the attentions of mischievous Sulphur-crested Cockatoos with a penchant for removing new growth and immature flower spikes from the callistemons.

I was looking around the block this morning, camera in hand, and came up with the following list of birds feeding on the flowers, fruits and insects attracted by same :

Brown, Yellow, Dusky, and White-gaped Honeyeaters, Little, Helmeted and Noisy Friar Bird, Rainbow Lorikeet, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Bee-eater, Willie Wagtail, Grey Fantail and Rufous Whistler.

Also feeding on the ground, and aerating the soil where I had recently irrigated were the Straw-necked and Australian White Ibis. These birds spend their day here but fly off elsewhere to spend the night.

All of this activity was overseen by our relatively tame but still very standoffish Blue-winged Kookaburra who swept down from her favourite tall tree to snatch a grasshopper as I walked past. She is one of about seven of her kind whose 'area of operations' includes my block.

I do have favourite tree/bird combinations. One that I witnessed today, and have seen many times since the plant first flowered in mid-2017, was the *Eucalyptus phoenicea* (Scarlet Gum) and Dusky Honeyeater combo. Two duskies were so intent on feeding on the flowers and wasting all that hard-fought-for energy on chasing each other through the foliage, that I had some very nice views of them before they noticed my presence. Unfortunately no photos of them today but I have taken a few shots of them and other species on other plants in recent days, which are included with this article.

The upshot of all of this is that, had I not decided to revegetate this section of my block, I would not have the daily priceless enjoyment of the birds and the flowing plants at this time of year. In my view this gives credibility to the saying: "As ye sow, so shall ye reap!!!"

Norm Rains

SKY BATTLE

Now and then we are told a story, like this one, that seems remarkable. My brother and his wife live in Charters Towers and every so often they take their tinnie out to the Burdekin and chug upriver, trailing a fishing line.

On one expedition, they heard a wild keening overhead but couldn't identify the cry or the bird so high above them. However, as they watched, two large birds began a rapid descent. Drawing closer, they became recognisable as White-bellied Sea-Eagles.

For a time, the keening raptors glided in a tight circle then suddenly flew at each other shrieking loudly. Crashing together, they locked talons and began a spiral dive downwards, scrabbling and snapping at each other, shrieking all the while but reluctant to release their grip.

Convinced that the eagles would eventually break apart, my brother and his wife were astonished to see them continue to spiral down, locked together, until they hit the water and disappeared beneath it.

Alarmed, my sister-in-law urged her husband to turn the boat around and scoot across to where the birds had entered the water to see if they could be helped. However, before he could turn about, the eagles resurfaced some distance from each other and began to swim to the shore. Using their powerful wings as arms, they paddled their way to the riverbank. Once there, they shook themselves, flinging off water and sat in the sun to dry before flying away.



My brother and his wife had never witnessed anything like this aerial battle, the crash into the river and the swim to shore. They found it incredible to watch and were relieved that neither bird was badly injured.

Sometimes, you can be lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time.

Jill Staunton.

ROUND TRIP

[On the fifth of August we set out on a month's trip that would take us out west, down to Brisbane and then home via the whales.](#)

The dam at Pentland was almost empty but we found a few Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterels scrounging for food. We stayed at Torrens Creek overnight for a change and, whilst driving around the crowded streets, we came upon seven Squatter Pigeons.



Black-tailed Native-Hen

Ray Sutton

The next day we spent at the Burra Range. The quarry really has been quarried now. Still a few *Grevillea decora* and *sessilis* around which sheltered a Noisy Friarbird, a few Brown Honeyeaters and a lone Singing Honeyeater. The grevilleas will grow again after we get a couple of wet seasons. We hope. The other side of the road had more

grevilleas, wattles and Jacksonias.. Not many more birds though. So dry.

Off to Winton via Hughenden where a couple of Nankeen Kestrels put on a superb flying display in the park just as you reach town. Rainbow Lorikeets, Magpies and a few others were playing on the grass.

But Winton was great. We spent every day at Bladensburg National Park along with visits to the sewage ponds. Funny how birders and sewage go together. Most of our time was spent at Engine Hole. With not much other water around, it attracted quite a few birds.

Small flocks of Budgerigars and Cockatiels flew back and forth around Engine Hole all the time. A pair of Whistling kites have a long-standing nest on the other side of the waterhole. They had a young one fledged and he sat for long periods on the dead tree near our chairs. One day he appeared to have a Galah's head dangling from his beak. Another day a Brown Falcon had the cheek to sit on the tree and the young kite came in and saw him off, aided by one of the adult kites, who then presented the youngster with a Budgerigar for his efforts.

Sometimes the Budgies and Cockatiels flew down to the waterhole and had very quick drinks. A friendly pair of Galahs was occupying a tree hollow only metres from our chairs. They would disappear into the hollow for a few minutes and then pop their heads out and look around. Our presence did not perturb them at all.

Through parts of the park we came across lots of Crimson Chats. We were told that they were up at the homestead so we drove up there and they were running around in front of us, dozens of them. A few Squatter Pigeons came in for a look. They are one of my favourites. A whole dead tree full of Crested Pigeons guarded the entrance to the homestead area and there were many Diamond Doves scurrying around.

At the sewage ponds we found Dotterels, both Black-fronted and Red-kneed as well as Reed Warblers, Little Grassbirds, Plum-headed Finches, Crimson Chats, Budgies and Black-tailed Native-Hens.



But the best part was on the last day. We stayed at Engine Hole much later than usual and when we drove off at about 5.15 pm, we were suddenly surrounded by thousands of beautiful green Budgerigars. They wheeled and circled, rose and fell and then disappeared into the long grass, only to rise up in a wonderful murmuration. We stood transfixed for ages. Finally I remembered to make a few little videos on my camera. It was almost impossible to follow their movements. I have seen it on TV but have never been in the centre of it before.

Next stop was a little bit out of our way, Lara Wetlands just out from Barcaldine. We camped near the billabong and set up shop by the water. We were constantly entertained by the same kinds of Dotterels we had already seen, Native-Hens, Brown Treecreepers and Cockatiels. But the funniest birds were the Pink-eared Ducks. There were four pairs of them and they all had their own little section of the water's edge. They swam up and down in their separate pairs, constantly twirling and whirling – first one way and then the other. Do they ever get giddy? We also had Yellow-billed Spoonbills, Red-winged Parrots, Pale-headed Rosellas and a few budgies, amongst others.



Brown Treecreeper

Ray Sutton

A quick look at the gem fields where we saw plenty of sapphire in the shops but not in the ground (we didn't look) and on to Roma (where we did find a few Red-rumps) and then to Brisbane to see the grandchildren. A King Parrot pair often come into their garden and up on to the veranda. The male turned up but he didn't know me so he left pretty quickly. He knows the family and now sits on their arms and eats some seed. We detoured to the Bunya Mountains on the way but it was a bad time of year. Nothing much around. We came across Bell Miners on the way up to Mt. Glorious.



Pink-eared Duck

Ray Sutton

In the lakes at Laidley we found a few hundred Pink-eared Ducks. A man we met at Boondall Wetlands told us to go to Kedron Brook just near the Gateway Motorway and in the distance we could see quite a lot of Red-necked Avocets.

At Hervey Bay we went off to see the whales. They came up very close to the boat, mostly adolescents. A real treat was seeing two Southern Right Whales with their calves. They don't visit Harvey Bay very often and we were lucky to see two sets in different locations.



Catch of the Day

Ray Sutton

We visited the Ospreys at Vernon Point on their high pole and they had a young one who was flying. Then the bus driver told us of another Osprey pair that had a nest in Urangan, not far from the pier. He gave us precise directions and, sure enough, only about seven metres up in the thick branches of a tree right on the Esplanade walking path was an Osprey nest.

A young Osprey sat beside the nest and eyed us off, not in the least concerned by our presence. She flew off and returned a few minutes later with a yellow-tailed trevally over a foot long. She flew along the beach and then wheeled and came straight in. She began devouring it, carefully eating the lips first.



Who will get the fish head?

We moved on to the Town of 1770 which is such a pretty spot. Along the beach were three large fish heads, discarded by the fisher. A Brahminy Kite sat square on top of one, enjoying a feast he hadn't had to work for. Up walked a crow, obviously intent on sharing (or stealing) this wonderful prize. There was a lot of lunging by the Kite and a lot of hopping by the crow. The poor Kite wasn't getting much chance to enjoy his trophy. Then a Magpie came up for a look. Within minutes there was a tower, Magpie on top, then the Crow then the Kite. But the Kite held on. Finally a Silver Gull came up for a look but he minded his own business. Meanwhile, the other two fish heads sat there, totally ignored.

A Gannet at Yeppoon and a few Rajah Shelducks at Airlie Beach rounded off our holiday.

Annette Sutton

CAPE YORK TRIP

In late July and early August I travelled to Artemis Station and Iron Range National Park as both a birding challenge and a caravanning challenge. I was on the road with Clermont birding friends, Olive and Bob McTrusty who were tenting – a mighty fine effort as Bob is now 80!

The first part of the experience was getting there. The McTrusty's Toyota was making parrot-like screeches and the roads left much to be desired after all the school holiday traffic had been over them. Having said that, the reach of the bitumen is ever expanding and the sections of the road that have been completed are excellent.



Golden-shouldered Parrots

We had 4 days at Artemis where we had the benefit of Sue Shepherd's knowledge, and she took us around on the first day to locate the Golden-shouldered Parrots in their wild habitat. I'm sure without her assistance, we would never have seen them grazing for seed amongst the burnt off stubble and stumps. The station is participating in some major research to determine the causes of the constant decline in numbers over recent years. They have installed camera monitored feeding stations and nest sites. (The cameras came from the Night Parrot project.) The cameras have shown that there is a feral cat problem that they weren't aware of, and so they are now trapping. Of course there are multiple causes.



Red-cheeked Parrot

Another issue identified is that in the last couple of years, the immature males are basically starving due to changes

in the timing of the wet season. Their seed has been sprouting before they had learnt to move to higher ground. So they have established a series of staged feeding stations to lead them up onto the range. This seems to be working as they found a nest site up near one of the higher stations this year. Additionally this year, the parrots haven't moved away as they normally would, so the feeding stations are still being maintained. The fact that there is a feeding station at the front gate of the station means that visitors are pretty well assured to see and photograph the OBP without disturbing them in their natural environment.

While we were at Artemis, we were fortunate to meet tour organiser John Griffiths (Cape Capers Birdwatching and Wildlife Tours) who very obligingly gave us some mud maps of his haunts at Iron Range and we headed off in early August.

We booked into Cook's Hut Campground on the recommendation of a number of other birders who found the site very productive. Our experience was somewhat different and we didn't find anything much there during our stay. We did though find quite a lot of species at the Rainforest Campground and so spent large chunks of each



Frill-necked monarch

day there.

The Red-cheeked Parrots seemed to be attempting to nest there in a large dead tree but their efforts were somewhat thwarted by an inconsiderate camper who proceeded to hammer off a padlock while the birds were present. They stayed away for the next 24 hours but did return later the following day.

Our mud maps helped us find the Palm Cockatoo and Eclectus Parrot. The locals were also forthcoming, letting us know that apparently two pairs of Red-bellied Pitta had stayed this year. Olive and I did have a possible sighting of one but were unable to photograph it in the undergrowth and darkness in the rainforest to confirm.

The photography challenges in the rainforest were significant enough, but we also had to deal with overcast skies behind the tall dark canopies. The camera settings got a workout! The Toyota made it back, still screeching (2 broken manifold studs fed by turbo), and the caravan survived with only one stray screw emerging from who knows where. All in all a wonderful trip.

Sandra Sampson

Check this out from Ivor

<https://www.spotteron.com/brushturkeys/info>

ASDAN EXCURSION

Year 9 – 10 ASDAN class went on an excursion to Anderson Park to participate in the Great Aussie Bird Count, for Birdweek 2018. On the excursion was Ty, Matthew and staff members Mr Levi and Mrs Haig. We invited some birdwatchers from Birdlife Townsville to share their knowledge with us, after they had already visited our senior ASDAN class.



The week before the excursion we discussed and signed the Birdwatcher Code of Ethics, which we printed from the Great Aussie Bird Count website. We also looked at videos of swooping birds on Youtube, as we had heard there were swooping birds in the park. Ty thought of ways to protect himself from swooping birds and his funniest idea was a pet cat on a helmet. We looked at inventions on Youtube involving elaborate hats covered in party poppers and noise makers, but we decided we would probably be fine without these.

On the day we walked to Anderson Park to meet Janet C and Wal T, two volunteers from Birdlife Townsville. At the entrance to Anderson Park was a sign warning people about swooping plovers. It said "Warning, you are entering a swoop zone. Plovers swoop to defend eggs or young that are not capable of defending themselves". It gave some pretty sensible instructions on how to be safe from swooping birds- stay in a group, wear a hat, walk quickly but don't panic, and take a different route if possible. We looked at the sign, and then walked into the park. The birdwatching started straight away- Ty saw lots of curlews on the way in, and used the iPad to take some photos.



We then walked to the lagoon where there were lots of beautiful waterbirds. Janet and Wal were waiting for us at the lagoon with a scope set up. We said hello and thanks for coming. Ty showed Wal the pictures of his pet birds which he keeps on his phone.

Ty pointed out a bird in the bushes which we all had a look at. Wal looked at it with his binoculars and said it was a honeyeater. We all stood and looked at the birds.

Wal and Janet had set up a scope and invited us to have a turn. The scope was very powerful and we were amazed at how clearly you could see the birds. We learnt how to adjust the focus and how to turn the scope using the handle.



After trying out the scopes and the binoculars, we opened the Great Aussie Bird Count app and began a proper survey. We had 20 minutes to see how many birds we could count. Ty was especially keen to help count the different birds and was able to describe the birds he was seeing, point out different birds and learn lots of new information from Wal and Janet. Ty used the scope to thoroughly check for birds in the distance and was able to find quite a lot of birds. We saw ducks, cormorants, geese, ibis, plovers, lorikeets, cockatoos, honeyeaters, swallows, kookaburras, bee-eaters, and even a Spangled Drongo. We also found a large Whistling Kite nest up high in the trees.

Matthew listened to some of the bird count but he was especially interested to investigate the fish in the lagoon, and he walked around the lagoon talking with Mr Levi about the different fish there. Matthew identified the Telopea in the water, which are a pest species of fish. Matthew also found lots of eels.



The main birds we saw were Plumed Whistling Ducks and Magpie Geese but by the end of the trip we had seen 27 different species, and close to 240 birds all up. These were all recorded on the app, which showed a picture of each bird.

Before we left, we had a real treat. The Whistling Kite came and landed near the nest and stayed still for a long time. We looked through the scope and watched the Kite blink, turn her head, and blink again. We learnt that the

Whistling Kite is a raptor (bird of prey) and there were probably one, two or three eggs in her nest.

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It was hard to tear ourselves away from the scope but we had to go back to school. On behalf of our class, Ty said thankyou to Wal and Janet for coming. They gave us some bird books to keep in the classroom and also some to take home.

We went back to school and showed other students photos of what we had done. The next week at school Ty and Matthew decided what to write in a thankyou letter, and Ty also tallied up the numbers of the different birds he had counted. Jacob and Sarah, other members of the class who had been absent for the excursion, were interested to find out more, and Sarah decided to write a guide to birdwatching in Anderson Park for people who use AUSLAN (Australian Sign Language). This guide will include useful information including the names of the birds and will make birdwatching in Anderson Park even more accessible for people, so it is a really wonderful idea.

Julia Haig

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The following experience is what makes taking part in BirdLife Townsville's Education Programs so rewarding.

Janet Cross and I had a lovely morning at Anderson Park showing a student how to identify birds and use binoculars. She was keen to get involved with the Backyard Bird Count and get more of her fellow students to take part as well. We got the attached thankyou from her.

This student was very curious about all the birds suddenly taking off to the other side of the pond to where some people were sitting on a bench. We were able to see that the people were feeding the birds with bread. After a discussion about the effects of feeding birds with bread, she became determined to take some action to spread the word. She has apparently informed many of her teachers and fellow students. She has even taken the step of writing to the ABC about a popular children's program which appears to promote this practice. Janet and I were thrilled that we were able to make such an impact on one person who is sharing the message far and wide. We need more like her in this world!

PS. Many Pimlico High School students took part in the BackYard Bird Count.

Janet Robino

To the makers of Peppa Pig, Pimlico High Qld Australia
 I was a fan of your show until I heard something on my birdwatching excursion. I learnt that feeding bread to birds isn't ok! Peppa Pig and her family have been doing this for a while on your show, feeding bread to ducks and I would appreciate if you would show our younger audiences what birds should be eating, chopped up lettuce and water greens.

To put it simply, our younger audiences are copying what they see on Peppa Pig and it's not ok. I would really appreciate if you would stop showing them the wrong way to feed birds. Bread makes birds sick and the calcium in their bones start weakening.

Anyway your show is great but think of all the birds you could help if you stop showing younger audiences feeding bread to ducks.

yours truly,

xxxxxx

Dear Janet and Janet
 Thanks for taking me on a birdwatching adventure!
 I can't believe we saw more than zoo birds,
 we got the young kids to sign up for more birdwatching
 we hope you can come back to our school soon, I would like to add more birds to our list,
 From xxxxxxxx Pimlico
 Year 12,
 Don't feed me bread!

According to National Geographic, scientists have an answer for the age old dispute over which came first, the chicken or the egg. Reptiles were laying eggs thousands of years before chickens appeared. The first chicken came from an egg laid by a bird that was not quite a chicken. Therefore, the egg came first.

Common Birds

A storm had passed through in all its glory, depositing more water at the Town Common during the weekend of 12th to 14th October. At last it was worth checking out our favourite spots.

I had been in Charters Towers during the weekend so was a little late in visiting this new wonder; however, Wendy and I made the trek on Monday, 15th and were soon enjoying this vision splendid. Along the road, a Pallid Cuckoo gave cause to cheer and the usual pretty Honeyeaters in the flowering trees, Crimson Finches and Cisticolas entertained us to our first port of call – Melaleuca Viewing area. It provided all that we hoped for with a huge number of Grey Teal – according to some more diligent counters, up to 1500 - Brolga adults and juveniles strutting around and digging furiously in the bulkuru, Sharp-tailed Sand Pipers, Egrets galore, a White-necked Heron, White-faced Heron, Black-winged Stilts and oh, joy --- there were Glossy Ibis and the even less common Red-kneed Dotterel. This was heaven in a pond. To top off the birds in the water, or perhaps to spook them, an Osprey cruised back and forth over the lot, sometimes diving down a bit but not really making an attack. A Whistling Kite and also a Brahminy Kite soon appeared and did much the same, providing us with great views. At the far side were a dozen or so Royal Spoonbills and some Masked Lapwings.



Glossy Ibis

Ray Sutton

Finally we moved on to the Pandanus Viewing area, spying Crimson Finches and Red-backed Fairy-wrens as we drove. We have been pleasantly surprised by the large number of the latter which have been seen there during both our visits. No wonder we haven't been seeing many of them in other places, they are all at the Common. The birds here were much the same, but a Black-necked Stork was spotted far over in the long para grass.

So - continue to the Freshwater Hide. Tony Ashton greeted us with his super camera and was able to give us a run-down on what he'd seen earlier. Many Royal Spoonbills were standing lazily at the western end, while a Little Pied Cormorant ducked and dived right in front of us. A Swamp Harrier hunted happily further over near the Jacana hide, while Egret heads appeared and disappeared above the long grass. After a chat with Tony, we searched for his Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove but were unlucky, so decided it was smoko time. Had our coffee while standing around in the car park there and watching

assiduously for any new-comers. Sunbirds entertained us and a Varied Triller appeared to add to the White-winged Trillers we had seen back along the road earlier. Wendy had an appointment to go to, so we headed slowly back past the viewing areas. Five pigs were busy snorting and digging at the edge of the Pandanus area, but abandoned their attack as we pulled up.

A quick visit to the Payet Hide showed – nothing! Not even a Kingfisher! A tree snake near the nest of a Brown-backed Honeyeater attracted our attention, and the Red-backed Fairy-wrens and a Drongo greeted us along the track, as we departed for home.



Black-necked Stork Annette Sutton

Thus enthused, I asked Ivor if he'd like to go out there, so on Thursday, he, Beth and I made another visit. This was equally entertaining and mostly we found the same birds plus a few extras, all of which he has posted on ebird. He found the two Barking Owls for us near the Payet Hide, as we wandered in that area, but our target bird was the Shining Fly-catcher which many others had seen near the Melaleuca viewing area during the week. However much we searched, the male certainly evaded us, though we are fairly sure we found the female with her buff breast more pronounced than a Leaden female. The juvenile Brolgas were still playing around, flapping their wings at each other and three Black-necked Storks were at the Pandanus area.

Again, we met Tony Ashton toting his huge camera, so I checked as to where we might hope to see the Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove. Off we went to the Freshwater Hide to find very little life on the pond in comparison to the time before. One Magpie Goose was a new arrival though and a few Glossy Ibis had found that spot, too. This time, we searched more diligently for the Fruit-Dove and with Ivor to help, finally spotted one sitting quietly in the tree where Tony said it would be. So clearly visible once found, but difficult to see before one's eyes picked it out. What clever camouflage birds have as they rest in trees with foliage of similar colours to their feathers. Yes, to Fruit-Dove. A beautiful bird indeed. After four fascinating hours and a list of 65 birds seen and heard, it was time to depart for home and lunch

Elna Kerswell

UNUSUAL PLOVER



All this year there has been a group of Masked Lapwings wandering the lawns at work. Initially there were five birds, so I assumed this was a pair with grown young, but it has now dwindled to just a pair. What caught my attention was that one of the birds has a chest band, sort of like the southern subspecies *Vanellus miles novaehollandiae*, but not entirely convincing. It has no visible wing spur, but it does have more black on the back of the neck than the bird in the illustration in "The Australian Bird Guide." The Guide refers to a broad zone of hybridisation "to the north central Queensland coast." How common are such intermediates in the Townsville area? I must pay more attention to these stylish birds.

Hugh Sweatman

PRACTICE

On Sunday 14th October I decided to get in training for the Backyard Bird Count. With a cuppa on the patio I started at 7.30am. The Rainbow Lorikeets were screeching in delight over the road in the Eucalypt and the Bottlebrush. A lot of pairing and snuggling going on, probably 40 of them. Over the next 20 minutes I saw a female Mistletoebird, the obligatory Australian White Ibis, 4 pushy Blue Faced Honeyeaters, 3 Brown Honeyeaters daintily eating insects in the Golden Penda, two Bower birds, one Drongo, three Rock Doves, Sparrows galore,



Rainbow Lorikeet

Annete Sutton

and a Magpie Goose. The 'piece de resistance' was a Hobby flying over the neighbourhood.

Spurred on by the morning's effort I decided to go to the banks of Ross River in Mundingburra at 5.30pm. The chorus here was the many Figbirds flying between trees and eating ripe figs on the side of fruiting fig trees. Other sightings included Masked Lapwings, one Dollarbird, one Channel-billed Cuckoo perching in a eucalypt while surrounded by vociferous Blue-faced Honeyeaters, Yellow Honeyeaters, Brown Honeyeaters, one Mangrove Honeyeater, Little Friar Birds, Noisy Friar Birds, 1 Male Mistletoebird, one Pallid Cuckoo and one Brush-turkey, a pair of Leaden Flycatchers, two PIPs, Red-tailed Black Cockies, Rainbow Lorikeets, Sulphur Crested Cockies, many Bee-eaters, one beautiful Sacred Kingfisher, one Blue Winged Kookaburra, Magpies and Magpie Larks, Varied Trillers, Great Bowerbirds, Pheasant Coucal and the 'rubbish' birds--- Sparrows, Rock Pigeons, and lastly Indian Mynas.

Looking forward to the 22nd!!

Cecily Messer

National Backyard Bird Count

Checklists submitted 84,839

Species sighted 667

Birds sighted 2,778,780

SOUTH-WEST TO BUNBURY

Recently, Peter and I visited our family in Bunbury, Western Australia. We enjoyed many rambling bushwalks with our grandchildren, the highlights of which were the wildflowers and the birds.

The Big Swamp at Bunbury is a great location for seeing waterbirds. Ducks are bountiful and include Pacific Black Ducks, Hardheads, Australian Shelducks, and Australian Wood Ducks. The real delight for us was a male Musk Duck that entertained us by constantly diving deep, disappearing and resurfacing on the other side of the boardwalk we were on.



Musk Duck

The Big Swamp is home to Eurasian Coots, Purple Swamphens, Dusky Moorhens, Black Swans, Australasian Darters and a myriad of other non-aquatic birds such as the Australian Ringneck Parrot. Several boardwalks take you on a stroll through a *Melaleuca raphiophylla* (Swamp paperbark) forest. For our grandchildren, it was Nick Sharratt's story, *The Foggy, Foggy Forest* come to life. One boardwalk meanders close to the centre of the

swamp where Australian Reed-Warblers sing, almost invisible amongst swathes of bulrushes. Bunbury's Big Swamp is well worth a visit.



Melaleuca Swamp

South of Bunbury towards Busselton is a Tuart Forest Walk. Here, amongst the towering Tuarts, conifers and Peppermint trees, the Arum Lillies, introduced from South Africa and now a declared pest, bloomed spectacularly across the forest floors. It was in this area that we were fortunate to spot a flock of Baudin's Black-Cockatoos eating grass seed on the ground. When they flew screeching up into the Tuarts, their white tails and white wing feathers were clearly displayed.



Black Swans with Cygnets

Back at Dalyellup amongst the dune vegetation we saw the Red Wattlebird, the New Holland Honeyeater, the western Silvereeye and the spectacular Splendid Fairy-wren flitting around in blossoming acacias. The wren looked like a sparkling sapphire darting in and out of the golden wattles.

Late September in this neck of the woods is all about nesting and caring for hatchlings. Swans sat on mounded nests above the waterline or attended to their newly hatched cygnets. Straw-necked Ibis were busy in rookeries they'd established in Tuart canopies above ponds and creeks or in Melaleuca thickets knee deep in swamp water. Ducklings of all manner abounded as did Purple Swamphen and Eurasian Coot chicks.

Altogether, September is a wonderful time to visit this area of south-west Western Australia and to enjoy a birdwatching ramble amongst the beauty of the wildflowers.

Jill and Peter Staunton

*The musk duck (*Biziura lobata*) is a highly aquatic, stiff-tailed duck native to southern Australia. It is the only living member of the genus *Biziura*. This animal derives its common name from the peculiar musky odour it emanates during the breeding season.*

COBBOLD GORGE

On 7 September we set off early for Georgetown as the first leg of our trip to Cobbold Gorge. Along Herveys Range Road and onto Greenvale was our first leg before fuel and smoko.

It's always a delight to be met at the picnic tables by a noisy mob of Apostlebirds, checking you out as a food source. Also had a good opportunity to sort out that the flock of corvids were Little Crows. We continued on through the Lynd Junction and then the Gulf Developmental Road to Mt. Surprise for a lunch stop. On this stretch, we usually see an Emu or two, but dipped this time and the only birds of note were a few Wedge-tailed Eagles feeding on roadkill.



On the last leg to Georgetown we stopped at a rest area on the north side of the road where a small dam still has water. Few birds here as well, but there was a small flock of Weebill feeding. After checking in at the motel, we did a tour of the town and saw 37 species, which included our only Fairy-wrens for the whole seven day trip, a pair of Red-backed Fairy-wrens. Other birds of note included Squatter Pigeon, Diamond Dove, White-winged Triller and Little Crow. To this point the countryside did not have the distressed look of past droughts I have seen in the area. There still seems to be lots of 'free water' in dams and creeks. Also the land did not have that flogged look it gets when it has been over grazed.

The next day before we left Georgetown for Forsayth we went for a turn around the racecourse. The centre dam was dry but we still recorded 31 species, including oodles of Diamond Dove, a pair of Black-throated Finch and an Australasian Bushlark. After smoko we set off for Forsayth on what is a mostly sealed road. Now the country looked very dry and no water evident. Consequently the birds dried up as well. We were surprised by the absence of falcons and kestrels and other birds of prey, except for the ubiquitous Black Kites.

Arriving in Forsayth about lunchtime, we did the only sensible thing and went to the newly renovated pub for a beer. The birds of Forsayth were dominated by a large flock of Blue-faced Honeyeaters. The last 40km to Cobbold village was all unsealed gravel road in good condition through lightly wooded undulating sandstone country. The Cobbold Gorge tourism business is part of the Robin Hood Cattle Station – supposedly named because it adjoined the Sherwood mining lease. The

village is in an attractive setting with plenty of flowering shrubs and remnant trees, all set overlooking the infinity pool (doesn't everyone have one these days) and home dam, which is kept to a minimal level by pumped river water.



After a rest in our cabin with the smallest fridge I've ever seen, we sauntered around the village area to get our bearings and to record what was active in the late afternoon. It looked as though the Apostlebirds might rule the ground, but Rainbow Lorikeets rule the callistemon, and the Little and Noisy Friarbirds ruled the larger trees. Of the 24 species recorded, the surprise was the pair of Cotton Pygmy-geese on the home dam. The gorge tour is well worth doing as the guides are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. The boat ride in the Gorge is very peaceful and allowed us very close views of some of the resident freshwater crocodiles.

There's always time for one last look around, so as we drove out of Cobbold Gorge village, we noticed a little side road and decided to investigate. It was the little dam we had been told about, but because the information given was that it had dried up, we didn't investigate further. Pity, because there was some water that provided a haven for birds, birds that we hadn't seen in our days at Cobbold such as Sacred Kingfisher and Red-kneed Dotterel. Overhead as a final treat we had excellent views



of a Black-breasted Buzzard. Our time at Cobbold netted us 59 species and adding one species (the above Dotterel) to the area total of 119 species.

When we arrived in Mt Surprise (Bedrock Village Caravan Park), we were happy to learn that our timing was perfect as we could experience the Savannahlander train trip to Einasleigh, with the opportunity to see Copperfield Gorge. Cobbold Gorge is viewed at ground level, looking up at the steep walls, whereas Copperfield Gorge is viewed from

the top, looking down. Both are unique and quite spectacular. The caravan park bus met us at the Einasleigh pub (under new management) to escort us for the tour of the gorge and township. Did you know there's a memorial to the Black Hawk tragedy in the town park? There's always something to learn.

Then it was time to boil a billy on the banks of the Einasleigh River before enjoying a very rough road trip back to the caravan park. Phew, to say that it is a rough road is an understatement! It was worth it though, as we saw our only Emu of the trip with a bonus .. three chicks.

We had a good time as birding tourists and we would recommend it as an enjoyable outback experience.

Karen Doyle & Ivor Preston

BOWERBIRDS



Townsville seems to be the epicentre for urban bowerbirds and I have been enjoying watching their antics and trying to photograph them. Malcolm Calvert alerted me to a very fine bower along the river in Cranbrook. It was a very busy place on the morning that I visited – up to six birds at a time and lots of chasing and some display. The dominant male revealed a crest the likes of which I had never seen. The feathers of his crest appear to be reddish underneath, and the way that that he was able to change the shape and apparent size of his head was quite surprising.



Hugh Sweatman

CHOUGHS

Our recent trip to Carnarvon Gorge provided lots of photo opportunities for landscape and wildlife (I saw more echidnas in five days than I have seen in the rest of my life). Among the easier and particularly charming photographic subjects were the flock of White-winged Choughs in the empty QPWS camping area near the information centre.

They were wonderfully unconcerned about humans, and seemed always active: squabbling in the trees with the local Apostlebirds, or energetically tossing leaf litter around as the group progressed across the camping



spaces, and lots of social grooming. Then they have a strange behaviour where two birds lie on their sides on the grass and grapple quite gently with their feet, which seems to excite the others who approach with their red eye rings expanded and wings spread in what could have been aggression ... but turned into more social grooming ...?



Hugh Sweatman



PHOTO GROUP

The theme for the BirdLife Townsville Photo Group get together for October was 'Big Birds' which suggested birds equal to or larger than an Australian Magpie. I imagine you can guess that we had an assortment of images of Cassowaries, Emus, Pelicans and the like. Some chose to throw in some images of geese, raptors and even the larger parrots such as Major Mitchell's. I mustn't forget the old Bustard with its snooty head up display as he featured a few times, always holding that same head up posture. A couple of images elicited the 'how'd ya get that shot, those buggers never stand still'?

Once the themed images were shown we moved onto the 'extras'. These are just images people would like to show, of birds of course. There were some crackers here also. The images ranged all the way from the diminutive Superb Fairy-wren to the Brolga and just about every 'Family' in between was represented.

So the seven people who attended the night got to see some wonderful bird images, show some of their own, had a lot of laughs and discuss birds, location, techniques and generally socialise over supper. A small selection of the images is included at the end of the Drongo.

Please remember you don't have to be a photographer or even have a camera to attend. All are welcome so just come along to view some lovely bird images with a relaxed group of people. Supper is BYO so bring along a thermos and your favourite snack for a chin wag once the slide show is over.

Mark



Australian Bustard

Janet Robino



Australian Raven

John Lowry



Emu

Len Ezzy



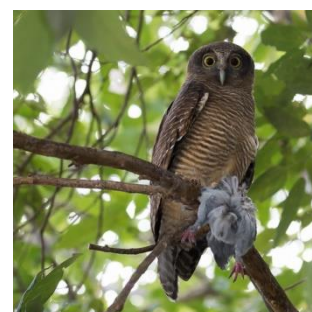
Major Mitchell's Cockatoos

P. Goulding



Yellow-billed Spoonbill

Mark Horvath



Rufous Owl

Annette Sibson

QUEST

Name	Quest Number	Date
Barbara Reidy	349	15-12-17
Janet Robino	308	04-11-17
Rosemary Payet	288	15-10-17
Graham Castles	274	01-10-17
Elna Kerswell	269	26-09-17
Marleen Acton	264	21-09-17
Janet Cross	263	20-09-17
Beth Snewin	259	16-09-17
Annette Sibson	255	12-09-17
Wal Threlfall	228	16-08-17
Ian Leach	212	31-07-17
Pat Charlton	197	16-07-17
Warren Charlton	188	07-07-17
Annette Sutton	160	09-06-17
Julia Goldsbury	122	02-05-17
Carolyn Osterhaus	76	17-03-17



Where Sun Hotel Function Room

When 6.30 pm Saturday 8th December

Prizes Trivia

Pay for your meal and drinks

RSVP contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au