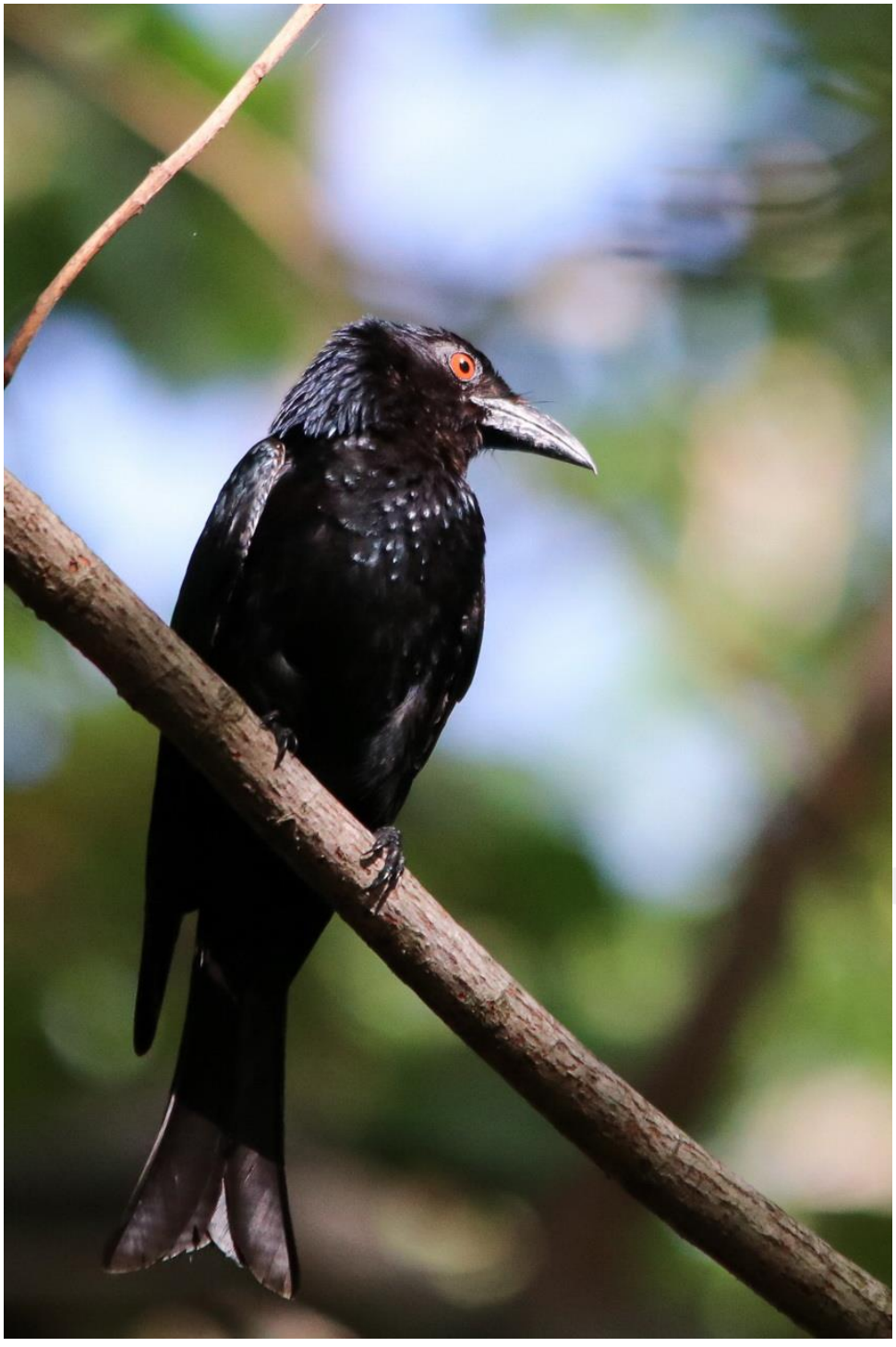
The Drongo

Number 153 February 20198



Annette Sibson

Museum Musings

Tablelands

O'Reilly's

Cuckoos

President's Report AGM 2019

Birdlife Townsville has had its usual activity filled year. 2019 is shaping up to be just as exciting. We continue to enjoy a good reputation with visiting birders who join us on some of our regular surveys and outings.

We have some changes coming up for 2019. After many, many years, Malcolm and Lenore Calvert are finally relinquishing leading the Bush Garden Monthly Surveys. This has been an amazing contribution to the club and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their constant commitment. Wendy Kaus will now be the leader for this activity. Malcolm and Lenore are giving Wendy some valuable support and guidance as she takes over this role.

Norm Rains will not renominate for the committee this year. Norm has been a very active committee member for several years holding roles including Treasurer, Education, and Representative on Port of Townsville Community Liaison Group. Thank you to Norm for this great contribution and all the best with the extra travelling he now plans. Norm will still be the leader for the Wongaloo surveys.

Michael McMaster has also retired from the committee as he has moved to Cairns to live.

Of course, this means we need some new committee members. Nominations can be accepted from the floor or indeed at a later date if you need to think about it. If interested, speak to one of the current committee members for more information.

Regular surveys will continue at Wongaloo and Ross River Dam. BirdLife Townsville is fortunate to have access to both these areas for planned surveys. We need to be mindful that entry to both these areas is restricted. Members are always welcome to attend any of the organised surveys to these areas but we ask that all members respect the entry restrictions so that we can have access to these great birding areas and continuing the important job of monitoring birds as they deal with the changes in the habitat.

Nina Doyle has managed the financial records and made all the necessary adaptations to keep us up-to-date with the accounting requirements of National Office. Thankfully, Nina has accepted her nomination to continue as Treasurer. And, equally good news is that Wal Threlfall has accepted his nomination as Secretary. I'm sure everyone recognises how much work Wal does to keep us all informed of the Activities the club has to offer members, but there is much, much more he does 'behind the scenes'. Wal once again represented BirdLife Townsville at the Branch Network Meeting in Melbourne and is an active member of BirdLife Australia's National Safety Committee and coordinates the Birds in Schools Program which will really get off the mark the first term of this year.

Janet Cross continued in her role as representative on the Black-throated Finch Recovery Team, Wildlife Hazard Management Committee Townsville Airport and as Coordinator of Safety. While on the subject of safety, I would like to remind all leaders to carry the snake bite first aid pack on their person at all time on outings. Each little pack comes with very simple instructions which the most inexperienced person would have no problems following. It is light and compact and we are taking steps to make it as easy to carry as possible. They have never been needed as yet, but I always reckon the best insurance against needing something is to have it on hand.

Norm Rains had another busy year coordinating our Education Programs. Several school sessions were delivered in Townsville, Palm Island, Ingham and Ayr. Community Awareness Programs were conducted at several venues: Active Expo; Alva Beach 'It's Your Reef' Expo'; World Wetland Day at Sustainability Centre; Environmental Activity at Sustainability Centre; and Peggy Banfield Park Opening (Bushland Beach). Norm was also invited back for a session for the kids and their carers at Ronald McDonald House. Wal and Norm conducted another Townsville Airport Bird Identification Training Session.

'The Quest' is Birdlife Townsville Members' only competition and runs all year. The aim is to record a different species of bird (within Queensland only) for each of the 365 days of the year. It is competitive, but relies on your honesty and integrity. Remember to enjoy yourself and participate in our activities and get out and list as many birds as you can. Then, at the end of the year you pay five cents for each bird on your list. This money is donated to a local conservation initiative. The quest earned $317 in 2018. Please register for the quest by email to *contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au*. Make sure you send your progressive total to Annette for the Drongo.

Our Shorebird 2020 surveys for 2019 started with a Workshop on Wader Identification by John Lowry which was followed with practical experience with a survey at Bushland Beach. As I write this report, the surveys at Lucinda and Cungulla are planned. As Townsville is finally getting some lovely soaking rain which, according to the weatherman may continue, these surveys may have to be postponed. This is a good time to remind members to keep an eye on the website for any late changes to the Activities Calendar *http:www.birdlifetownsville.org.au*.

The Nature Laws campaign will get a bit more active this year. At this stage there will be a Community Forum in March. Mark Horvath will again coordinate this activity. Please watch the website for date, time and venue details. Could members please promote this among their friends, colleagues and contacts as this is an important issue for the future of our environment and birds and their habitat. A fact sheet about this campaign is available at *www.birdlife.org.au/campaign-information/ActforBirds/FactSheet*.

Mark is still looking after the club's scopes, binoculars and AV equipment. He has been busy developing photos for use in displays. The shorebird photos used in last year's library displays received good feedback. Mark is now working on the wetland birds' photos. Mark also leads the Photography Group. You don't have to be a photographer to attend. You can come along to enjoy looking at some really nice photos of birds.

Our new committee members in 2018 hit the ground running. Annette Sibson has taken on responsibility for writing articles about what BirdLife Townsville is up to for the BirdLife Australia's Magazine and the Blog. Julie Goldsbury has taken on the job of looking for grant opportunities so that our educational equipment can be updated.

October was again a very busy time as we promoted Bird Week. Activities included: Three Library Displays; Three Shopping Centre information stands the week prior to Bird Week; Backyard Bird Count; The Twitchathon (we had 2 teams again); and The Black-throated Finch Waterhole Survey

The Christmas Function was again held at the Sun Hotel. Nina's Christmas Trivia Quiz was again a big hit. We even had a visit from Santa. In response to feedback from those who attended, it is planned to use the same venue next year.

It takes a lot of work by a lot of people to keep BirdLife Townsville the active club that it is. Once again, a big thank you to all the committee members for their hard work and support over the last year. Thank you to all the members who take on the role of leader so that we can enjoy so many opportunities to get out there and enjoy birds – and of course, the serious side to this is our contribution to research into the state of Australia's birds as all our surveys and outing counts are entered into Birdata.

Thanks to Annette Sutton, we continue to get a great newsletter. The Drongo not only looks good, it is a great read. To make Annette's job a lot easier, remember to keep your jottings, photos and stories coming in. You'll all be pleased to know that Beth, Wendy and their off-siders have agreed to continue the afternoon tea for the meetings. We are very spoilt with such lovely home cooked treats each month, so a big thank you to them all.

Please tell your committee what you enjoy about BirdLife Townsville and any suggestions for improvement are always welcome. Email *contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au*.

Janet Robino

Wongaloo *Annette Sutton*

YOUR COMMITTEE

President: Janet Robino	Michael McMAster	Norm Rains
Secretary: Wal Threlfall	Mark Horvath	Janet Cross
Treasurer: Nina Doyle	Julie Goldsbury	Annette Sibson

Newsletter Editor Annette Sutton amsgreat@gmail.com

Deadline for next Drongo is April 26th. Please send articles as Word documents, photos as attachments.

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

THE TABLELANDS IN JANUARY

Bron and I needed a little break from painting the inside of the house so we thought a trip to the Atherton Tablelands might be in order, irrespective of the weather at this time of year. As it turned out the weather was as expected, being heavily overcast or raining on most days, however it didn't limit us to any great extent.

Double-eyed Fig-parrot

On the way up we stopped, as per usual, at Etty Bay in the hope of glimpsing a Cassowary. Had lunch etc. there however dipped on the bird until we were over the headland and on our way out. As he often is, he was foraging on the side of the road.

Our first port of call was a few nights at Rose Gums. Got cabin 4 which apparently is the best one for birders. The rain was intermittent enough for us to do the walks, although some of the walking was at a very brisk pace in order to limit the number of leeches attaching themselves to us. They were prolific with all the wet.

Freckles Duck at Hastie's Swamp

It wasn't until our last day at Rose Gums that the weather was conducive to taking photos. To be honest that was the only day I felt it safe enough to take the camera outside without it getting soaked. The best birds were actually seen from the cabin's deck. A few highlights were Pied Monarchs, Yellow-breasted Boatbills, Barred Cuckoo-shrikes, White-naped Honeyeaters and the ever present Scarlet Honeyeaters. We did hear what sounded like thousands of Chowchillas every morning but failed to see any during our walks, or for that matter the Blue-faced Parrot-Finches that are supposed to reside here.

The following day, being a relatively fine day we thought we would take the opportunity to visit Lake Eacham. Got some excellent images there in November although we did not expect the fig trees to be bearing and the usual ones in the car park were not. However, we did stumble across a couple of Double-eyed Fig Parrots feeding in a small fig tree right next to one of the picnic tables. Other than those and a couple of other birds it was fairly quiet but we had a good time trying to get the perfect shot of the Fig Parrots. Pretty sure we didn't succeed there.

White-headed pigeon

Over the next couple of days we visited our usual haunts. However, due to the poor weather sightings were about the only plus, as the opportunities to take photos was very limited. We did however sight two of the Fruit-Doves and just need the Rose-crowned to make the set. On the sixth day we finally headed out to Hastie's Swamp. Compared to some of our previous visits to this site

Nankeen Night-Heron

it was very quiet. We did however run into another birder from Townsville and so spent an enjoyable morning relaxing and chatting in the hide while taking photos when the opportunity arrived and scanning the swamp from time to time. Some of the highlights were a Freckled Duck, a microsecond glimpse of a Little Kingfisher and capturing a few nice images of the Nankeen Night-Heron. After that all three of us partook of a great meal at the Malanda Hotel.

The following day we did the Tinaroo circuit which included The Curtain Fig Tree, Mobo Creek Crater and Lake Euramoo tracks. We sighted some nice birds in these locations with the picks being a Bowers Shrike-thrush, and a Rufous Fantail bathing at Mobo Creek while on the Lake Euramoo track we sighted a Pied Monarch and finally a Chowchilla (female).

While in Malanda we stayed at the Malanda Falls Caravan Park and the species observed here were quite rewarding. The White-headed Pigeons flew through or roosted in the local trees every day. Other visitors were Emerald Doves, Wompoos, Bazas, Swiftlets, Monarchs and a Grey Goshawk which flew overhead. I initially dismissed the Goshawk as a Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, as they were flying overhead regularly, but something didn't fit. I raised my binos to the bird as it receded into the distance. There is something wrong with the Cockatoo. It has yellow legs.

Pied Monarch

All in all a good time to go to the Tablelands, even if a bit wet.

Mark Horvath

EUNGELLA HONEYEATER

We received the following message from Daryl Barnes, President BirdLife Mackay:

"As of Sunday 20th of January there are now 3 Eungella Honeyeaters with sexy coloured leg bands on them. Who will be the first person to photograph one? Best of luck."

It would be good to let BirdLife Mackay know of any sightings of the Eungella Honeyeaters as they are monitoring them closely to establish how the birds have fared following the bushfires through the area in 2018.

A CUCKOO IN THE NEST

The expression, to have a cuckoo in the nest, originated long ago and was derived from the behaviour of some members of a certain type of bird family, namely the cuckoo. Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher and scientist, was one of the first persons to describe the bird's behaviour as parasitic.

Both Aristotle and Pliny (an ancient Roman philosopher and naturalist), used this bird's habit of brood parasitism as a reference for particular human behaviours. By the Middle Ages, the term was in common use. In Old French the word, *cucuault*, indicated a man whose wife was unfaithful and suggested that he might be raising children not of his paternity. This French word, *cucu,* meaning cuckoo, is the root of the English term, *cuckold*. That's not a word in common use today but no doubt the practice persists!

To put that in context, at the end of 2018, in November, we were striding through Anderson Gardens as Channel-billed Cuckoos joyfully announced their presence by flying overhead – on their way to cuckold other birds, no doubt.

At the top of a tall conifer, squawking for a meal, was, in fact, a young Channel-billed Cuckoo. Its voice was loud and persistent and, as we watched, a magpie flew onto the branch beside it. Incredibly, the cuckoo squawked even louder and slid along the branch towards the magpie. Clearly, this was the cuckoo in the nest but it was now almost twice the size of its non-biological mother.

To give the magpie credit, she dutifully fed the squawking imposter but we had to wonder at what point she would decide that enough was enough! And we also wondered how many of its magpie siblings it had evicted from the nest in order to survive itself. It's incredible to think that the behavioural programs nature equipped these birds with thousands of years ago are still functioning perfectly today.

Jill Staunton

MAGIC O'REILLY'S

Last November we spent five days at O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat. We had been there on day visits before but this time we stayed on.

Cyclone Debbie had made a mess of the road up from Canungra and there were massive road works taking place. This was quite fortuitous as many of the single lane stretches were manned by traffic controllers so we had no worries of oncoming traffic. I was very grateful as I was driving.

Regent Bowerbird (male)

The first morning we joined a walk with a Ranger up the boardwalk and back down the road. Outside the dining room, the Ranger gave a short talk and had some food for the birds. They came from everywhere. King Parrots and Crimson Rosellas were the main players but there were plenty of Bowerbirds, Crimson and Satin, Lewin's Honeyeaters, Pied Currawongs and a Brush-turkey or two.

Once in my life in the Bunya Mountains I had had a brief glimpse of a Regent Bowerbird male as it flew across a clearing. We had seen females on our day visits to O'Reilly's but not males. During our stay we were overcome by Regents of both sexes. The males were much bolder than the females and would even sit on your hand. The brilliant colours of the male knock you over. I love the crimson patch on the forehead, a stark contrast to the yellow and black.

Eastern Whipbird

Along the boardwalk we came across a pair of Whipbirds. They were used to the morning ritual and came out to the Ranger, looking for their early morning treat. Considering Whipbirds are so hard to find in the rainforest, even when you can hear them right on top of you, this was a real bonus. They sat on visitors' hands and showed no fear at all. Sometimes they sat on mobile phones, no doubt wanting to be photographed but not quite knowing how the thing works. Later, when I went for a walk along the boardwalk on my own, I was accosted by a young Whipbird who made it very clear that he was not impressed by my failure to bring him a tasty morsel.

Eastern Yellow Robin

We left the boardwalk and went through the forest towards the road. There, by the side of the path, was a Satin Bowerbird's bower, all decorated in blue. The proprietor took not the least bit of notice of us and went about his business as if we didn't exist. He behaved the same way towards me when I walked by there a day or two later early in the morning. But suddenly he became agitated and I soon saw why. A Brush-turkey wandered through and walked right through the beautiful blue decorations, scratching away as Brush-turkeys do.

Nankeen Kestrel

Over the days, we saw many birds along the boardwalk. Scratching around in the leaf litter and then jumping up onto the boardwalk, the White-browed and Yellow-throated Scrubwrens were always there. Sometimes we were lucky enough to come across Logrunners. Another leaf litter dweller was a Russet-tailed Thrush. We thought it may have been a Bassian but enquiries on e-bird determined it was a Russet-tail. Who am I to argue? In one spot, an Eastern Yellow Robin sat quietly on her nest.

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Our room had a front and a back verandah. We had the doors open to the front, looking over the valley and the windows to the back, looking out into the forest. In no time at all a Crimson Rosella flew straight in and sat on the bed. We tried to ease it out but it was quite unafraid. It fluttered onto the spare bed and inspected the cameras and other goodies, no doubt hoping to find food, and then left through the window. After that we kept the doors shut.

Intrepid Exploring Crimson Rosella

We put chopped up apple, nuts and sultanas out on the balcony railing occasionally. The Parrots were the bossiest but the Bowerbirds got a fair share. How wonderful to have these birds just a foot or two away or sitting on you hand or shoulder. A King Parrot thought the food was a bit slow in coming so he bit my ear. Hard. At the same time a Crimson Rosella bit my thumb. You mustn't keep them waiting.

Wonga Pigeon

Down below our balcony a Lewin's Honeyeater spent a lot of time feeding in a grevillea. Superb Fairy-wrens bounced around the paths. Red-necked Pademelons grazed on the grass around the bushes and once we saw a Long-necked Pademelon in the rainforest. Sometimes a Wonga Pigeon took a leisurely walk along the path. Around the resort we found Grey Shrike-thrush and Eastern Spinebills. Lots of Red-browed Finch hang around the designated feeding area where visitors go with their tray of seed that they have purchased in the shop. Ray went to the Birds of Prey show so that he could photograph his great passion, birds in flight

Outside the dining room (the meals are superb) there is an enclosure with a big rock and other feeding platforms. The staff put fruit out at human meal times so you can eat your dinner whilst enjoying the birds. The Currawongs are meant to be excluded by the mesh sides and roof but they manage to get in.

Australian Logrunner

But of course the bird we all wanted to see was Albert's Lyrebird. Naturally, Marleen found it on the first morning but although we walked around all the places where the birds had been reported many times, we failed to find it. "Oh, but they were just in the staff car park". Nonsense. Not when we were there. We got up early on our last morning and, just as we were about to leave our room for a last search, we got a phone call from Marleen, "Get over to the staff car park area." So off we flew and when we got there, there were two Lyrebirds (Mum and a fully grown chick) fossicking around the staff quarters in a small garden. They didn't care about us and we were able to take photos although the light was very poor. So that was a big triumph. We could leave, saying we had seen our main bird. It wasn't a male with a beautiful tail, mimicking everything he could think of, but it was a Lyrebird. Two.

Albert's Lyrebird

Then breakfast and the drive down that mountain and over the Gateway Bridge. Two drives I could happily miss out on. We can't wait to go back.

Annette Sutton

Albert's lyrebird *(Menura alberti) is endemic to subtropical rainforests of Australia, on the state border between NSW and Queensland. It lacks the elegant lyre-shaped tail feathers of the Superb Lyrebird and is found in a much more restricted range. In the past, Albert's lyrebirds were shot to be eaten in pies, to supply tail-feathers to "globe-trotting curio-hunters" or by vandals. The total population of Albert's lyrebirds is estimated at only 3,500 breeding birds and it has one of the smallest distributional ranges of any bird on the continent.*

THE QUEST

Initially I tell myself and my husband that I'm not doing The Quest this year, I'll have this year off. Then I change my mind, as you do, but I tell myself I'll just take it easy and see what I can find around town.

Well, that worked for a bit, home, The Strand, Jezzine walkway, Pallarenda, just a quick stop at Soroptimist Park, we're driving past anyway! Scored great views of my very first Mangrove Gerygone there! That was January 1st.

On the 3rd I rushed around the Palmetum in the morning, then an afternoon walk at Ross River Dam, a drive to the end of the wall and finish off with the Borrow Pits, we're driving past anyway!

Spotted Whistling-Ducks

On the 8th it was Anderson Gardens, Mt St John sewage works then Mt Stuart, just for a drive!

Off to Cungulla on the 13th, just for a look! Oh the sandflies were very friendly there, but the Grey Plover photograph was worth it.

Up to Toomulla for a week after that. I walked a lot up there, found some great birds. A Shining Flycatcher pair seem to have become a bit of a fixture out in the scrub behind our hut. They were being followed around by a Northern Fantail, what a treat. Up at Saltwater Creek one afternoon was the resident Azure Kingfisher, great views this time, no camera, I was just looking! A quick walk (with the binoculars) down behind our hut before tea had me in a spin. A Hardhead and 9 Spotted Whistling-Ducks!! I dashed home for the camera!

Back to Saltwater Creek again early the next morning, camera in hand, found the male Lovely Fairy-wren catching breakfast and a male Cicadabird checking me out.

Last morning and a quick walk down behind our hut again to check. I'm not dreaming re Spotted Whistling-Ducks and there were now 10 and a Hardhead! Jan 19th.

Grey Plover

Back in town and now the proud owner of a spotting scope so off we go to AIMS corner and Cungulla to put it through its paces. Jan 22nd.

Wungjunga had been in the news, so we head off down there one morning and found the Little Ringed Plover along with more birds for The Quest. Neither of us had ever been there so it was good to have a look! Jan 24th.

Little Ringed Plover

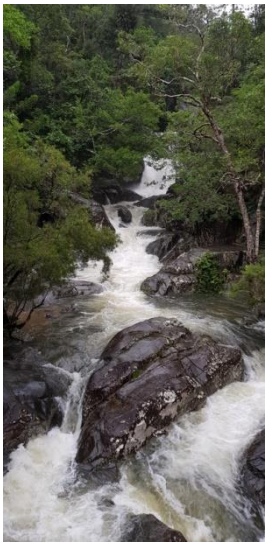
So much for just taking it easy! I've got 4 months covered already. I'd put a picture of someone with raised eyebrows here if I could!

On a side note, internet connection is very patchy at Toomulla so any internet notification of birds seen has to wait until I'm back in town.

Annette Sibson.

THE WEATHER

Barbara and I had plans for a birding trip to Paluma.



Little Crystal Creek

Running River

The Weatherman forecasted possible heavy rain for the planned Sunday and Monday. As all the 'promised' rain over the last several months had by-passed Townsville, we decided to go ahead. There was some reasonably light rain on Sunday morning so we assumed the 'big deluge' has given Townsville region a miss again. In hindsight, it was

a foolhardy assumption. When we got to Little Crystal Creek on the way up, we realised there had been a bit more rain than we were expecting. We still persisted and as a result, spent a sleepless night listening to the heavy rain and bits and pieces of trees pelting the roof. Of course, there was not a lot of bird activity.

On the way down the hill on Monday morning we had to dodge one tree, a few bits of branches and a land slip on the road.

But.....it was so lovely to see the rainforest getting such a drenching.

Running River was actually running – first time I've seen this. All the waterfalls along the Paluma Road were thundering down and spilling over the road.

Maybe we are going to have to believe the weather man in future.

Janet Robino

(What a prophesy – Ed.)

MUSEUM MUSINGS

Last week we had a visit from the cruise ship 'Seven Seas Mariner. The booking was for a tour of MTQ for four groups of 40 people, with each group to be in the museum for 90 minutes visit.

It was decided that an experienced volunteer in each area would stay put while others shepherded the groups from one station to the next.

Magpie Goose tongue

Initially the plan was to split the group into 4 so we would have 10 at a time….not enough volunteers so the groups were around 20. Taxidermy was one station and, as those of you who have visited out room will know, there is not enough room for 20 extra. We shifted into the theatre and as there was plenty of room, we provided chairs as some of the folk were getting very weary….its a long time for some oldies to stand and wander and as always there were quite a few with walking sticks and other devices.

Most said they had never seen anything like our Taxidermy before and while some shut their eyes and pretended to be somewhere else, most were fascinated. A retired doctor even gave me a few new ideas!

Magpie Goose

Skull

Now I have been working on this poor car strike victim for weeks and had the bird fully skinned. I showed them the clean skin and the bone from knee to foot ready to have the leg muscle remade and the opposite one with the leg all finished.

The birds head and beak has been fascinating me and so I passed around the tongue… Look at the serrations – no other bird's tongue has anything like this. Then the beak has serrations on both upper and lower sections, which along with that specialized tongue must act like a saw to cut vegetation for food and nesting. The beak is finished with a strong hook. Handy when digging for roots I suspect.

Interesting Facts

* Magpie Geese are the sole living representative of the family Anseranatidae. The bill structure is characteristic but is considered distinct from other related species such as South American screamers and other ducks, swans and geese.

* Earliest records of the group in Australia is an unnamed species found in the late Oligocene Carl Creek Limestone of Queensland

Jaw

*Found in northern Australia and in southern New Guinea. Once found from the Coorong and in the wetlands of South Australia and Western Victoria, overhunting and habitat destruction saw their numbers decimated. Classed as near threatened by Victoria in 2007, some reintroductions have taken place.

*Magpie Geese often breed in triads, one male and two females. All care for the young. These are

reported to be more successful that the ones that have two adults to feed and protect.

*Unlike true geese their moult is gradual so no flightless period results.

Remember Julia, Jenny and I are at MTQ from 9.30 am until about 2.00pm each Tuesday, while Ian and I are there on Wednesday. Tap on the window if you'd like to get a closer look, or ask questions.

Cheers

Beth

UNEXPECTED

Pat and I do Saunders Beach as part of the bi-annual Challenge Count. We have a favourite spot on the LHS of Saunders Beach Road – right next to the 60 kph sign that produces a number of varieties of bush birds, the occasional Beach Stone-curlews (none this time) and the odd car wreck.

On Friday (30th Nov), Pat walked ahead while I kept the car at the first boggy section. After a while, she returned and suggested we drive on. That's when we saw it!

It was a Holden Rodeo ute – the owner was going fishing and had everything that he needed to make it a good trip – EXCEPT!

"Good news... turns out it was just your battery!"

A word of advice – if you come by a car that has broken down and the owner works at the mines – keep driving! The car had stopped - with a dead battery. While he had jumper leads, there was no way I could have driven to where we could use them. The chap was calling his wife to get a new battery so I checked the state of the batteries. His start battery was a boat anchor that day with 5.5v in it, the other is a boat anchor for the next day – 11v in it! The battery leads had corroded, the bolts and washers were rusty. He said he had changed the alternator the previous day – it was a pity he didn't clean the battery terminals!

He also had a good tow rope but TJM (bless their hearts) remove towing hooks when they fit bull bars – so I had to do a 250 point turn so I could use what I thought was a "Toyota towing hook" on the back of the car. Pat held a sapling down so I didn't have to scrape the side of the car and rip the running board off.

I pulled him backwards to within 50m of the main road. It was fairly hairy with both vehicles being about 3.5m apart; he had minimal braking and no power steering. As he was negotiating the last wet spot, he hit a big palm tree with his tray – stopping the operation. We had a look after doing the survey but he had gone – obviously the new battery worked.

Warren Charlton

FLOODS

Just to finish off this issue of the Drongo, I think mention must be made of the unprecedented "catastrophic" weather.

Townsville and just about all of North Queensland, Far North Queensland and the west have faced nearly two weeks of constant monsoonal rain. We have received well over a year's worth of rain in not much over a week.

Black School Weir

It will be interesting to see what will happen to the birds when things start to dry out. There will be water everywhere so no doubt they will be widely dispersed. Many of Birdlife Townsville's regular birding sites will take quite a while to come back on line. The roads to Paluma and Harvey Range are cut by landslides.

The Borrow pits at the dam are full to the brim. No doubt the Bush Garden will have been devastated. Woodstock will be waterlogged and Wongaloo will have disappeared under water. Reed Beds Road has no doubt been flooded. Winton, Richmond and Hughenden have had the country all around flooded.

All the members send their best wishes to anyone who has suffered flood damage. Here is to some dry weather coming up.

Editor

Last year Janet Robino counted 366 birds in the Quest. Congratulations. Please send inyour Quest numbers for the next Drongo by April 26th.