

The Drongo

Number 155 August 2019



Puffins

Cumberland Dam

Dinosaurs

Education Program



FROM THE PRESIDENT

The last few months have been very busy indeed. The Shorebird 2020 winter surveys were all completed. Some records to note are: 50 Eastern Curlews and 1 Collared Kingfisher at Cungulla; 13 Whimbrel and 26 Pied Oystercatchers at Bushland Beach and 43 Grey-tailed Tattlers at Lucinda. And last but certainly not least, 3 Beach Stone-Curlews at Lucinda.

The Birds In Schools Program is well on the way with the Townsville Junior Grammar School students planting their bird-friendly garden. See Wal's article for the full story. Our education and community awareness programs are really ramping up. If you are interested in getting involved contact the committee to get more information on how you can contribute.

Several members helped out at the Sustainability House Open Day. After a slow start, probably because of the cold weather, we were kept very busy with lots of families asking lots of questions. The display cases from the Museum of Tropical North Queensland were a particular hit. One case holds a lovely Barn Owl and the other several kingfishers. There was also a constant queue of kids and adults to look at some very obliging birds through the scopes.

The Photography Group is going strong with several members getting together on the first Tuesday evening each month to share photos and pick up hints from each other. You don't need to be a photographer to come along. Everyone is welcome to join in and enjoy looking at some pretty good photos of birds.

Janet Robino

YOUR COMMITTEE

President: Janet Robino	Janet Cross	Annette Sibson
Secretary: Wal Threlfall	Mark Horvath	Julia Goldsbury
Treasurer: Nina Doyle	Jill Staunton	Peter Staunton

Newsletter Editor Annette Sutton amsgreat@gmail.com

[Deadline for next Drongo is October 31st. Please send articles as Word documents, photos as attachments.](#)

[The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Birdlife Townsville.](#)



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PUFFINS ON SKOMER ISLAND

It all started with Ray reading his photo magazine and an article about Puffins on Skomer Island on the Western coast of Wales. Then we did a bit of searching on the Internet, roped in our son Chris, and, with our daughter kindly lending us her car, we set off in late June from Hertfordshire, fairly close to London.

The first stumbling block was they don't run trips to Skomer on a Monday. As we arrived on the Sunday and were all set for the Monday that was a bit of a blow. Luckily, we still had Tuesday up our sleeve. So much for our research on the Internet. Mr Google let us down.



Guillemots

Ray Sutton

There was plenty to explore in West Pembrokeshire and we heard that there was an area on Military of Defence land nearby where one could walk to the cliff tops and see Guillemots, Kittiwakes, Razorbills and others. Unfortunately, the range was closed for firing practice and our bodies shook as the heavy artillery exploded nearby. Then someone said the military would open the range for a couple of hours at 4.30 pm so, after a nice afternoon tea at a nearby seaside resort (too cold for my liking), we went to Castlemartin, watched them pull down the red flag and unlock the gate, and streamed through with many others to walk past the Royal Tank Regiment and get onto the cliffs.

Just off the coast were several rock stacks, not unlike those on the Great Ocean Road. The tops of several of these were covered with thousands of nesting Guillemots. Guillemots are first cousins of Puffins, a sort of Northern Hemisphere Penguin that can fly. We had no longer settled in when a Great Black-Backed Gull flew in and stole a chick from a momentarily unguarded nest. It flew off with its small prey dangling helplessly.

Back to the Puffins. You can't book the ferry to Skomer and they only take three or four ferries a day with fifty people at a time. So you have to queue up very early at the harbour (very

tiny) to get tickets. Chris left the hotel about 6.30 am and drove down very narrow lanes to the harbour. Six pounds to park for the day. At least you can use the ticket all day. He was about sixty metres from the top of the queue and, even though the office opened at 8.00 am, it was 8.40 by the time he was served. But he got the precious tickets.



Gull with captive chick

Ray Sutton

At 11.30 am we boarded the tiny ferry with 47 others packed in like sardines and set off on the ten minute trip to Skomer Island. Not far from the island, birds were floating in the sea and swirling around in the sky. Puffins and others. On landing, there are eighty-seven stairs to climb but fortunately they are wide and concrete and have good handrails. Then we had to have a briefing before we were let loose on the island. There are quite a few Puffins looking at you curiously as you listen.

Half of the world's population of Manx Shearwaters breed in underground burrows on Skomer each year before heading off to South America. Just under 350,000 pairs it is estimated live on Skomer Island. So all visitors have to be told to stick to the designated pathways for fear of collapsing burrows if you stray. They sleep in the burrows all day and head out to sea to feed at night. The only Shearwaters we saw were dead ones. The Great Black-Backed Gulls wait for them on their return every morning.



Puffin

Annette Sutton

The path at first is steep and very rocky. After about two kilometres we came to The Wick which is the cliff top area where the Puffins

congregate. There is a gravel path about a metre wide along the cliff top and the access path joins it at right angles. Puffins were wandering about everywhere. The surrounding country was mostly grass flats with daisies all through the grass, making a very picturesque background for such quirky, pretty little birds. They are quite tiny, only about 18 cm tall and weigh in at 500 grams.



The Puffins pair off and either reclaim an old burrow or dig a new one to raise their one little Puffling. They hunt far out to sea and bring back mouthfuls of sand eels or other small fish.

The jaws of the puffin enable it to carry multiple small fish simultaneously. While the jaws of many other birds are hinged at one point, the puffin's beak has a flexible hinge, allowing it to control the degree to which its mouth opens. In addition, the upper and lower jaws of the puffin are joined together with a soft and stretchy piece of flesh known as a "rosette", which allows the puffin to open its mouth even wider than the average bird. The inside of the upper jaw is also textured with a series of "spines" known as denticles, which point back towards the throat. The puffin can hold its prey against the denticles with its strong tongue, and can continue hunting for more prey while holding its previous catch in place.

Puffins on average carry around 10 fish at a time, but have also been sighted carrying up to 60 fish simultaneously. From asknature.org



They flew on to the top of the cliff with their mouths full and then ran very purposefully up the bank to their burrows, sometimes almost walking over my feet. You have to stand stock still when they run past so as not to frighten or bamboozle them. I saw one with a bit of nesting material and one running around with a



Thief

Ray Sutton

small stone in its mouth. Home decoration? Gulls would sometimes threaten them, chasing them to see if they could steal the fish. The Puffins won in the skirmishes I saw.

The iconic feature of the Atlantic puffin is its brightly coloured striped beak. But after breeding they return to the sea and stay at sea for eight months, during which time they shed their colourful beaks and black eyeliner and are just a dull grey. Very little is known about this phase of the Puffin's life.



Razorbill

Ray Sutton

Breeding around the cliffs below the Puffins were Guillemots, Razorbills and Kittiwakes. Fulmars also breed there. They are like a small albatross and glide around the area. We also saw Oyster Catchers which are a lot like our Pied Oystercatchers – same genus, different species. And a rabbit.

Puffins should be on everybody's bucket list.

Annette Sutton

<https://www.welshwildlife.org/skomer-skokholm/skomer/>

CUMBERLAND DAM

I'd heard of this place and the thrilling birds that visit it so I was really keen to get out and about with the binos before we'd set up the van. My wonderful husband sent me off to check it out while he did the set up. It's probably a lot more peaceful that way!!

Wow! What a great place. My initial look around wasn't very productive. It was the middle of the day and lots of vans were coming in and setting up. I had another go in the evening; it was much better and by then I'd scoped out how to get out around to the back of the dam.



Masked Finch

So I got up with the birds, pre dawn. It was pretty damn cold I can tell you, especially for a north coast Queenslander. I had lots of layers on. Gloves would have been handy!!



Yellow-tinted Honeyeater

The light was glorious, with just enough light cloud to give wonderful colours to the sky. Two Brolga flew into the dam, through that glorious colour..whoot... On venturing further, I discovered three Forest Kingfisher using the same leafless tree as a perch to catch their breakfast. Lots of honeyeater types were singing their heads off with an occasional call from a Paperbark Flycatcher.

I walked on, rubbing my hands to try to warm them as best I could. Standing still, I saw and heard the local gang of Grey-crowned Babblers. They are such lovely birds. These were happy

to continue to feed while I photographed them. Next I came across a lovely pair of Rufous Whistlers; the male posed so nicely for me.

Eventually I made my way back to the van and breakfast. Sam had been for a walk too, through the fence and along the river bed. He said there were a few little pools of water and one in particular with some small birds busily



Grey-crowned Babbler

drinking and bathing.

So after breakfast we headed off to the riverbed. Well, wow! The paperbarks were in full flower so the bird activity there was non-stop. I had a hard time keeping up with the types of birds visiting, let alone the numbers. After nearly falling into a rabbit hole (dodgy ankles!!) and giving myself a big fright, I settled down and managed to identify some of the birds. Honeyeaters predominated, Yellow-tinted, Rufous-throated of various ages, Blue-faced, Brown, Banded and Yellow were the majority. Then there were Little Friarbird, Yellow-throated Miner, Rainbow Lorikeet, Varied Lorikeet (whoot!), Black-faced Woodswallows were also making the most of the feast of nectar.

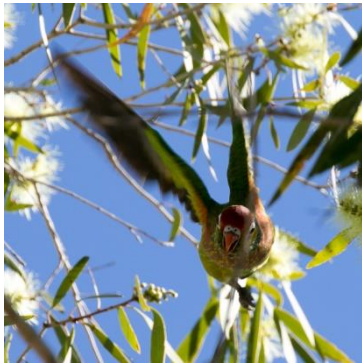


Brolgas flying in

We finally left the blossom and trees and found the small puddle Sam had discovered. Well the treats there were amazing... Black-throated Finch (northern race) were coming and going, bathing, drinking and just sitting. Masked Finch where doing much the same. Banded Honeyeaters where enjoying the water too, from juvenile up to adults. At one point a gang of Apostlebirds turned up to disrupt the small

birds. I used the noise to move closer and try for better photos. It didn't take long for the small birds to return and initially they were a bit cautious and settled along the bank that I couldn't see, of course!! But then they relaxed more and I managed to get some shots of the visitors. At one point my photos were being photobombed by Black-throated Finches, hahaha.. I'll let the photo's tell the story..

The birds relaxed to the point that I had Masked Finch preening after a bath just 2 metres from me, in the small tree that I was using as a very poor hide!! I was in heaven I can tell you. Every so often I stopped breathing so as not to



Varied Lorieet

scare the birds that arrived. A pair of Diamond Doves came along, stayed long enough for a quick drink, not long enough for a photo. A pair of Pale-headed Rosellas landed in the tree that hung over the water, but never ventured further. A Rufous Whistler came and sat in the water, eventually bathing and splashing a bit of water about. During all this various honeyeaters flew into and out of the water, bathing. They were mostly Yellow-tinted with an occasional Brown and Rufous-throated joining in.



Black-throated and Masked Finches

Eventually the Apostlebirds returned and the small birds departed once again. I picked myself up and headed over to where Sam was sitting. By the time Sam had headed off and I was getting ready to follow, the Black-throated Finches (northern race) were back in the puddle. Obviously I wasn't too scary!!

Annette Sibson

BIRDS IN SCHOOLS

Birdlife Townsville has been participating in the Birdlife Australia "Birds in Schools" program and in May this year, your Committee participated in the "plant out" of a bird friendly garden at the Townsville Grammar Junior School, Annandale.



But, first what is the "Birds in Schools" program --- "Birds in Schools" is an environmental education project designed to engage students in the scientific process through investigating and monitoring the birds and habitat of their school grounds, with the ultimate aim of developing and implementing an Action Plan related to improving school biodiversity.



In the case of Townsville Grammar Junior School the "Action Plan" involved:

Bird surveys and the collection, distribution and understanding of the data on the bird species and number of birds within the school grounds;

Designing and building of bird nesting boxes;

The "planting out" of a bird friendly garden to improve school biodiversity

So on Thursday 30 May from 9am to 12 noon we met at the school garden to commence the plant out; 35 Grade 6 Students, the Principal (Noel Nethery) and Teacher (Shandelle O'Reilly), 5 members of Birdlife Townsville (Janet Robino, Wal Threlfall, Jill & Peter Staunton and Janet Cross); TCC Councillor Anne-Maree Greaney; Uncle Alfred from the Bindal People; Helene James TCC Community Involvement Officer and 4 TCC staff from the Gardening Dept. as well as the local media.

Speeches by the Principal Noel Nethery and TCC Councillor Anne-Maree Greaney started the proceedings, followed by a traditional smoking ceremony performed by Uncle Alfred, TCC staff advised on the correct method of planting, then it was all action stations as the students commenced the great "plant out" (TCC generously provided 100 shrubs and bushes) --- everyone got down and dirty !!!



The day finished with Birdlife Townsville and the students installing a bird bath, with 3 nest boxes to be placed in trees (within the school grounds) at a later date.

A very satisfying and enjoyable day was had by all and our important message of bird and habitat conservation was on display for the next generation.



I can certainly recommend to Birdlife Townsville members that this is a program you should get involved with, so next time you see an email calling for volunteers --- GET INVOLVED.

Wal Threlfall



PALMETUM MAY

On a cool, fairly overcast day, six hardy members met at the Palmetum for our monthly outing. Birding was pretty slow to start with. The Lagoon area yielded 5 Forest Kingfishers, 1 Intermediate Egret, 1 adult and 4 Juvenile Jacana, 2 Darters, 1 Great Bowerbird, 1 Mistletoebird, a few Masked Lapwings and many, many Australian White Ibis. We had a pleasant walk through the rainforest but the birds were very few and far between.

Things livened up when we got to the Turtle Bridge. There was lots of mistletoe in flower which was alive with Sunbirds, Mistletoebirds, White-gaped and Brown Honeyeaters, Rufous Fantail, Bee-eaters, Forest Kingfishers and Helmeted Friarbirds.



As we were heading off to the tea rooms for what we all considered was a well-earned cuppa, two very small flashes of colour rocketed across the creek accompanied by one high pitched 'peep'. With great anticipation and excitement we searched the area where we thought they may have flown into. Sharp-eyed Julie was the one to spot our little bird perched on a branch over the water. It was, of course a Little Kingfisher! While we were watching it, an Azure Kingfisher flew in and perched right beside it.

None of us was quick enough to get a photo of them sitting side by side, but who cares!! The Little Kingfisher was a 'Lifer' for Jill, Peter, Julie and Anne. As for me, it is always such a thrill to see an Azure Kingfisher and a major highlight to see a Little Kingfisher....but to see 2 Little Kingfisher and then see a Little and an Azure sitting together was just amazing.

To finish off a great morning we had a lovely morning tea and stimulating conservation at the Tumbetin Lodge.

Janet Robino



ARE BIRDS DINOSAURS

Birds are not just descended from avian dinosaurs. They are dinosaurs.

Here is a collection of bits and pieces from the internet.

Ask your average palaeontologist who is familiar with the phylogeny of vertebrates and they will probably tell you that yes, birds (avians) are dinosaurs. Using proper terminology, birds are avian dinosaurs; other dinosaurs are non-avian dinosaurs, and (strange as it may sound) birds are technically considered reptiles.



Archaeopteryx

Australian Museum

<https://ucmp.berkeley.edu/diapsids/avians.html>

Birds are part of the group Diapsida, which also includes all other living reptiles (crocodilians, turtles, tuataras, and squamates (mostly snakes and lizards)). ... These evolved over the next 65 million years into modern birds. So birds aren't just closely related to dinosaurs, they really are dinosaurs!

<https://askabiologist.asu.edu/questions/birds-dinosaurs-reptiles>

Birds [evolved from a group of meat-eating dinosaurs](#) called theropods. That's the same group that Tyrannosaurus rex belonged to, although birds evolved from small theropods, not huge ones like T. rex.

The oldest bird fossils are about 150 million years old. These ancient birds looked quite a lot like small, feathered dinosaurs and they had much in common. Their mouths still contained sharp teeth. But over time, birds lost their teeth and evolved beaks. Can you imagine coming face-to-face with a toothy pigeon?

After more than 140 million years in charge, the [reign of the dinosaurs came to an abrupt end](#) when a huge asteroid strike and massive

volcanic eruptions caused disastrous changes to the environment. Most dinosaurs went extinct. Only birds remained.

Over the next 66 million years, birds evolved in many ways, which enabled them to survive in lots of different habitats. Today there are at least 11,000 bird species.

But with such a close relationship to the extinct dinosaurs, why did birds survive?

The answer probably lies in a combination of things: their small size, the fact they can eat a lot of different foods and their ability to fly.

<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/why-are-birds-the-only-surviving-dinosaurs.html>

There is also a school of thought that argues against this and you can read about it here.

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/tetrapod-zoology/the-birds-are-not-dinosaurs-movement/>

Just something for you to think about.

Annette Sutton

Paleontologists view archaeopteryx as a transitional fossil between dinosaurs and modern birds. with its blend of avian and reptilian features, it was long viewed as the earliest known bird. Discovered in 1860 in Germany, it's sometimes referred to as urvogel, the German word for "original bird" or "first bird." Recent discoveries, however, have displaced archaeopteryx from its lofty title.

Archaeopteryx is a combination of two ancient Greek words: archaios, meaning "ancient," and ptéryx, meaning "feather" or "wing." Archaeopteryx lived around 150 million years ago — during the early Tithonian stage in the late Jurassic Period — in what is now Bavaria, southern Germany. At the time, Europe was an archipelago and was much closer to the equator than it is today, with latitude similar to Florida, providing this basal bird, or "stem-bird," with a fairly warm — though likely dry — climate.

Various specimens of Archaeopteryx showed that it had flight and tail feathers, and the well-preserved "Berlin Specimen" showed the animal also had body plumage that included well-developed "trouser" feathers on the legs. Its body plumage was down-like and fluffy like those of the feathered theropod Sinosauropteryx, and may have even been "hair-like proto-feathers" that resemble the fur on mammals, according to a 2004 article in the journal [Comptes Rendus Palevol](#).

SACRED KINGFISHERS

I captured the attached images at the Cungulla boat ramp at about 3.30 pm on Friday when according to 'Willy Weather' on the internet, the tide was at its lowest at about .8m. There were four birds in the sighting which I have identified as Sacred Kingfishers.



As you can see, one of the birds is much more colourful than the others which is related to age I think. The more colourful bird is possibly a young but fully coloured up adult. The birds were really a bit far off to get better images with my camera gear but nevertheless the pics are OK for ID purposes.



The birds were very engrossed in picking morsels from the mangrove mud, hence their muddy beaks. I was wondering if you would like to alert members to this sighting as the birds will probably feed there at around the same time or a bit later in the next few days at low tide when plenty of mud is exposed. People who go there should park well back from the large trees and approach on foot so as not to startle the birds as I did.

Norm Rains

WONGALOO

Maybe the fact that the first Thursday in August was the first day of the month caught everyone by surprise. Maybe this could be the reason only Wal and I did the trek to Wongaloo to do the monthly survey. Whatever the reason, it is a real pity more members did not make the effort to get out of bed early on what was a beautiful Townsville winter day and join in the outing.

Wongaloo was at its best. The water levels were very high, most likely due to the very high tide in the early hours of the morning. The birdlife was a sight to behold. Even with only two pairs of eyes doing the counting, the number and variety of birds was mind-blowing – and they were just the ones we could see at any given time. We just knew there were a lot more hiding behind little islands and just too far away for us to be able to count even with the scope.

There were well over two thousand (2000) Magpie Geese; One thousand and two hundred (1200) Grey Teal; Several hundred Pacific Black Ducks; a heap of Royal Spoonbills and a good number of the usually elusive Yellow-billed Spoonbills. To get the complete list see the link to the Birddata list that Wal has sent to everyone.

Regardless of numbers, the sight of several hundred Grey Teal swirling around in the sky as a pair of Swamp Harriers did a 'getting to know you flight' overhead was magnificent. A pair of White-bellied Sea-Eagles was sitting cozily in their nest. A flock of at least sixty (60) Chestnut-breasted Mannikins erupted from the grass to perch in a tree to let us have a nice view. A pair of Brown Quail sprang from the grass right at our feet. A couple of Red-winged Parrots did a fly-by.



Green Pygmy-Geese

On and on it went.....but the highlight for both Wal and me was the twenty eight (28) Green Pygmy-Geese nestled amongst the water lilies at Pygmy Pond. Yes, it was definitely 28, and it is such a little pond.

Janet Robino

FLAT CREEK STATION

The early morning drive to the fence into Rocky Dam was through low grassland with birds calling all the way.

Under the fence and down the slight slope, again through low grassland, more birds calling (lots of White-throated Gerygone singing). On arrival, eight Red-winged Parrots took off, at least one whinging loudly. I found a great spot beside a tree, in the shade, somewhat concealed and with full view of the whole dam. I set up my scope to suit my seat, held my binoculars in my lap and I was ready. (No camera today!)

First cab of the rank was some argy bargy between a Black Kite pair and a Whistling Kite. One Black Kite disappeared into the top of a tree with much noise. I scoped a nest with probable young, given the racket that could be heard every time an adult bird came within sight. The nest was only partially visible through the branches. It became obvious to me that these were resident birds (Black Kite and Whistling Kite) and there was an occasional harmless clash throughout the morning.

The Red-winged family came to drink, all 8 together on a dead tree. Later on I had dad and two young drinking within 10 metres of where I was sitting. I think dad was trying to encourage his continually whinging offspring to fill up on water. It worked for one, not the other. The joys of parenting!!

Seven Black-throated Finches (northern race) came to drink; they were 10 metres or so from me. Great views with the scope.

A Forest Kingfisher came over and caught some breakfast. Several pairs of Jacky Winter were feeding from dead tree vantage points, occasionally bursting into song.

I was thrilled when a Wallaby came very close for a few minutes. It had a drink and nibbled on the green grass nearby. It eventually gave in to its nervousness and headed off into the bush.

A White-necked Heron caught itself a fish and was mobbed by the kites. It was able to evade them and keep its dinner after lots of jostling and calling. By then there were 3 Whistling Kites and the Black Kite.

In the meantime the waterbirds were busily feeding. There were plenty of Eurasian Coots, Comb-crested Jacanas and Green Pygmy-Geese. I scoped out a Cotton Pygmy-Goose pair (no photo and out of range anyway) but easily distinguishable from the Green Pygmy-Geese by that white head and neck. There was a lone Hardhead, a pair of Pacific Black Ducks and a family group of Australasian Grebes.

Of course the morning wouldn't be complete without a visit from the local Apostlebird gang, loud, raucous and plentiful. I was surprised

when two Pale-headed Rosellas joined the Apostlebirds in a nearby tree.

Another large group of birds that was busy drinking and making lots of noise were the Blue-faced Honeyeaters. I counted 30 of them at one point.

Over from my spot I could see various Finch types going to the water for a drink. Double-barred predominated, a few Zebra and a few Black-throated (northern race).

An Australasian Darter sat perched in a tall dead tree, joined once by two Blue-winged Kookaburras.

It was time to go and as I was moving to pack up I spied 3 crane in the bush to my left. Unfortunately they had moved off by the time I got my binoculars up.

It was a glorious way to spend three hours.

Annette Sibson

BIRDING UK

One of the big success stories in the UK is the resurgence of the Red Kite. They were nearly extinct in the first half of the 20th century but have been gradually increasing in population so that they are now a common sighting in many parts of the UK. The kites began making a comeback in Wales after being down to just a few pairs. During the 1950s, the rabbit myxomatosis outbreak devastated a main food supply of the kites. This was followed by poor breeding success in the early 1960s, thought to be caused by effects of organochlorine pesticides.



Red Kite with Starling

Ray Sutton

The re-introduction programme run by RSPB, Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage, with support and sponsorship from many other bodies, started in 1989 and has helped to establish Red Kites in several areas of England and Scotland, and their range and numbers are slowly expanding. They are a common sight over our daughter's back garden and Ray even photographed one clutching a Starling in its talons. Whether it was prey or carrion, we don't know. Our Black kite is *Milvus migrans* and the

Red Kite is *Milvus milvus*, so they are first cousins.

One bird everyone wants to see in England is the Kingfisher. It is not rare but hard to find. We went to a hide in Hemel Hempstead where there is reported to be a breeding pair. It is only open to the public on a Thursday morning but a gentleman named Mike obtained permission from the Trust that runs it to invite us as his guests at any time. One morning a young male flew in and sat on a stick, fleetingly. I took a few shots but the camera didn't find the bird really well so they are a bit blurry. Ray didn't see him at all. Another morning I saw him fly very fast across the spring.



Kingfisher Annette Sutton

We did get to see Wrens (which are also a bit hard to find), Dunnocks, Yellow Wagtails, Reed Buntings, Goldfinches, Lesser Whitethroats, and more common species such as Blue and Great Tits, Wood Pigeons, Moorhens, Magpies, Blackbirds and Mallards.



Great Spotted Woodpecker Ray Sutton

On a trip to Devon we visited several hides near Exmouth. There were dozens of Redshanks there and I found a Black-tailed Godwit and some Dunlin. The Little Egrets we saw are the same species as the ones in Australia. On a

ferry trip along the Jurassic Coast, we saw Cormorants resting on a cliff top and dozens of Kittywakes nesting on the face. There were Herring Gulls and Black-headed Gulls at the beach.

We discovered a back yard with some bird feeders and we were peering over the fence when the dogs barked and the owner of the house emerged to see what was going on. He kindly invited us in and we sat there on his back patio for an hour or more. The other bird everybody wants to see is a Woodpecker and a Great Spotted turned up at the feeder. First he perched in tree and hid behind the trunk. Then he peeped around the right hand side, hid again and then peeked around the left. He did this a few times in a most engaging manner and then he decided it was OK and came out into the open and onto the feeder. We picked up a few new birds here – Chaffinch, Black Cap, Nuthatch and a very bright yellow Siskin. Some Robins also entertained us.



Chaffinch Ray Sutton

St. James's Park was the other highlight. When you walk up the beautiful flower-lined paths from Horseguards' Parade you come to a lake and all sorts of waterfowl are roaming the walkway. There are native and exotic birds. Lots of Coot (same species as ours), Moorhens (different species), Swans, Ducks and Geese wander around your feet. A few of the more striking ones were Red-crested Pochard, Shelduck, Red-breasted Goose, Bahama Pintails and even a Black Swan. There are four species of geese. A Lot of the birds had young. Flying around were flashes of green. They are part of a large London population of Indian Ringnecks, presumably the beginnings of which were escapees. There were three Pelicans in the park and three more have just arrived from Prague so the park keepers have erected a fence along the side of the lake and the birds no longer wander around your feet and a lot had disappeared last time we went. The fence is to stop the Pelicans roaming off. Hope they take it down after a few months because it spoiled the whole experience.

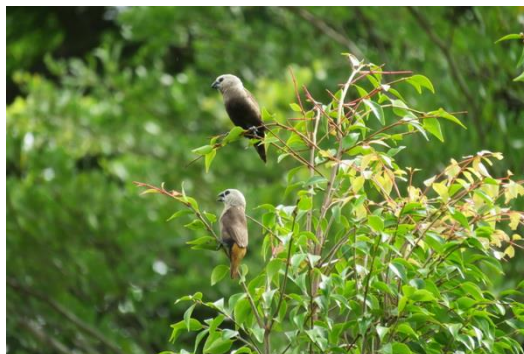
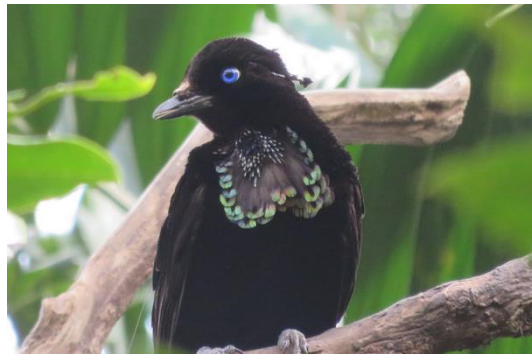
Hope we see the Kingfisher again.

Annette Sutton

A DRONGO CHALLENGE!

This challenge to Birdlife Townsville members is to identify the following PNG birds. The photos were sent to Peter and Jill Staunton by Bruce Wilson who worked as a remote area Nurse Practitioner in PNG. The photos were taken three months ago.

Peter Staunton



MORE FROM WONGALOO

Janet Robino



A FEW MORE FROM UK

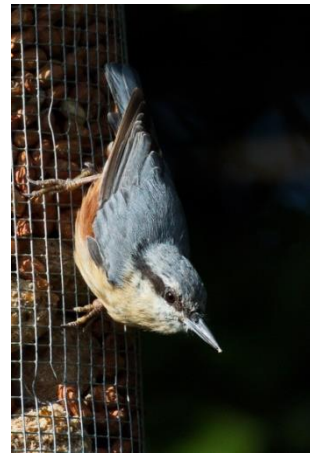
Ray Sutton



Blue Tit



Magpie



Nuthatch



Female Blackcap



Black-headed Gull



Robin

QUEST

Name	Quest Number	Date
Janet Robino	265	22/09/2019
Pat Charlton	243	31/08/2019
Ian Leach	243	31/08/2019
Annette Sibson	236	24/08/2019
Warren Charlton	232	20/08/2019
Rosemary Payet	225	13/08/2019
Wal Threlfall	224	12/08/2019
Marleen Acton	260	17/09/2019
Mark Horvath	207	26/07/2019
Janet Cross	199	18/07/2019
Janet Cross	199	18/07/2019
Elna Kerswell	191	10/07/2019
Cecily Messer	171	20/06/2019
Barbara Reidy	166	15/06/2019
Wendy Kaus	166	15/06/2019
Annette Sutton	155	4/06/2019
Julia Goldsbury	83	24/03/2019

