

The Drongo

Number 154 May 2019



Ray Sutton

Bladensburg

Ecologica

Fork-tailed Swifts



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Due to the severe weather event in February, BirdLife Townsville's Annual General Meeting was cancelled and rescheduled to 9 March 2019. I was unable to attend as I had already booked flights for a trip down south. According to the feedback I've had from many who attended, I missed a great presentation by Jill Staunton, author of "Reiver's Moon". As I had already read Jill's book, I was very disappointed to miss this talk. The minutes of the AGM have been distributed to members with names of your new committee members. At the April meeting, Peter and Jill Staunton were endorsed to fill the two Committee Member vacancies.

The committee welcomes feedback and suggestions from members. Please do this via email, phone or approaching one of the committee at a meeting. It really isn't appropriate to have these discussions at outings. The committee members are just like everyone else, too focused on looking for birds and having a good time to be taking in serious stuff or indeed, remembering it by the time they get home.

Fortunately, I did not miss the 2018 Christmas Party. Once again, it was a resounding success. Thanks to Nina once again, for the entertaining Christmas Trivia Quiz. Just as well we were in a separate room. With all the laughter, 'objections' and shouts of disbelief, we may well have been asked to leave the premises for 'disruptive behaviour'. Wal presented our 'year in review' which was not only informative but just as entertaining as the Quiz. Once again, Santa made an appearance. Interestingly, Norm seems to disappear just before Santa turns up each year.

Of course, due to the severe weather event, we also had to cancel several of our usual outings and surveys, so it's no wonder we had 23 very eager members attending our Mngela/Clare Trip on Sunday 28 April. Wal had made up a roster for car-pooling so we were all belted up and ready to head off right on time at 0630. We had a great lunch at Claredale Pastures and of course, saw some great birds on the way. We arrived home at 1700, tired but happy.

This would be a good time to remind everyone about driving in convoy. Car headlights to be on, allow enough space between vehicles to allow safe overtaking by other traffic, nominate a 'tail-end Charlie', maintain radio contact (especially between leader and 'tail-end Charlie'), and of course, obey all road rules. If you are lucky enough to be one of the non-drivers, remember to offer the driver a contribution towards the cost of fuel.

Despite the rain and floods in February, many members have made a great start on their Year Quest. Remember to email Wal on contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au to register for the Quest and provide your current number for recording in the Drongo.

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

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Deadline for next Drongo is Wednesday July 31st.

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

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SCOTTISH VISITORS

Recently Wendy and I hosted our Scottish relatives for a tour of North Queensland. As they knew we were birders, Geoff purchased the latest publication on Australian Birds – The CSIRO one, and studied it intently for the 4 weeks before he arrived. "How many species do you think I might see?" he asked on the first day... "At least 50," we said, not knowing just how keen he was.

Well this was a case of the Luck of the Scots!! We managed to find him a list of 165 in the 4 weeks we searched. It seemed that new birds just appeared to add to his count – and not just birds. I don't know how many of you have stopped at Peterson Creek in Yungaburra to search for a platypus, but I for one had decided that they didn't exist!

Never the less, down we trotted down early one morning, arriving around 7. We started at the northern end, asking the other early searchers if they had seen any activity. Soon we were getting positive replies with, "Just back up that way!" We hurried quietly along, getting more encouragement and then there they were – possibly 3-5 diving, swimming, eating and at one stage even fighting. We watched, photographed and enjoyed.



Later the same day, after deciding on lunch at Malanda Falls because of the drizzle that had followed us around Lake Eacham, we decided to look for a Tree Kangaroo. After lots of looking at the Nerada Tea factory road-side vegetation, sharp-eyed Wendy spied 'a tail'. We followed it up with our glasses and came at last to a large Tree Kangaroo, happily feeding in the top of a very tall tree. Now I expect many Australians have yet to see either a Tree kangaroo or a Platypus, but to see both in the one day along with Whipbirds, Robins, Chowchillas, Cuckoo-shrikes etc was unheard of...

We enjoyed sharing our beautiful part of the world with Jane and Geoff. They marveled at our trees – the size, variety and number. They were impressed by the number of National Parks and the areas of seemingly untouched vegetation. Undara was a stark contrast to the rainforest, but equally enjoyed. Finally, it was coastal delights.

Etty Bay and surrounds netted us 5 Cassowaries... two of which were so calm and laid back that they rested sitting on their feet. One behind the vans, drank from a bucket of water, which was obviously known to the bird, while the other, sat on the side of the road – watching the cars go by.

Our last morning with them allowed a quick trip to Laudham Park Road to try for a Bustard. We found two, as well as a Pipit and a Brown Falcon. They are now resting for a few days on an island before heading back to the chill of a Scottish Winter.



We enjoyed sharing and rediscovering the wonders of our own back yard. Sometimes we need others to remind us that we are very blessed to have so many birds, animals and natural areas. "I hope you all realize what a rare thing this is," Geoff said more than once.

Beth Snewin

BUSH GARDEN

I was keen to find a Tawny Frogmouth, they must be here in the Bush Garden somewhere. I have never found a Tawny Frogmouth on my own. I and my husband were busy craning our necks up into any likely looking tree. I spied some droppings under one tree so spent a good while peering up into that tree, warming up my neck muscles.



We wandered along the track some more and saw a fellow bird watcher, binoculars up, quietly watching 'something'. I approached; she spied me and said she had something up here, so up I went and spied a lovely pair of Leaden Flycatchers. On speaking with her, she said she knew there was a Tawny Frogmouth around there somewhere. She found it, and pointed it out to me,

whooot! We had a bit more of a chat and went our separate ways, I up towards the weir and she back towards the road.

I peered into every paperbark along that track, up, around, behind, covering as much of each tree as I could. Chatting to my husband, pointing out what looked like a pile of plant rubbish (are they tidying up?) I looked further up the paperbark that was behind that pile of plant rubbish and low and behold there was a Tawny Frogmouth. Finally I'd found a Tawny Frogmouth on my own. All others have been pointed out to me by other people, so I was pretty happy.

After checking all the other trees (apparently there are 3 Tawny's in the area) we headed back along the path. We stopped at the first Tawny Frogmouth site, just to check it out. There were a few honeyeaters giving it a hard time. Standing there, just watching the honeyeaters, I spied the 3rd Tawny, not up in the trees, but down at our knees!! It was sitting quietly in a very low bush, being harassed by the honeyeaters. The fellow birdwatcher and I would have walked right beside it earlier!

Mission accomplished.

Annette Sibson

BERTO THE PNG FRUIT DOVE

This story is recounted by Bruce, a remote area Nurse Practitioner, who works in PNG

PNG Fruit Doves very commonly fall foul of man-made structures that appear without warning in their forest and jungles: fences, the mining Rig and container structures, for example. We saw one injured bird every second day or so within the fenced site. After resting overnight, most birds were able to launch and fly away by dawn. It seems that, although not actually nocturnal, they are on the wing in the late evening and early morning dark hours which is when they crash into unfamiliar obstacles.



This chap (yes, he was a male) had been picked up by one of the national crane drivers and kept in his crane cab the previous day and preceding night then brought to me the next morning. I wanted to let him go in the light of day and tried to launch him but despite flapping well, he only made a descending flight path to the ground over a 30 metre distance.

After picking him up I noticed blood on my hands and on examining him discovered a large central open chest wound of 3cm x 2.5cm, so I took him into my clinic. I prepared a cage for him then cleaned his wound with betadine, watered and fed him and wondered if he would improve though I was not at all hopeful that he would. I knew it was far too late to attempt suturing the wound as this would increase the likelihood of infection. Strangely, I couldn't see any breast muscle tissue.



I expected to see him flat on the floor the next morning but he was still standing. After finding out that Melky, one of the Indonesian workers onsite, keeps and breeds birds, I asked him for help with feeding and he happily assisted me. Melky fed the fruit dove twice daily with papaya, banana and water and named him 'Berto', after one of his favourite birds.



By day five, the wound began to slowly close and Berto started losing his feathers. This continued yet Berto appeared to have an appetite when Melky was feeding him. The bird was growing familiar with the handling, feeding, watering and cleaning routine.

When I opened the clinic each morning, I was surprised to find Berto still perched in his little cage. I really did not expect him to have survived two days, let alone so long. On day ten, he attempted to fly making the wonderful whistling sound of doves as his wings flapped. I wanted to let him go but the evening hours were approaching and I thought releasing him in daylight would be safer. However, on the morning of day eleven, he literally fell forward off his perch, landing face down. Sadly, Berto had endured as long as he could.

As told to Jill Staunton

WINTON – BLADENSBURG

Over Easter, four couples met at Winton in Central Western Queensland to go exploring our favourite haunts in Bladensburg N.P. and around Winton. The Suttons and Actons had a head start and had found an elusive Painted Honeyeater in the National Park (the rest of us never found it).



Crimson Chat

Ray Sutton

On our arrival, a quick trip to the sewerage works started us off well, with flocks of White-browed and Black-faced Woodswallows, as well as an occasional Masked and Little Woodswallow. Diamond Doves, Zebra Finches and Budgies were in abundance, also an occasional Plum-headed Finch, one Crimson Chat, Horsefield's Bronze-Cuckoo, as well as usual birds lurking in the ponds including Reed-Warblers and Little Grassbirds. Variegated Fairy-wren (now known as Purple Backed Fairy Wren) also made themselves visible.



White-browed Woodswallow

Ray Sutton

Next morning three couples headed off early to Bladensburg while Charltons hunted unsuccessfully for a new spare tyre for the van, having blown the original one near Hughenden. We caught up with the others having morning tea at Scrammy Rock Hole. Not a lot of birds to be seen, except Budgies, Grey Shrike-Thrush and one lone male Crimson Chat in full colour. However enroute to this spot the latecomers had good views of a Black Falcon and a Wedgetail Eagle. There had been a lot of rain in areas around Winton and birds were well spread out.

Returning to the main track we found a lunch spot near a swamp. Scouting around the edges we sighted Yellow-rumped Thornbill, two Pallid Cuckoos, Common Bronzewing, more Budgies and Diamond Doves. Warren and I returned to this spot on Easter Monday, while waiting for the shops to open to get a new tyre, and added Inland and Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Weebill,

Grey Fantail, Jacky Winter, Black-shouldered Kite and four Little Button-quail.



Diamond Dove

Annette Sutton

Sunday saw us exploring another area of the park near Skull Hole Gorge. In the spinifex some of us had quick views of Rufous-crowned Emu-wren and Spinifexbirds. Nearby in some flowering shrubs we found Grey-headed, Black and Singing Honeyeaters. One fortunate person saw a Painted Honeyeater. Also seen were Crested Bellbirds, Little Friarbird, Jacky Winter and Pied Butcherbird. Warren and I also returned here on the Monday. Still no Painted Honeyeater but a little further along the track we found three Bourke's Parrots. On Sunday we had lunch at Bough Shed Camp site and were entertained by two large Lace Monitor Lizards who weren't anxious to move. Here there were lots of White-plumed Honeyeaters, Grey Shrike-thrush, Little Friarbirds and more Budgies and Diamond Doves. The same were seen at Gum Hole Creek.



Zebra Finch

Ray Sutton

Leaving here, the Actons had heard of another track, not easy to find. It led to a water hole. Here we saw Olive-backed Oriole, Apostle Birds, Sacred Kingfisher, Grey-crowned Babbler, Black-fronted Dotterels, Grey Teal, and more Budgies and Diamond Doves coming into drink. All told in the Winton area we saw 93 bird species.

After collecting a tyre on Tuesday enroute towards home, we stopped in Pentland to look at the dam. Saw the usual ducks and water birds, about 20 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, lots of Black-fronted Dotterel, plus Spotted and Great Bowerbird, Red-backed Kingfisher, Plum-headed, Zebra and Double-barred Finches.

A quick return trip to the dam before leaving on Wednesday was a highlight when we saw two male and one female Australasian Shoveler.

Pat Charlton

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

For some weeks in February and March, I was harassed by our resident Masked Lapwings. The parents had bred four young ones and had successfully protected them by the usual Lapwing tactics of screeching and screaming and going on the direct attack whenever anyone drew near. Somehow these wretched creatures had the uncanny ability to work out what route I was going to take on my morning walk. If I changed the route, they changed their attack position which often entailed hiding around a corner, and remaining silent until I was almost upon them. Several times I had to retreat in an undignified manner, until I deemed I was safe, but the necessity to continually look back over my shoulder really bugged me. I use a walking stick, but I'm sure if I had to swing it at my attacker I would fall over and break a hip, so that wasn't an option.



One morning, while pausing at my usual spot on the bridge spanning our Council drain to check for the resident Black-fronted Dotterels, I noticed a Sulphur Crested Cockatoo sitting on the power line which crossed the drain. The Lapwings were just over the bridge and slightly to the left. Suddenly the Cockatoo took off and swung low over them, stirring the parents into wild protestations as they rose to the attack with a great deal of screeching. The Cockatoo circled ahead of its pursuers, circled around and dive-bombed the chicks again. I stood cheering quietly and in some wonderment about this strange behavior. Imagine the hub-bub! Cockatoo circling and attacking, Lapwings chasing furiously but unable to catch their quarry, and I enjoying the spectacle. I stood transfixed for about 5 minutes while this chase, attack and defend, screeching and shrieking continued. My joy was unconfined as I laughed heartily, while wishing I had someone with me to share this unusual

behavior. I've never seen a Cockatoo swoop and attack anything before, have you? Cockatoo 1, Elna 1, Lapwings 0.

However, I must add that those rotten screeching creatures didn't learn their lesson and next morning were lying in wait for me again in a different place. Thank goodness the chicks have now reached the stage where their parents aren't having to protect them and I can enjoy my walks without being harassed.

Elna Kerswell.

ECOLOGICA

On Friday night the 5th April, I was fortunate to have the very pleasant duty on behalf of Birdlife Townsville to open the current art exhibition "Ecologica" at the Tyto Regional Art Gallery, Ingham.

But first, let's take a step back, as I'm getting a little ahead of myself --- Two weeks ago I received an email from Heather Byrne who extended an invitation to Birdlife Townsville to open "Ecologica".



Bush Stone-curlews Linda Bates

Surprised, I'll say, let's face it --- it's not every day that Birdlife Townsville is asked to open an Art Exhibition. After all, we are involved in the appreciation and protection of Australia's birds and their habitats.

Okay, so what did we (Birdlife Townsville) have in common ????

"Ecologica" is a play on the word "Ecology" from ancient Greek meaning "house or "environment". The Oxford Dictionary details that "Ecology" is a branch of Biology which studies the interactions among organisms (including us humans) and their environment ---- in a

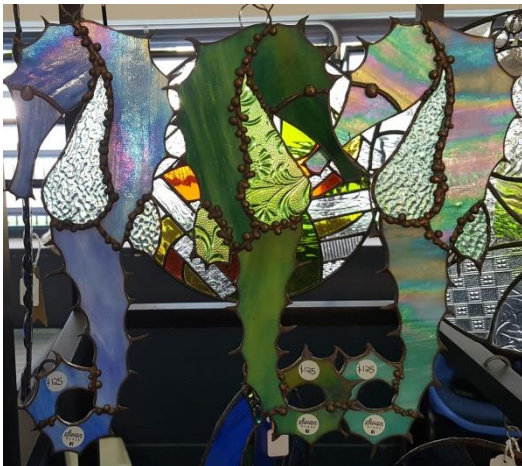
nutshell, the core goal is to understand the abundance and distribution of living things and biodiversity in the physical environment .



Heather Byrne

I contacted Heather Byrne to further discuss the matter -
- "Ecologica," I was informed, was a result of a collaboration between three artists, who are passionate about the flora and fauna of our beautiful country and how they convey this love of the environment through their art.

So, on behalf of Birdlife Townsville, I was delighted to say
--- YES



Sea Horses Sarah Swan

It was now 6.30 pm Friday the 5TH April, Leta and I had arrived at the Tyto Regional Art Gallery, we made ourselves known to the three Artists --- Linda Bates (clay), Sarah Swan (glass) and Heather Byrne (pastel and water colour) and then we took in the amazing art work on display. It was a feast for the eyes --- Linda's pottery;

original, colourful and quirky, depicting our favourite birds and animals --- Sarah's glass; ingenious, they glitter, shine and catch the light, birds in all their beauty --- Heather's pastel and water colours; combining her hobby of bird watching and then capturing via her art, the birds that share her surroundings doing what they do in everyday life ---truly amazing!!

I was so glad I said YES and had this unique opportunity to open this wonderful exhibition "ECOLOGICA".

These three local Artists through their collaboration, talent, and their love of the environment and its inhabitants, let their art tell this wonderful story and in doing so helps us to truly appreciate the beauty that surrounds us and why it must be protected.

If you haven't done so, then take the opportunity now to travel to Ingham and see this wonderful exhibition "ECOLOGICA" which is on display from 4th April to 5TH May.

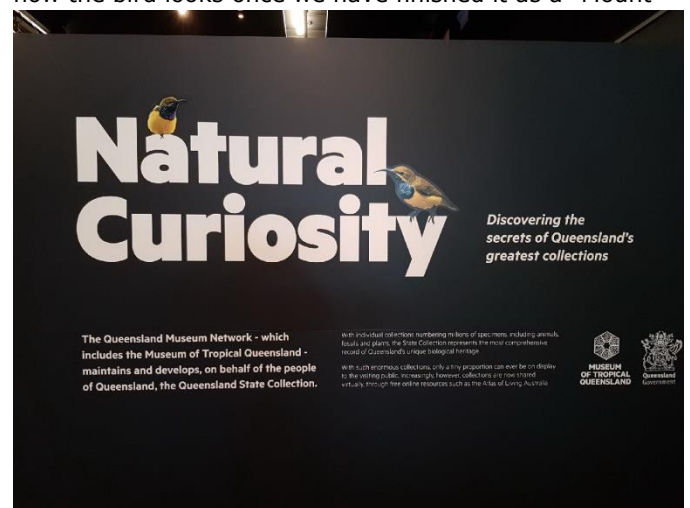
You will not be disappointed.

Wal Threlfall

MUSEUM MUSINGS

The new display at MTQ called "Natural Curiosity" is proving to be very popular. It looks at the many things Museums have 'back of house', hidden in drawers and cupboards and usually only seen by scientists.

It starts with a display of taxidermy with one of our Pheasant Coucals in a half and half mode. One half shows how the bird looks once we have finished it as a "Mount"



and the other half, the work that must take place to have it looking 'real'. Some of our tools of trade, as well as a variety of mounts fill that case. The second case holds a collection of "Skins."

Skins are just that; the bird or animal skinned then lightly filled with cotton wool only, no wires and no eyes. The legs are crossed over the stick that passes through the body to the head, keeping the body straight. These skins



enable researchers to compare the different sizes and variations of a species. Not having the bird "mounted" ensures that no mistakes in size, eye colours or positioning can be made. Skins are kept in climate controlled drawers and as they stay out of the light they fade less than our 'mounts'. Skins are considered valuable for research and are said to last for hundreds of years.

The cases then look at the old style of preservation, pickling in jars... See if you can identify the items. The snake was brought in recently by Jim from Paluma. It is a large Death Adder which he had kept in a jar for over 30 years. Jim was able to tell us the story of how he came to have it and where he had collected it from.

Corals and other items all have fascinating stories, with the many cases in the exhibition drawing the visitor further and further in. Visitors have been commenting most favourably on the display and I'd say it is well worth a visit.

The bird cases are also due for a revamp with Parrots being the most likely next display.

Beth Snewin

WESTERN TRIP

On the Wednesday before Easter we set out on our third trip to Winton in nine months.

Walking back to the car at the Poppet Head in Charters Towers, I noticed that the passenger side rear wheel was looking a bit deflated. After an hour the RACQ chappie turned up and changed the wheel but the tyre was no more. So off we go to a tyre place for a new spare.

On our way again. We dropped in at Pentland to have a look at the dam but, even though there was water in it for the first time in ages, we didn't find any birds of note – not even a Dotterel. So we headed off to Hughenden where we were able to spend the night still hitched up.

Next morning we refuelled and made tracks for Winton. By this time we had been joined by Marleen and Alf. We stopped at the dam with the windmill but there was very

little there. Just a few bush birds flying about. Back on the road, we saw a few Spotted Harriers.

Into Winton and an afternoon visit to the Sewage Treatment Works. Of course. We straight away found Masked and White-browed Woodswallows and quite a lot of Budgies. No Crakes or Native Hens this time. Pat has listed other birds so I will leave it at that.

Bladensburg and all around Winton was Green, Green, Green. There was water in Bladensburg where I have never seen water before. Even Top Crossing had water across the track. Ray and I found a little hotspot on the way to the Ranger station with Crimson Chats, White-winged Trillers, Diamond Doves, various Woodswallows and a few Spinifex pigeons here and there (one of my favourites).



Spotted Harrier

Ray Sutton

Ray loves to sit at Engine Hole with his camera at the ready. We had a lot of fun with the Budgies. They would fly into the gum trees on the opposite bank, check out for dangers, and then flit down to roots that stretched out over the water and have a very quick drink. You had to be quick to photograph them before they flew off.

One pair of Budgies was checking out a hollow in a tree right beside us. There was a bit of courting going on. Another pair was very busy chewing away at the bark on a nearby tree. Cockatiels and Galahs flew in and out and there were the usual White-plumed Honeyeaters. Even the resident Whistling Kite turned up to say hello.



We left Winton for Lara Wetlands, 28 kilometres south of Barcaldine then in on a 13 kilometre nicely graded dirt road. We have had lots of birds there before but not this time. Everything was green here too and the widespread water must mean wide spread birds. The only ducks we found were four Grey Teal. They have built a dirt wall all around the waterhole (man-made and filled with artesian

water). That means there are now no shallow edges or beach so the Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterels and the Black-winged Stilts have given the place the flick. Not sure if it affected the Pink-eared Ducks and Native Hens but they were not there either.

Next stop U.K. – a whole world of different birds.

Annette Sutton

CICADABIRD - A LIFER FOR ME

In mid- April 2019 I finally found and photographed a Cicadabird to add to my collection of Australia's Cuckoo-shrike images. I located the bird at the Alligator Creek Camp Ground in the Bowling Green Bay National Park just up the road from home, hence it's a 'local' for me.



Cicadabird

Courtesy ebird

The bird, a male, was high up in the canopy of a tall eucalypt and not in a good position for a clear photograph. Besides being partially screened by foliage, the windy and overcast conditions at the time were most unhelpful for a clear shot. I did however manage to fire off enough to get a least one photo that shows features such as overall dark grey colour and the almost black wing feathers. The bird uttered no sound during the few minutes of my sighting, (apparently the males don't call up this way), so I was unable to confirm the sighting by its call, nor did it display the wing-shuffling behaviour of the other larger Cuckoo-shrikes, which, according to the field guides, is normal for this species.

Cicadabirds, named because the call of the adult male is said to be like the chirrup of a cicada, belong to the family *Campephagidae*, the caterpillar-eaters, named from the Greek *kampe* (caterpillar, silkworm) and *phagein*, (eat). There are two genera in Australia, *Coracina* (Greek-Korakinos --young Raven) to which the four other Cuckoo-shrikes belong. The other genus of this family is the '*lalage*' *lalage*—Greek (*babbling* or *croaker*) which is represented locally by the White-winged and Varied Trillers.

The common name "Cuckoo-shrike", applied to all birds in the *Coracina* genus in Australia, except Cicadabirds, is unfortunately a combination of names of birds from two entirely unrelated taxonomical Orders, the Cuckoos and the Shrikes. The Cuckoo-shrikes are neither a Shrike nor

a Cuckoo. One authority suggests the 'Cuckoo' part of the name arises from the overall grey colours and dipping flight of many Cuckoos and 'Shrike' is from the birds' robust beaks designed for grasping and killing. Who knows but having said this, the name Cuckoo-shrike has survived through the years so I guess we are stuck with it.

All I need now is a good clear shot of the male Cicadabird and a sighting and shot of a female of this species to complete my collection of this genus. Now that I have the one sighting of the male, I will be haunting the Alligator Creek Camping Ground until I am successful.

Norm Rains

BIRDS AND NETS

From the Adelaide Advertiser Friday 5 April 2019

RSPCA South Australia is calling on Adelaide to be more "net aware" after capturing animals which have become entangled in disposal nets.

A team of four officers have rescued nine birds and one fox this year. However, there are fears there could be more animals that are caught in nets and never found. Some of the birds had already died from injuries and exhaustion. The surviving animals needed treatment for injuries such as broken wings and legs.

Animals have been caught in netting protecting fruit trees, netting and shade clothes on sporting fields, in playgrounds and abandoned buildings.

RSPCA South Australia senior rescue officer Nalika Van Loenen said it's "truly heartbreaking" to find birds struggling to free themselves.

"One can only imagine the shock and fear they experience when they fly into these nets and suddenly find themselves stuck" she said.

"Our suburbs are full of potentially lethal traps as a result of these nets being erected without thought to the danger they pose to wildlife. We'd like people to be net aware – to identify potential wildlife traps and take steps to remove the risk."

RSPCA asks people to consider alternative ways to protect fruit, such as placing bags over it, try wildlife friendly netting and discarding unneeded netting. The base of nets should also be secured to the trunk of a tree, make a frame for the net so it's stretched tight. Do check nets regularly.



SPOTTED DOVE

The Spotted Dove is native to eastern Asia. It was introduced into Australia in the mid 1800s and early 1900s and quickly became established. It is now a common sight throughout eastern Australia, and around the major towns and cities from Cairns to Perth.



When I moved to Townsville in 1993, Spotted Doves were a rare sighting here, but they were reasonably commonplace once you hit the cane fields to the north and south. However, in 2006 after Cyclone Larry, there was a large influx of these Doves, probably from the north due to a loss of food sources.

Their numbers gradually dropped off and they once again became an unusual sighting until the arrival of Cyclone Yasi in 2011. This time a noticeable population remained resident, spread around the town.

On a smaller geographic scale, after the wet weather early in February 2019, thanks to troublesome Cyclone Trevor, the Spotted Dove appeared in reasonable numbers in the Carlyle Gardens village on a daily basis. Before then their occurrence was occasional, mainly on the Bowhunters Road southern boundary. Wet weather events obviously upset the bird's routine or more precisely disrupted their food supply and they found something to like in the village gardens. Over 2 months since the rain eased, the numbers in Carlyle are still higher than usual. Most people are familiar with the local native Peaceful Dove, which lives in large numbers, shuffling around on the grass or in the garden looking for seeds. The Spotted Dove is a similar shape but more than twice the size. It is also seen feeding on the ground looking for seeds. They are often seen together on powerlines, resting from their feeding or on the lookout for a mate. The male of both species performs a similar elaborate bowing and tail spreading routine when courting.

Ivor Preston

Editor's Note

I grew up in Townsville and in my childhood we had no Spotted Doves, Crows, Sparrows, or White Ibis.



SWIFTS

I was up reasonably early and trying to summon enough energy to go for a drive looking for birds for The Quest so I wandered outside to check out the Firewheel Tree, which was in full bloom and attracting lots of local birds. I couldn't even get interested in getting the camera and tripod out to photograph my backyard birds. So I wandered about the garden a bit more, then I looked up! In the sky where quite a few Fork-tailed Swifts, all heading in one direction. I stood around a bit, counting and trying to keep in the shade so that I wasn't eyeballing the sun. In a very short time I'd counted over 100 birds, still all heading in roughly the same direction..

So, in between batches of birds (as best as I could) I set myself up in the shed which is a bit raised and has great views over ours and our neighbours' roof tops. I can see the top of Mt Stuart between a few trees and a great expanse of sky. So I could see the Swifts coming and count them as they passed.

It was a great way to spend a few hours. In the end I counted approximately 500 Fork-tailed Swifts, most were on a pretty direct path to the North west. Some were quite low and I could hear them calling, some were so high that I could only see them with the binoculars.



While waiting between batches of birds I made a note of what other birds were also moving about. I had a flock of Australian White Ibis (in V formation), a Black Kite, Rainbow Lorikeets, a Cattle Egret (heading the same way as the Swifts), Rainbow Bee-eaters, Australasian Darters (small flock), Little Black Cormorants (in V formation), a Goshawk/Sparrowhawk, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, White-breasted Woodswallow, Olive-backed Sunbirds, Common Mynahs, Magpie Larks and two Pied Imperial Pigeons. Oh and a few aeroplanes. (We're in the flight path). There were also numerous butterfly species and dragonflies, and lizards rustling in the leaf litter nearby. It was really great to see so much life. As the morning heated up the activity pretty much stopped.

Energy levels still zilch, but tomorrow is another day..

Annette Sibson

Range

The fork-tailed Swift breeds in Asia and migrates to south east Asia and Australia in winter. It can be seen in the skies over Australia.

CUNGULLA

In mid-March, I decided I'd better try to add some Waders to my Quest list, so I asked Ivor and Wendy if they would like to check them out at Cungulla.



Red-capped Plover

Ray Sutton

We headed off at a suitable time (8.00a.m. – none of this 6.30a.m. for me) and stopped at the Causeway to see what was there at a full-moon tide. To our surprise, there were numerous Egrets of all denominations, with the Little Egret being most common, a good number of Stilts, Red-capped Plovers, a Common Greenshank and two Black-necked Storks. Very good and worth the pleasure of watching them for some time.



Black-winged Stilts

Ray Sutton

While looking towards the sea, we realized that a heavy shower was approaching at speed across the water, so we headed quickly to the car and sat encased there for the next ten minutes, with wipers working to afford a view ahead. It passed! Off to the beach. Fine again and very pleasant with a cooling breeze while we had our coffee before moving to the edge of the beach. Great timing – the tide was moving out quickly, so we could see the Eastern Curlews, Pied Oystercatchers, a flock of Great Knots, Whimbrels, Red-necked Stints and a couple of unidentifiable ones. No telescope with us.

Finally we drove to the Boat Ramp, got out of the car and had the instant pleasure of seeing several Mangrove Honeyeaters buzzing back and forth in front of us, landing in a mangrove to the right, then back to the left, a number of times. They sang their beautiful song as they

rested, then flew, doing the usual Honeyeater thing of playing chasey. We found another place where we had access to the lagoon just south of there and watched four Sacred Kingfishers diving onto the mud, hoping that if we looked hard enough they just might turn into the hoped-for Mangrove variety, but they didn't of course.

The power lines beside the road had Dollar Birds, Magpies and Magpie-larks decorating them and a huge flock of Straw-necked Ibis fed blissfully in a soggy paddock, so in all we ticked off 56 species and went home satisfied with our morning's work. What pleasurable work it was, too.

Elna Kerswell

SPEED DESIGN

Designers of Japan's bullet train used nature to solve a key performance problem. Japan's noise pollution laws dictate that trains are not allowed to produce more than 70 decibels while travelling through populated areas. One of the engineers, a keen birdwatcher, observed a Kingfisher diving at high speed with barely a splash and surmised this was due to the shape of its bill. As a result of this observation, the nose of the train was designed in a beak shape, which allowed it to run at world-record speeds while adhering to stringent noise standards.

From the Weekend Australian April 6-7, 2019

FERAL FOCUS

Published 22 Mar 2019

For the first time, Bush Heritage and its partners have the ability to simultaneously control feral cats and foxes in the south coast region of Western Australia. Our efforts will help native species to rebuild their populations.

In the Fitz-Stirling region of Western Australia, the sun beats down on a rack of sausages sweating in the sun. Moist to begin with, these sausages become wetter and more pungent with the heat. The smell can turn even the strongest of human stomachs, but it's just the kind of delicacy that feral cats love.

"It's an awful smell," admits Bush Heritage ecologist Angela Sanders, "and the people who drop this bait out of planes need to have really strong stomachs."

The pungent delicacies are Eradicat baits, and they are ready to take centre stage in the first-ever integrated feral predator control program in the [Fitz-Stirling region](#) of south-west Western Australia. The baits contain a poison that most West Australian native animals have an evolved tolerance to because it occurs naturally in some endemic plants. This means they can be used to control feral cats with little risk of unintentionally harming native species.

The full article is published in *bushtracks*, the Bush Heritage magazine, Autumn 2019 and can be viewed on the website <https://www.bushheritage.org.au>

QUEST

Name	Quest Number	Date
Rosemary Payet	225	13-08-17
Marleen Acton	220	08-08-17
Mark Horvath	207	26-07-17
Annette Sibson	196	15-07-17
Elna Kerswell	191	10-07-17
Wal Threlfall	181	30-06-17
Cecily Messer	171	20-06-17
Barbara Reidy	166	15-06-17
Wendy Kaus	166	15-06-17
Janet Cross	162	11-06-17
Pat Charlton	160	09-06-17
Warren Charlton	157	06-06-17
Janet Robino	153	02-06-17
Annette Sutton	149	29-05-17
Julia Goldsbury	38	07-02-17

