

The Drongo

Number 143 August 2016



Asian Bees

Red Centre

NSW



FROM THE PRESIDENT

A few of our Owl Boxes are all ready for some owl family to take up residence. So far, observations have not shown any owl activity but it is very early days. We expect that the boxes will need to be out in the bush for a while before they take on the smells of the wild. Our little team of owl watchers will be keeping a close eye on the situation and let us know what's happening.

We are in the process of updating our BirdLife Townsville brochure and the display materials. Mark Horvath and the rest of the Photography Group have been hard at work getting some great photos ready to be printed in time for the Library Displays in October. It is taking a fair bit of work as the information for each bird is being formatted into the photo. One set of the photos will be given to Beth, Jenny and the team at the Museum for use in their education projects.

Townsville City Council has erected signs at Bushland Beach to encourage dog owners to keep their dogs on the leash on the beach to protect our resident and migratory shorebirds. These signs will be put up in other beach areas over time. The council would like feedback from BirdLife members about any indications that the signs are having an impact e.g. are dogs being kept on the leash or still running free on the shoreline? If you are up at Bushland Beach and notice any of this activity send Wal an email on contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au.

Check out Wal's story about the Asian Honey Bee and how BirdLife Townsville is doing its bit to help protect Australia's biosecurity and how you can get involved.

Janet Robino

YOUR COMMITTEE

President: Janet Robino

Secretary: Wal Threlfall

Treasurer: Nina Doyle

Conservation Co-ordinator: Janet Cross

Education Officer: Norm Rains

Safety Officer: Janet Cross

Committee : Warren Charlton Michael McMaster Eve Hanlon

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ASIAN HONEY BEE AND THE RAINBOW BEE-EATER

Birdlife Townsville has agreed to a request from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) to participate in a bio-security project to rid Townsville of the feral Asian Honey Bee and the parasitic Varroa Mite. The Asian Honey Bee (size 10mm, shiny dark appearance, flies quickly and erratically) is a natural host for the Varroa Mite and two hives have been detected in Townsville - one in a shipping container at the Port of Townsville and one in a bird box in the suburb of Annandale. Both contained the Varroa Mite and have been eradicated. The Varroa Mite has the ability to infect the European Honey Bee by sucking on them and eventually killing them, severely affecting honey production, the pollination of food crops and putting the Queensland \$900 million bee keeping industry at risk.

DAF has implemented a quarantine and surveillance program within a 10 km radius of the Port of Townsville. Restrictions have been imposed on the movement of Bee Hives, Bees, Bee products (excluding honey) and Bee keeping equipment.



Your Club is playing its part in this very important project by identifying known Rainbow Bee-eater roosts. The migratory Rainbow Bee-eaters display a suite of behavioural traits that are useful in determining the presence or absence of the Asian Honey Bee. Specifically, these traits include feeding on bees, regurgitating indigestible material (such as bee wings), expelling waste pellets and they also routinely congregate in flocks at the same roost sites each night. A dedicated small number of members have identified roosting sites at Annandale and Anderson Botanical Gardens. They have pegged ground sheets at the foot of the trees and are collecting samples of regurgitated material and waste pellets, forwarding them to DAF who then determine if any Asian Honey Bee wings are present. If wings are detected then DAF Officers will try to locate the Bee hives and eradicate them.

How can you help?

- (1) If you know of any roosting sites for the Rainbow Bee-eater, let us know by email at: contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au
- (2) Report any strange bees or swarms to Bio-security Queensland on 132523

Wal Threlfall

CHINA

On 28th May Barbara Reidy and I headed off on a three week trip to China with Ken Cross. It was pretty full-on (as anyone who has done one of Ken's trips will understand) but great.



White-browed Tit

The birds were great and the scenery absolutely amazing once we got out of the cities. Apart from the birds, my favourites were the Chinese Opera - a variety show with spectacular acts - and the Terracotta Warriors at Xi'an. If you are interested in more details and lots of pictures, you can check it all out on Ken's blog at kencrossinchina.blogspot.com.au.

Janet Robino

BOWERBIRD

We have a bird feeder in the back yard. It is mostly used by Peaceful Doves and Nutmeg Finches. The other day a Great Bowerbird landed on it and tried with all his might to lift out the red pot plant saucer which is at least eight inches wide. He was really going to wow the girls with that trophy. After a while he gave up the idea and went off, no doubt in search of more moveable trinkets.

Annette Sutton



JULY LONG WEEKEND

The planned weekend according to the calendar was to be held at Mt Zero/Taravale but there were a few hiccups.

Norm received permission from George and Lyn Spotswood to go to their area but I had a thought about revisiting a station that the club had not attended since 2009 when a combined TRBOC-BANQ camp was held at Pajingo Cattle Station – south of Charters Towers. I contacted David and Jenny Black via Mark Stoneman (Jenny is Mark's daughter) and yes their camp was available and yes, they had received a lot of rain and yes, there were lots of birds. A number of people showed an interest especially as there was accommodation in the old railway cottages.

The morning that I was going to call Gary Spotswood that I would cancel the camp at their place, Jenny Black called to say the 27Km long road to Pajingo Stn (and several others) was atrocious – that they suffered damage to their trucks and trailers each time they used the road.



Barn Owl Ian Boyd

So the camp was held at Spotswood's place, with Karen Emery, the Ezzys and Charltons attending and Sandra Sampson coming down for the Sunday.

After gaining permission, we had a look at the sand mining area on an adjacent property but there were no significant birds in that area and mining was taking place. We investigated the Spotswood property and saw many birds by car and on foot. One interesting one was a Red-chested Button-quail. Pat and Chris managed to see a Spotted Crake (I saw it briefly as it dashed off into the reeds) and after many visits to the reeds, all we could get were answers to our calls!

I managed to get a good photo of a "damn bird". Both Karen and I spotted a Pallid Cuckoo in a tree and were sneaking up on it to get a frontal picture. We both realised it was about to fly off and Karen said "damn" –

at the same moment, I pushed the button and got an excellent photo of the bird in flight! On Saturday night we went spotlighting – seeing a Barn Owl and a Barking Owl out on their nightly prowls. Len managed to get outstanding photos. Nothing else was seen.



Brown Falcon Ray Sutton

On Sunday with Sandra in attendance, we headed down to Wunjunga. The highlight on the way was a VERY cranky Brown Falcon that wasn't worried that his target was bigger than it! It was dive bombing a White-necked Heron and then after a number of low flights over the bird (including one where it hit the heron on the head), it flew off to another lot (around a dozen) of White-necked Herons and took its anger out on them with continual sweeping and diving on them. They flew off after a few swoops. What stirred the falcon up, we don't know!



Barking Owl Ray Sutton

On the way back to camp, Pat spotted an "interesting" bird – Len sent the picture off to a panel of experts and it stumped all of them! It was thought to be a Pipit or ground dwelling bird with some sort of a growth on its head. By the time the others came back, it had disappeared in the grass and did not reshow even during a concentrated search.

So that was a very relaxed weekend of interesting birding. I still want to visit Pajingo but that will have to wait until the road is repaired and next year for us.

Warren Charlton

NON STOP BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS

This week a friend from Brisbane, Richard, came to Townsville with his 'list' of lifers he would like to see. I had prior warning of his list and let him know the possibilities.

Richard arrived Tuesday at 3pm, we had a cuppa and set off to Woodstock. Great surprise, joy and another lifer tick when I found the Black-throated Finches. They were on the power lines at the eastern side of the power station along with Plum-headed Finches, Zebra Finches, Chestnut-breasted Mannikins and, surprise surprise, a Restless Flycatcher. Grey Fantails turned up at every stop.



Brahminy Kite Karen Emery

Up and at it the next morning, Wednesday, and headed up to Paluma. Stopped at the falls and saw the usual Graceful, Lewin's, Scarlet and Yellow-spotted Honeyeaters. Plenty of Silvereyes too. Next stop number 97 to see where the Paradise Kingfisher hangs out in summer; a Boatbill then two Pied Monarchs were in nearby shrubbery. Woohoo; two more lifer ticks. Then we headed straight to the walk behind the Education Centre with Chowchillas calling and in fleeting views near the wooden bridge; another lifer. A cuppa at Ivy Cottage to see the male and female Satin Bowerbirds and honeyeaters eating the tomato jam! Out to the Grandis Forest to the high pitched 'zitz' of Little Lorikeets, with Rainbows and Scaly-breasted also present. Many Bridled Honeyeaters flew around making plenty of calls; another lifer. Grey Fantails of course. Another great birding trip had been made to Paluma, no rain, a bonus.

Thursday morning and up and at it to go to the Common. Close to the entrance, a Peregrine Falcon was sitting on a post. The Ospreys are a welcome sight and the Red-backed Fairywrens and Crimson Finch along the road. At Payet's Hide we saw a Swamp Harrier, Kestrel, many Darters, all the Egrets, Brown Falcon and first Brolgas. At next viewing area there were more Brolgas with what seemed like hundreds of Magpie Geese. In the trees were two Caspian Terns harassing a White-bellied Sea-Eagle. On to the concrete hide where green, brown and cream little frogs are clinging to the walls.

Another couple were taking photographs of birds and said they had seen many Kingfishers at Payet's Hide, different colours. Seemed strange so asked to see any photos—and there were the beautiful Bee-eaters. A couple of Brolgas here plus three Glossy Ibis, a bonus (5c!!). We stopped at the old fig tree looking for any Little Kingfishers or Fruit Doves; out flew two Topknot Pigeons, yeehah. At the furthest hide we saw Green Pygmy-geese, Wandering Whistling-Ducks, Australasian Grebes, one Yellow-billed and three Royal Spoonbills, Olive-backed Orioles. Richard's bird –Grey Fantail X 10 seen.



Osprey Karen Emery

Driving back to the entrance, a Brahminy Kite emerged, Chestnut-breasted Mannikins and Zebra Finches were amidst the grass with the Scaly-breasted Munia. (Look that one up!).

No, we were not finished yet! On to Benwell Road at midday and both were excited to see three Beach Stone-curlews on the mud near the rock wall, along with two Sacred Kingfishers. A Sea-Eagle flew over and Richard spotted the two Ospreys on the nest in one of the huge power towers. Up at the turn off to the seafood shop were a Striated Heron, White-faced Heron, and thirty Zebra Finches feeding on the side of the road. Not many waders left, two Whimbrels and five Red-capped Plovers.



Royal Spoonbill
Karen Emery

Time to go home for lunch and a cuppa. Lovely. Richard headed off and I vowed I wouldn't be getting up early the next morning!!

All told Richard saw five lifers and was delighted –me too. I think I owe another thirty cents to the club.

Cecily Messer

SUNBIRDS

Congratulations to all parents who managed to successfully raise human chicks. I chose not to have children and today I am certain I made the right choice. It's too much worry and stress.

I am currently brooding with anxiety over the little Sunbird chick in the nest outside my lounge door. I returned home from Tai Chi this morning to frantic chirping on the back deck. "My" tiny Sunbird chick had fallen out of its nest and was being buffeted by the cold wind blowing across the deck.

Luckily, a couple of years ago, I had listened fascinated to Janet Robino's fallen chick woes, so was aware that I could safely pop the chick back in the nest and the parents would be none the wiser. I did a hasty repair to the hole near the bottom of the nest, with a lovely pale yellow embroidery thread (heaven knows where that came from) and crossed my fingers that the adults wouldn't notice. I don't do any crafts so I wasn't confident.

A few minutes later the female flew in and out without stopping. She sat on my deck wire for an anxious minute or two and then flew in again and fed her chick. The male was a little more wary. He took a couple of reconnaissance flights before alighting on the renovated nest.

Unfortunately, as I kept an anxious watch over my hasty repair, the little chick re-made the hole and was again teetering on the brink. Janet had used an onion bag for her repairs but, not being a chef, I was fresh out. What I did have to hand was a lovely, soft cream-coloured Emirates travel sock that looked fit for purpose. I quickly fitted the sock following the next feed. Perfect!



The parents were more agitated this time, as was I. I gave Janet a ring hoping she might make a house call. Before I had plucked up the courage to ask, both the male and the female flew back in, and after a few passes, have started to feed the chick again. I feel like a proud parent.

Last year I wasn't so lucky. I went through the trauma of losing an ENTIRE nest (with chick) while out for a short walk. It was perplexing. Not a cat, I don't have one. Snake, I hope not. A large bird, probably, though why it would want the entire nest is anyone's guess.

When the male and female began constructing a new nest, in the same place, I just had to take action - bugger nature, and all that survival of the fittest nonsense.



After weeks of deliberation, I built a beautiful open cage to fit round the nest, using one of Steve's crab pots, luckily he hasn't noticed yet. I put it in place just before the female laid eggs, hoping they wouldn't notice it - surely they would be reluctant to abandon a new nest at such a critical time, given the hard work taken to build it. It worked a treat.

The current little chick is the third since the cage. Hopefully the sock will hold (it's been 4 hours now) and the chick will take flight in a few days.

Yours in parenthood

Jacqui

PS Chick has just left the nest. So cute. Parents are feeding it as it perches on a branch

CURLEW MYSTERY

In a street within Kirwan, very close to a busy main road, I have observed over the past year or so, a pair of Bush Stone-curlews moving round the garden in a side street. Occasionally they travel as far as my Court, and alerted by their calls, I always watch them from my veranda, wandering up and down the road. Just recently I was only ever able to see one of them in the yard. So today I decided to ask the householder if they were both still there. He did not mind my intrusion, as I did not know him, and told me the original female was missing half one of her legs and was getting "Beaten-up" to use his words by the other bird, so he took it upon himself to separate them and look after the injured bird. In the meantime the male had found another "better-looking bird", again to use his words, as a mate!!!! This satisfied my curiosity, and I was pleased to hear the outcome,



Barbara Reidy

COUNTRY NSW

A few months back John and I travelled around inland New South Wales. One afternoon we visited Dunn's Swamp on the western edge of Wollemi National Park (about 50k from Mudgee). Sounds ordinary, but it was anything but. Great campground, beautiful spot for swimming and kayaking and walking, and best of all, lots of birds.

We had no sooner started on a walk around the numerous sandstone pagodas, when we were confronted by three Rockwarblers. Totally unexpected, but exciting as we had not managed to find them in Capertee Valley. It was a veritable hotspot as they were joined by mobs of Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeaters flitting and feeding. Then soon after, a Superb Lyrebird trotted across our path – I'm not sure who got the biggest surprise. We had one more glimpse of him as we tried to follow him but then he disappeared.

On the way out we stopped to check out some scrubby bushes and you could only describe the bird activity here as frenzied – Spinebills, New Hollands, Wrens, Thornbills, Yellow-faced H/e, White-eared H/e, and White-browed Scrubwren. So much activity in such a short space of time had us smiling all the way back.

Also, we visited Girraween National Park on our way south and stayed just outside the Park. It was a first time for us and we weren't disappointed. There was a treasure trove of birds around our cabin, either on the grass, in the trees, on the fence, or on the verandah railing – many Eastern Rosellas, King Parrots, Turquoise Parrot, female Satin Bowerbirds, Pied Butcherbirds, Thornbills, and Spotted Pardalote.

In the Park itself, the walk to the Underground Tunnel was alive with New Holland Honeyeaters. We also saw Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos there and many sightings of Treecreepers, one of which was most likely the Red-browed.



Dunn's Swamp

Chris Stewart

On another walk in the Park we were fortunate to experience and be surrounded by a mob of Thornbills flitting from branches to boulders – Striated, Yellow, and Brown. Nearby were Spotted Pardalote, Red-browed Finches, White-throated Treecreepers, Eastern Yellow Robins, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and Golden Whistlers. The light, drizzly rain seemed to stir them up.

Chris Stewart

MOUNT KAPUTAR, NSW

Alf and I visited Mount Kaputar NP (52km from Narrabri) in May. It was pretty cold, about 12C, but the birds were great.



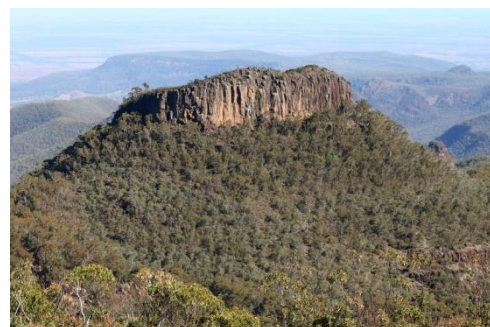
Spotted Quail-thrush

I picked up Red Wattlebird, Brown-headed, Lewin's and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Striated Thornbill, Eastern Yellow Robin, Spotted Pardalote, Variegated Fairy-wrens, White-throated Treecreeper plus a couple of others but the best birds by far were two Spotted Quail-thrush. I had not seen these birds since 2006 and we had great views of them for several minutes.



Spotted Pardalote

The views from the lookouts are wonderful and the drive in is beautiful. My advice is go in the morning and take lunch with you. We unfortunately went after lunch so our time there was too short for me.



Euglah Rock Mt.Kaputar N.P.

Marleen Acton

BUTTON-QUAIL IDENTIFICATION

Recently a small bird was found in North Ward, freshly dead, lying at the side of the road. It was brought to the Museum of Tropical Queensland but its identity was uncertain. Help from local experts Ian Montgomery, Len Ezzy and Niel Bruce, plus a careful check of reference books confirmed it to be a Red-backed Button-quail, *Turnix maculosus*, male, probably young, definitely rather skinny.

Useful to know, the feet are diagnostic. Button-quails, *Turnix* species, have three forward toes only, no rear toe. *Coturnix* species, the button-less Quails, have three forward and one back toe. Thanks to Ian Montgomery for pointing out this detail.

Red-backed Button-quail occur in eastern and northern Australia as well as parts of PNG and Indonesia. However, they are considered Vulnerable in NSW and generally uncommon in Queensland.

Ebird-Eremaea shows only seven records near Townsville. Three sightings, all in the Annandale area in late 2011, were likely the same two birds. The other records (1 to 3 birds) were widely spaced: 1991 Town Common, 2008 Bohle Wetland, 2012 near Gunnadoo Road, 2014 Herveys Range Rd.

Button-quails spend most of time on the ground and are typically reluctant to fly. Not much has been documented about their movements, but some Red-backed Button-quail are thought to be dispersive, possibly travelling at night. Perhaps that's why one unlucky individual was in found in Eyre Street, North Ward?

Photo 1: Three-toed feet helped to identify this specimen received at the Museum.

Photo 2: The slim bill of the Red-backed Button-quail (centre) was also helpful for ID. Here it is seen with a King Quail (left) and a Brown Quail (right) at the Museum.



Photo 1



Photo 2

Julia Hazel

BACKYARD BIRDS

We tend to take them for granted at times but our backyard birds can still manage to put a smile on our faces. By the time the afternoon rolls around the birds here are keen to have fun whether it's dunking in the bird bath or skimming over the pool or 'meeting up with friends'.



Sacred Kingfisher Ray Sutton

This afternoon, we had two Doves perched on the pool fence. Not sure if they were being amorous or grooming each other but there was lots of up-close pecking activity. Next a Sacred Kingfisher flew up from the bird bath to join them, though at a discreet distance. Then a hyperactive Flycatcher sat plum in the middle of them and his frantic activity didn't faze them one bit. Then to add to the mix, a Drongo joined them all on the fence. He seemed to be making a statement by bursting into song but they didn't raise a feather. The Drongo then took off at massive speed to dive-bomb the pool followed by the Kingfisher. The Kingfisher was not as showy, and quickly returned to the shrubbery to shake off.

No two days are the same – different combinations of birds, different antics – and very satisfying.

Chris Stewart

SPOONBILLS

We went out to Woodstock in late July. Down on the Old Flinders Highway near the lagoon at Kelly's, we counted six Yellow-billed Spoonbills. There wasn't a Royal in sight.

Annette Sutton



WINTER JAUNT

In mid-June we set off for places we hadn't been. First of all we headed in a bee-line for the Northern Territory border (hadn't driven further than Julia Creek in that direction before). Then sharp left down through Alice Springs and then on to Adelaide and back home around the coast via Bowra.

That was the plan but cold, wind and rain sent us elsewhere. But I digress.

At Lake Moondarra we started talking to a professional bird photographer from Japan. He pointed out some Varied Lorikeets in a nearby tree. Later on a group of Grey-crowned Babblers arrived on the scene.

Everywhere we looked, there were Varied Lorikeets.

We also made a visit to Mary Kathleen where there were lots of budgies flying around. We probably saw flocks of Cockatiels but we couldn't be certain. Found a Jacky Winter and a Weebill. And there were more Varied Lorikeets.



Varied Lorikeet

As all good birders do, we visited the sewage treatment plant in Mt. Isa. You drive in and have to sign a register then off you go. The big highlight was a Hoary-headed Grebe. A Willy-wagtail delighted us with acrobatics over the water. We must have counted nearly twenty Black-fronted Dotterels.

We stayed in the caravan park in Camooweal as we believe spending some money in these remote places helps them out a bit. But dozens of grey nomads were camped out on the Georgina River. Well, at least they might have bought petrol in Camooweal. There was a family of three brolgas who had laid claim to a piece of the river. The fuss they made when some other brolgas approached made it very clear they weren't welcome.

Over the border and into the Northern Territory, then down the Stuart Highway (this over a few days of course). At a rest area named in honour of the great explorer, John McDouall Stuart, we found a Hooded Robin. He was quite pleased to pose for us. Later in the Olive Pink Botanic Gardens in Alice Springs we found Australian Ringnecks and we found the brown form of the Grey-crowned Babbler at the old telegraph station.

Marleen had recommended a visit to the Desert Park in Alice Springs and it was well worth it. We walked around or stood looking at birds all day. The flying bird show was great and offered lots of opportunities for aerial shots. It was quite amazing as they had even trained a White-faced Heron and a Bush Stone-curlew to come and go on cue. Two Spinifex Pigeons wandered into the show, not wanting to be left out. It was a bit tense at the end of the afternoon show when the young Wedge-tailed Eagle refused to fly home. The last thing I saw was a couple of Rangers climbing the hill, trying to coax him back. Hope it worked.



Inland Dotterel

There are about five aviaries with all sorts of birds which can be found out around that area. I was very pleased to hear the last of the Chiming Wedgebill. He didn't need a microphone. It was the only place I saw Painted Finches. I think my favourite was the Inland Dotterel. A Banded Lapwing was sitting on a nest right where people could stand. She (he?) stood up and revealed six green eggs spotted with black.

We drove out to the West McDonnell Ranges. There are lots of chasms and gorges and stuff. The scenery is spectacular. Although we were in the Red Centre, it was the Green Centre for us as there had been quite a bit of rain. Alice Springs had a hailstorm a couple of weeks before we got there. But the cliffs and bluffs were all red, even though the earth was covered in a green carpet. We were having morning tea in the kiosk at Ormiston Gorge when two Spinifex Pigeons wandered around the tables, carrying on like a pair of feral pigeons. What a treat. I had to encourage them off the kiosk floor on to some red rocks so the photos would look authentic.



Spinifex Pigeons

At Simpson's Gap we saw three Black-footed Rock Wallabies. They were very well camouflaged against the rock and you could only find them when they moved.

We paid the compulsory visit to Uluru and the Olgas. We did a bit of walking around Uluru and went to a waterhole and saw some aboriginal cave paintings. A few small waterfalls were running down the side of the rock. The Climb was closed so we didn't do it.

We left for King's Canyon. We couldn't get a powered site (too many grey nomads). We nearly froze as we couldn't use our little heater. There had been rain just before we got there and the path into the canyon from below was cut off by a creek that came down in a bore in front of people's startled eyes. We were about half an hour too late. Lucky as otherwise we would have been caught on the other side and we would have been forced to wade back. One look at the ascent to the Rim Walk and we were dissuaded.

Next day we went to Kathleen Springs, just a short drive from King's Canyon. At the springs the ecosystem completely changes and you are in a little wet area with lots of ferns. It was charming. We took two hours to do a reasonably short walk but we were held up by the carryings on of a group of Crimson Chats. They ran around all over the place and hopped up and down from bushes and thickets. We found a single Mulga Parrot hiding in a bush. Plenty of Ringnecks. We also found a few scrawny dingoes.



Crimson Chat

After we left King's Canyon and headed for Kulgera, we came across a lone camel ambling along the side of the road. It was the only camel we saw and we saw very few kangaroos. I think there was water all around so they were probably all scattered. Kulgera was very isolated and only about twenty kilometres from the South Australian border. At least we had electricity again but no water to connect to the van. Luckily, we were prepared and had plenty of bottled drinking water and plenty of water in the caravan tank.

We had quite a bit of rain on the trip. It rained quite a bit at Alice Springs and now it rained from Kulgera nearly down to Coober Pedie. The Oodnadatta Track and the Painted Desert were closed. We saw lots of off-road campers covered in thick mud where the campers had made a dash for the highway. Who knows how long you could get stuck for! We had a flat tyre north of Coober Pedie but a nice young man doubled back and changed the tyre in no time. It is nice to feel that young people care and I think probably "respect their

elders". We could have managed but it was so nice to have his help.



Gibber Bird

Coober Pedie is a magic place with its underground bookshop, hotels, cafes, houses, churches and mines. And all the mullock heaps. We loved it. We went out to the Breakaways which is described as a moonscape and has been used in many movies. Here we found a bird we thought we would never see. Not one but three Gibber Birds land in front of the car in the middle of the road and then proceeded to flirt with us for some time. They were so friendly. Then we came across about eight Banded Lapwings with some young. Finally a Spotted Harrier and a Brown Songlark were added to our list. We drove along quite a few kilometres of the wild dog fence that protects the South Australia sheep country from marauding dogs from the north. It was first built in the 1880s and stretches for 5600 kilometres from South-east Queensland to South Australia.

Next we headed for Woomera and walked around the outdoor museum with the rockets. I remember hearing all about Woomera back in the day and it was good to go there. Apart from a Spotted Harrier flying over the caravan park, we were not over-run by birds. All along the way from Richmond we were attended by Singing and White-plumed Honeyeaters and for a little while by Hooded Robins.

A lot of the way down the Stuart Highway there are no trees. In some places there are small wattle trees and some shrubs but you can go for miles and only see little round grey-green bushes about a metre and a half across and less than a metre high. It is quite foreign to a North Queenslander. Around Alice Springs there are thousands of desert casuarinas which look quite a lot like our beach casuarinas although the juvenile form looks more like a Christmas tree.

As we headed south to Port Augusta it became apparent from the weather forecasts that our intended itinerary would be in very cold, wet and windy conditions with even the threat of flooding. So we decided that we can always go back there another day. We headed to Broken Hill and home from Port Augusta. First we paid a visit to the Arid Lands at Port Augusta and were rewarded with a White-winged Fairy-wren. It got warmer as soon as we crossed the border into Goondiwindi. No wonder all the Victorians come up here for winter. We were glad to join them.

Annette Sutton

DIGI-VOLUNTEERING – FOR THE BIRDS

Digital technology enables automated monitoring of almost anything from birds to distant galaxies, plus the scanning of valuable historic paper records. But, on the next step, technology does not do so well. To extract key details from digital images, human eyes (and brains) are essential.

Several bird-related projects, and others, are seeking help from internet-connected volunteers to process digital images in their leisure time, from the comfort of home.

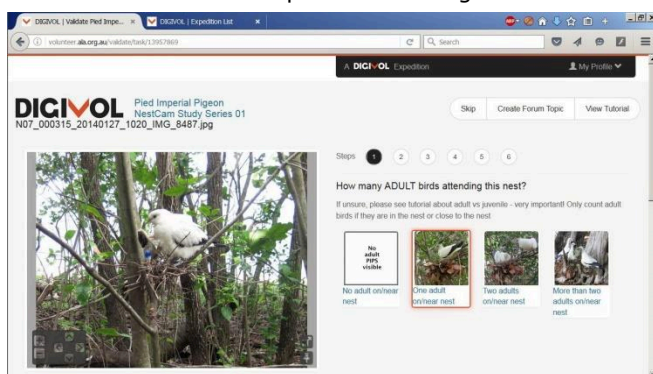
Currently, volunteers are needed for transcribing Vermont bird surveys and historic ornithological journals, and for extracting details from nest camera images. I'm involved with the latter, where the birds are Pied/Torresian Imperial Pigeons (as some members might have guessed).

Within the DigiVol system, the range of projects is diverse. As some of the virtual 'expeditions' get completed, and new ones get started, the selection of projects changes over time. If you'd like a change from birds, you could help with transcribing labels of museum specimens, historic field diaries or camera traps in the bush.

There is no pre-commitment. You can process just one image, or as many as you like. But a warning, this can be somewhat addictive. You will be the first person to study the image, and sometimes you will come across unexpected and intriguing things.

Have a look here: <http://volunteer.ala.org.au/>

Photo: A NestCam example from the DigiVol online



system.

Julia Hazel

CHECK THIS OUT

www.feedingbirds.org.au

You may be interested in participating.

PALM COCKATOOS



Palm Cockatoo

Ian Boyd

What you can jag when you're not even trying! We recently went on a trip up Cape York with friends who think we are a little crazy to be birdwatchers. So it was not our focus but the trusty binoculars came with us just-in-case. We were camping at the Archer River Roadhouse, lounging around, when John literally jumped up, ran for his binoculars yelling, 'Palm Cockatoo, Palm Cockatoo, Chris!' He had seen it fly in and land in a tree nearby where it proceeded to feed on the nuts. He (the bird, not John) splayed his crest at times and it was awesome. We coaxed one non-birder friend to come over and look and he was impressed. I managed to get two ordinary photos then it flew off, leaving two very satisfied birders marvelling at their luck.

We didn't go to Iron Range this trip, can-you-believe, but experienced Fruitbat Falls, Weipa, Bramwell Station, Thursday Island, beautiful Punsand Bay and of course, stood on the pointy bit at the top of Australia. On our return journey we couldn't get into Elliott Falls as there was too much water in the creek for our vehicles so we camped at Moreton Telegraph Station. We had no sooner pulled up (way down the back near the scrub) when John saw - you guessed it - Palm Cockatoos. He thought at first they were just black cockatoos so went to investigate and eureka! Two of them were munching away on nuts in a tree (Nonda) about twenty metres from our camp. So intent on their feeding, they were oblivious to the humans under the tree observing them. Our non-birding friend took photos (better than ours), but I don't think we've converted him yet.

Chris Stewart

On occasion, when their mood is right, Palm Cockatoos' bald red cheeks can flush with blood, turning from pale red to deep scarlet. If that's not intriguing enough, perhaps more curious is their drumming behaviour. Like no other creature in the world, palmies fashion thick sticks from branches, grip them with their feet and bang them on trunks and tree hollows - but it's unknown why they do it.

GALLERY

Photographer Ian Boyd



Radjah Shelduck



White-bellied Sea-Eagle



White-breasted Whistler

GALLERY

Photographer Annette Sibson



Osprey



Wandering Whistling-Duck



Lemon-bellied Flycatcher

CALENDAR

August

17th - Wednesday - Bush Garden Survey - Meet at end of Thompson St Mundingburra 7.00am. Leader Malcolm Calvert
 21st - Sunday - Ross River Dam Survey.- Meet in the Dam car park 7.00am. Leader Ian Boyd
 Saturday 27th to Sunday 28th - Campout at Mungalla Station and Mt. Cudmore This includes the monthly outing on the Sunday for those who cannot attend the campout. Leader: Ian Boyd.

September

1st - Thursday -Wongaloo Bird Survey. Meet for 6.30 departure from the Coles car park at the Annandale Shopping Centre, University Drive Annandale. Bring morning tea. Leader: Ian Boyd
 4th - Sunday - Town Common Survey.- Meet at the main gate 7.00am. Leader -TBA
 6th - Tuesday Photography Group Theme : "Little Birds/Finches". 7.00pm at a venue TBA.
 7th - Wednesday - Balgal Beach Coast Care / Rollingstone Community - Public Information session - "Shorebirds"-- Leader: Norm Rains -- Meet 7.30 pm Rollingstone Community Centre
 10th - Saturday - Committee Meeting (12.00) and General Meeting (2.00pm) Held in the Townsville City Council Sound Shell meeting room Thuringowa. Guest Speaker: Tony Grice "Black-throated Finch Recovery Team Survey"
 14th - Wednesday - Bush Garden Survey.- Leader: Malcolm Calvert -- Meet at end of Thompson St Mundingburra 7.00am.
 18th - Sunday - Ross River Dam Survey.- Leader: Ian Boyd --Meet in the Dam car park 7.00am.
 24th - Saturday - Balgal Beach Coast Care / Rollingstone Community -- "Shorebird ID" - Leader: Norm Rains -- Meet 10.30 am Balgal Beach -- Education Committee activity
 25th - Sunday Outing - Crystal Creek . Meet at the Reading's Cinema car park for a departure at 6.30am sharp. This is an all-day outing bring morning tea and lunch. Car pooling encouraged. Leader: Warren Charlton.

October

Note - BirdLife Townsville National Bird Month - Bird display from Monday 3 to Monday 31 October at the Flinders Street, Aitkenvale and Thuringowa Libraries all month. Leader: Norm Rains
 Saturday 1st to Monday 3rd (Queens Birthday) - Campout to Pajingo. More details closer to the date.
 2nd - Sunday - Town Common Survey.- Meet at the main gate 6.30am. Leader: TBA.
 4th - Tuesday - Photography Group Meeting - Theme: "Reflections" must be a bird in the image and it preferably should be the focus . A 7.00pm start at a venue TBA.
 6th - Thursday - Wongaloo Bird Survey. Meet 6.30 Coles car park at the Annandale Shopping Centre, University Drive Annandale. Bring morning tea. Car pooling encouraged. Leader: Ian Boyd
 8th - Saturday - Committee Meeting (12.00pm) and General Meeting (2.00pm) Held in the Townsville City Council Sound Shell meeting room Thuringowa. Guest Speaker : John Lowry "Shorebird ID"
 9th -- Sunday - Bushland Beach Shorebirds Survey -- Meet 6.30 am Rumbala Court park, Bushland Beach -- bring morning tea -- Leader: John Lowry
 12th - Wednesday - Bush Garden Survey. - Meet at end of Thompson St 6.30am. Leader Malcolm Calvert
 16th - Sunday - Ross River Dam Survey.- Meet in the Dam car park 6.30am. Leader: Ian Boyd
 19th - Wednesday - Spotswood Station Survey -- Meet 6.00 am Alligator Creek Roadhouse car park -- bring morning tea - Leader: Norm Rains
 17th - Monday to 23rd Sunday - Birdlife Australia "Aussie Backyard Bird Count" - register at: www.birdlife.org.au
 Saturday 22th and Sunday 23th - Annual Black-throated Finch Survey. Leader Tony Grice. Must register via www.blackthroatedfinch.com .
 26th - Wednesday -- Jerona Station / Barratta Creeks Survey -- Meet 6.00 am Alligator Creek Roadhouse car park -- bring morning tea -- Leader: Norm Rains
 30th Sunday Outing - Masters & Orient Road, Ingham . Meet at Reading's Cinema car park, Thuringowa Central for a departure at 6.30am sharp. This is an all-day outing bring morning tea and lunch

November

Any day of the month for the Torresian Imperial Pigeon Watch and Count from Cape York to Gladstone. Your own personal count. Leader Julia Hazel (James Cook University). Details at www.pipwatch.net .
 3rd - Thursday - Wongaloo Bird Survey. Meet for 6.30 departure from the Coles car park at the Annandale Shopping Centre, University Drive Annandale. Bring morning tea. Leader : Ian Boyd
 6th - Sunday - Town Common Survey.- Meet at the main gate 6.30am. Leader: TBA
 8th - Tuesday - Photography Group Meeting - Theme : "Feeding" . A 7.00pm start at a venue TBA.
 12th - Saturday - Committee Meeting (12.00pm) and General Meeting (2.00pm) Held in the Townsville City Council Sound Shell meeting room Thuringowa. Guest speaker: TBA_.



On Top of the World - China

Janet Robino

Quest

Chris Ezzy	343	08-12-16
Len Ezzy	341	06-12-16
Niel Bruce	333	28-11-16
Pat Charlton	264	20-09-16
Warren Charlton	257	13-09-16
Janet Robino	244	31-08-16
Ian Leach	242	29-08-16
Marleen Acton	212	30-07-16
Rosemary Payet	209	27-07-16
Janet Cross	209	27-07-16
Wal Threlfall	184	02-07-16
Annette Sutton	181	29-06-16
Michael McMaster	180	28-06-16



Red-headed Honeyeater

Ian Boyd



Yellow White-eye

Ian Boyd