

The Drongo

Number 142 May 2016



Ray Sutton

Kimberley

Museum
News

Gluepot



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Owl Boxes will hopefully all be in situ by the time you read this. We are just waiting for Adam Cozzitorto from Skilled Trees to be available to fix the last couple of boxes in place. Adam is generously donating his services so we are very happy to wait until he can fit us into his very busy schedule. It is now just a matter of watching and hoping that the owls think the boxes are nice and cosy.

Gloria and Rick have not wasted any time establishing themselves as Tasmanians. They have bought a property close to Cygnet and are looking forward to moving in sometime in May.

Janet Cross has taken on the role of Conservation Coordinator. She has offered to represent BirdLife Townsville on the Black-throated Finch Recovery Team. We are waiting for feedback from the Team after they have discussed this at a meeting.

Don't forget to tune into Local ABC radio at 1030 every second Tuesday to catch Beth Snewin's talk on birds and birding activity around Townsville. Beth is certainly taking to the media like a professional. I have had feedback from non-birding people who have said they make a point of tuning in just to listen to Beth. If you would like to see Beth's regular slot continued, you may want to let the ABC know.

Our commitments continue to take a fair bit of time for the few members of the education sub group. It would be helpful to have a few more people to share the load. If you are interested in contributing to increasing knowledge about birds in the community, contact Norm Rains to arrange coming along to one of the activities to see what goes on.

Janet Robino

YOUR COMMITTEE

President: Janet Robino
Secretary: Wal Threlfall
Treasurer: Nina Doyle
Conservation Officer: Garrie Douglas
Education Officer: Norm Rains
Safety Officer: Janet Cross
Committee : Warren Charlton

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CHINESE FLAGS

On the 19th March 2016 I thought I'd go down to Bushland Beach in the afternoon to see if any waders were around that might like their photo taken. After the long walk up to Black River I was rewarded with some Great and Red Knots, Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers,



Pacific Golden Plover with tag

the usual Bar-tailed Godwits, some Little Terns and the leads of this article, Pacific Golden Plovers.

There were several Pacific Golden Plovers around, with some sporting very nice colours. After inching my way forward to within a reasonable distance, I happily fired off several frames of the various individuals. Upon post processing one of the images, I noticed flags and a band on its legs, something that didn't register with me at the time. Having some awareness of the purpose of flags and bands I thought it might be appropriate to report my sighting.

A quick Google search about bird banding/flagging and I'm onto the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS) web site. Oh look, there's a form you can fill out electronically and submit. Sounds easy, and it was. Off goes the form and that same day I receive an email from the Senior Project Officer of the ABBBS, then not long after an email from the Australian Wader Study Group (AWSG). We all know who they are, don't we? In case not, they are a special interest group of Birdlife Australia.

I thought the information provided by two organisations was highly informative and obtained their permission to print it here (albeit minimally modified to suit the Drongo). Have a read as I'm sure you will also find it interesting.

Information Provided by the ABBBS.

The black over white flags indicates that this Pacific Golden Plover was marked in China, specifically Chongming Island near Shanghai by the National Bird Banding Centre of China. The exact time between banding and recovery is unknown. The bird had moved a distance of 6250 km with a bearing of 151 degrees.

This is quite a significant sighting, as we have very few recoveries/resightings of this species at all, and just one movement recorded from Kooragang Island (near Newcastle) to Chongming Island in China (approx 7800km). We have also had one movement from Alaska to Urunga on the north coast of NSW (approx 10,000km), and one from Kooragang Island NSW to Vanuatu (approx 2800km), but these are the

only movements into or out of Australia we have recorded.

ABBBS has forwarded the report to the Australasian Wader Study Group (AWSG), who collate sightings such as these into their database for analysis. The sighting has also been added to the national banding database as it is so important. ABBBS records indicate that the Chinese Banding Scheme started to flag birds using black over white in 2006-2007, so this bird must have been marked since then.

A formal recovery report is attached for your records, and again, many thanks for taking the time to make your report. Reports such as yours are invaluable for our understanding the migratory pathways of these species.

Information from the AWSG:

AWSG have three other records of what they believe to be of the same bird (a Pacific Golden Plover) flagged in SA but seen in Japan in 2010, 2012 and 2014 at the same place - Sunomata, Ogaki, Gifu on an inland wetland. As it was a plain flagged bird we are not exactly sure when it was banded but is probably one of a number banded in 2005/6.

Both organisations requested a copy of the photo and I duly sent the one included here of the flagged/banded bird. A further email response from ABBBS advised that they would send a copy to their contact at Chongming Dao "who will be thrilled to see it." That gave me a nice warm fuzzy feeling.

So next time you're out scoping waders, check their pins to see if they are sporting any jewellery and if so report it and add to our understanding of migratory birds and



hopefully aid in their conservation.

To assist you with your reporting I have included the URLs for the ABBBS, AWSG and the report forms below. Happy reporting.

ABBBS Web site -

<http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/science-and-research/bird-and-bat-banding>

ABBBS Form URL - <http://www.environment.gov.au/apps/web-forms/feedback/abbbs/reportform.html>

AWSG Web site - <http://awsq.org.au/>

AWSG Form URL - <http://awsq.org.au/wp-content/themes/AWSG/reportform.php>

I acknowledge both the ABBBS and AWSG for their kind permission to reproduce the information I have included here.

Mark Horvath

BIRDLIFE TOWNSVILLE - EASTER CAMP

Fourteen people attended the end of March campout at Cardwell. The idea was initially to produce a Bird List for the local information centre (they said late last year that they didn't have one). I did receive a link from Helen McLaughlin of the list that BLNQ produced so we went through that, ticking off what we could find.



Double-eyed Fig-Parrot

The weather was pleasant enough with only heavy rain on the way up, the company better and, while it was a great weekend, we worked hard to get the birds (108 of the list). The highlight was seeing some Double-eyed Fig-Parrots in a tree in the Kookaburra Holiday Park where most of us stayed. There were also Fig Birds, a Yellow Oriole and some pigeons/doves there as well.

The owners have been there for two years and are showing an interest in the local wild life. They have some bird list/location sheets for information. I left them with a list of what we saw. They also showed me a picture that another camper took and asked me what it was – a Red-browed Finch. I suggested they get hold of Lloyd Nielsen's newest publication (Birds of the Wet Tropics of Qld and the GBR) as it has titles such as "yellow birds", "birds with red eyes", etc – to make it easier for identification.

Other highlights were seeing a Grey Goshawk at Blencoe Falls, a Brown Goshawk at Kennedy, Varied Sitellas, several Collared Sparrowhawks and a Barred Cuckoo-shrike at Murray Falls. Not so good views were the bulldozing of sections of rain forest to plant fast growing pine trees!



Female Figbird

For some of us it was our third trip to Blencoe Falls; for others, their first but I doubt whether anyone is

interested in going back – especially in school holidays/long weekends! It was rather nerve wracking to come slowly around a corner to face a couple of young kids riding a quad bike going flat out and seeing them almost losing control when they tried to brake. And the adults were of no example – no helmets, no protective clothing, etc. Murray Falls was much quieter even though there were many campers.

The road to the top of the Kirrama Range was in very good condition. However, after that it was quite rough and extreme care was required.

It was a laid back camp – we slept in and left each morning at 7.30am. Some afternoons were free – especially in the hotter times. A small party went spot lighting one night and found several spiders, a coiled up snake in the middle of the road, several cane toads, a bandicoot and a rather startled Bush Stone-curlew that was sitting in the middle of a road!

Warren Charlton

MUSEUM HAPPENINGS

'Nestled' has finished, although the two Taxidermy cases remain, filled with birds and nests. How pleased we are that 'we' have ownership of these cases and continue to be grateful for the generous support of Birdlife Townsville.



Varied Honeyeater mount by Julia Hazel

The birds and nests from the other cases and the floor display have moved into the freezer prior to them rejoining the collection inside. The remaining two cases continue to attract visitors and enable us to talk to those interested in birds – alive and dead.

Thanks as always to the Birdlife members who collect deceased birds from the highways and yards of the area. Next week Alan Gillanders from Birdlife Northern Queensland, is bringing me a Greater Glider and a Striped Possum – rare treasures indeed.

As Nestled was such a success, we have been invited to plan a second Taxidermy exhibition for 2017 and at present are thinking it will be "Flight". We will start to mount birds in flying poses to show the various flying styles etc. Any ideas on the topic please drop us a line.

The Queensland Museum in Brisbane is creating a permanent exhibition called "Wildstate". Photographs of

some of the work done by Townsville Taxidermists have been sent to Brisbane. They are especially interested in our Honeyeaters. There is a possibility that some of our birds will be included in this exhibition.



My fortnightly Radio slot continues – next topic “Birds on Ross River Dam” (12th April). I can only cover five or so birds each time so I thought I would concentrate on the Cormorants, Egrets and Pelicans. That way I can do separate sessions on “Ducks of Townsville”, “Local Raptors”, “Townsville’s Kingfishers” etc. If you do catch the chat with Paula and I say something wrong, please let me know so I can correct it the following fortnight. I make lots of notes but it is hard to refer to them when ‘chatting’.

As Paula isn’t a birder I take in ‘mounts’ or pictures so she knows just which bird we are talking about. The club’s pictures have been very helpful as have been the shots offered by our local bird photographers and experts. A special thank you to Len for his advice, photos and feedback. Paula told me that she is learning such a lot about birds and looks forward to our chats. She is a lovely lady and easy to chat with. I don’t know how long the slot will continue but it is good to have the opportunity to spread the word and represent Birdlife and the Museum.

Beth Snewin

ETTY BAY

We have never stayed at Etty Bay before so we decided to spend two nights there in April as there had been photos on Facebook of Dad Cassowary and four half grown chicks parading up the road.

We set up the van about lunch time and waited. We were sitting down on the edge of the beach, watching some crabs running up and down the sand. Next thing we know a male Cassowary has arrived. Not Dad but another. He wandered around the vans and then slowly made his way off. He is so used to humans and so trusting.

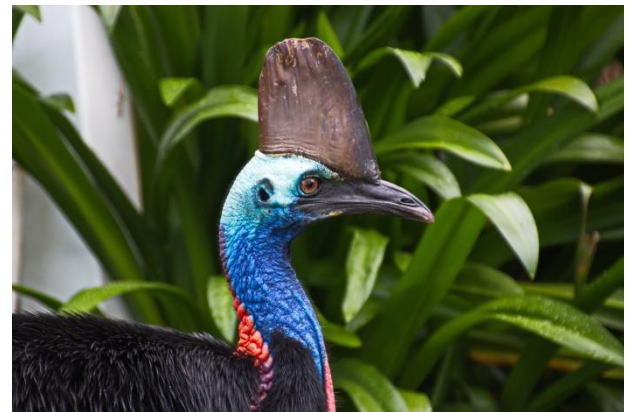
After the Cassowary left, we drove off to Mourilyan Harbour to check it out. It reminds me of a Norwegian Fjord for some reason. On the drive back, round the last bend in the road before descending into Etty Bay, Dad and the four chicks appeared on the road. It was

getting quite late by now so we adjusted the camera and did our best. We didn’t approach them and they were happy to wander across the road and back. One chick was always way behind the others. Eventually, they disappeared into the forest .

Next morning the lone male reappeared, checked out the van park and wandered off along the beach. Later in the afternoon, Dad and the chicks paid us a visit. They spent quite a lot of time on the top of the beach and then went off up the hill on the side of the road, always one chick lagging behind. On our last morning, both the lone male and a female turned up in the park. There was a very tall pawpaw tree beside our van with two ripe pawpaws. Both birds came over to the tree independently and stared up at the pawpaws. They must be used to them eventually falling to the ground so they reckoned it was worth an inspection.

So if you want to see Cassowaries up close and personal, Etty Bay is the place.

Annette Sutton



VISITORS FROM HAWAII

On Thursday, 31st March, Wendy Kaus had promised to take two men from Hawaii, who were related to some friends of hers from Longreach, to look for birds around the Townsville area. Beth Snewin and I agreed to join the expedition. Beth and Wendy picked the men up from their Hotel in the City and spent time at Pallarenda admiring and photographing a flock of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos. From there, they did a run through the Town Common where they found Intermediate and Great Egrets, Little Pied Cormorants, Magpie Geese and Australian Ibis conveniently feeding in the lagoons before the Golf Course. The Red-backed Fairy-wren obliged too, as did Figbirds, a Great Bowerbird, Bee-eaters, Honeyeaters, a Drongo, Leaden Fly-catcher and the Osprey which was sitting near its nest in the dead tree. Water birds were scarce, but at Payet's Tower they saw a Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Jacana, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Brown-backed Honeyeater, Wandering Whistling-Duck, Brahminy Kite and a Bush Stone-curlew.



I joined them at Stuart, so Keith came with me as we followed Wendy, Beth and Peter. Keith and Peter were both in their early 60s and very interesting men. Keith lives on the large island of Hawaii, on seven acres of rich, volcanic soil. He grows a large variety of fruit trees, both tropical and temperate, and works in a Lab preparing specimens for the pathologists to study. He has visited his sister and her family near Longreach several times and each time they do a trip somewhere interesting, including Lawn Hill, Alice Springs, Kakadu, and around the west of Queensland. Peter is married to another sister, and they live on Oahu where he works with the Honolulu Zoo, trying to protect endangered species from the feral brown snakes which were brought in to Hawaii with U.S. military gear from Guam. Apparently the Airport now has a protective barrier around it to trap the snakes as they arrive. For many years the snakes have preyed on the local birds so that many species are highly endangered. He works with The Pacific Bird Conservation, trapping and relocating threatened species birds to uninhabited, outer islands with NO snakes.

Our plan was to go to Woodstock, then Giru, and home via the Reed Beds and Cromarty, so we set off along the Flinders Highway. At Toonpan, a Jabiru kindly appeared and along the Gunnadoo Road area saw a Pipit, Double-

barred Finches, Little Friarbird, Apostles, Coucal, Whistling Kite and White-faced Herons. By this time, it was morning tea in the park where there were Plum-headed Finches, Black-faced Woodswallow, Straw-necked Ibis, Yellow Honeyeater, Striated Pardalote, Galah, Forest Kingfisher, Zebra Finch and Chestnut-breasted Mannikins. Near Kelly's dam was a Yellow-billed Spoonbill and a Blue-winged Kookaburra.

Straight on to Horseshoe Lagoon where to our surprise there were no Coots and no Swans. Little else showed either, so we went back to Giru for lunch. We saw a White-browed Robin and Mistletoebird in the Melaleuca swamp then a Latham's Snipe flushed beside my car and flew right in front of Wendy's along Reed Beds Road. There was a single Black Swan, a couple of Brolgas, a Pelican, Plumed Whistling Ducks visible on a couple of the dams and lagoons in the distance and a Tawny Grassbird on a fence. The prize for the day was the two adult Jabirus standing on their nest opposite Mark Stoneman's house. That is always a wonderful sight. The Causeway gave us Marsh Sandpiper, Sharp Tailed Sandpiper Little Egret, Caspian Tern and a lovely Red-capped Plover. Beth saw a Pied Imperial-Pigeon and a Dollarbird on the road home after a very happy day showing our visitors some of our favourite birding places and many of our wonderful local birds. All told we toted up 85 species. It had been a great pleasure to meet these two fellows and learn something about conservation work in Hawaii and they were happy to see the birds, many of which were already known to them from previous trips to Australia.

Elna Kerswell

OSPREY NEST

This photo was taken on the 30/4/16 near the new bridge on the new port access road. Taken with 7DMK2, 100-400 Canon lens and 1.4 extender from 100 to 150 metres away. The Osprey have built a nest and are sitting on it, taking turns.

Bob Murphy



The pair of Ospreys on the Town Common seem to be sitting on their nest at the moment.

WHEN A PLAN COMES TOGETHER

I'd been keen to try out my new camera but the monsoon and the enervating heat conspired to keep me frustrated and at home. At least, while the rain poured, I could do some research for when the coast was clear. I planned a getaway to track down a couple of birds that have eluded me up to now and hopefully also get some shots of wading birds colouring up for their long migration.



Little Kingfisher

The monsoon finally moved away and I was able to book a few nights accommodation on the Cairns Esplanade. On any walk along the waterfront here you may encounter Varied Honeyeater, Fig-Parrot, PIPs aplenty, and a variety of terns, waders, egrets and herons. It's a favourite destination of ours.

My first target species was the Mangrove Robin, a bird I have never managed to track down, despite spending many hours looking in suitable habitat. Online I had found a very helpful website called 'finding birds around Cairns' which actually gives GPS coordinates for bird sites in the region. With the use of Google Maps we established that the Mangrove Robin site was at the far northern end of the Esplanade. My wife and I walked there from the lagoon end (quite a trek in the heat).

We headed directly to an area with a gap which allowed views into the mangroves and peered in to the gloom. There, sitting on a horizontal branch four metres away was a beautiful Mangrove Robin. I immediately noticed how smart and clean the white, grey and black plumage looked. A handsome bird and a new tick; don't you love it when a plan comes together! The robin was curious and unafraid, coming even further out of cover to look us over!

Our elation was short lived however, as a hoard of hungry sandflies and mozzies reminded us we'd left the repellent back in our room. I took some hurried shots and we retreated, planning to return, more prepared, another time. We did go back twice but I was not able to get any further photos.

While heading to the robin site we passed a small mixed group of waders on the beach near the walking path. Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwit and Great Knot (some developing breeding plumage) were waiting patiently for the tide to recede, exposing their muddy feeding grounds. One impatient, or particularly hungry,

Bar-tailed Godwit was feeding on the lawn above the path. On the way back I was able to get fairly close to this group to take some shots without disturbing them in the slightest.

The following day we visited Centenary Lakes after another Esplanade outing. By this time it was quite hot and there wasn't much about. After watching some Magpie Geese with goslings feeding among the water-lilies, we decided to circumnavigate the freshwater lake before heading back for lunch. Right at the end of the track a movement caught my eye. On a small exposed twig over a narrow channel, a Little Kingfisher gazed intently at the water searching for its next meal. I had time for two quick shots before it pounced on its prey and flew into the thick scrub and out of sight.

On the way back to Townsville I intended to look for another bird that I hadn't managed to tick, the Zitting Cisticola. I will admit that I may have seen this bird before but would not have had the confidence to separate it from non-breeding Golden-headed. Into the too hard basket it went!

Inspired by a recent Eremaea Birdlines post for Zitting Cisticola and more confident about identification since buying Lloyd Nielsen's new book, it was time to give it a go. We headed along Orient Road south of Ingham, camera at the ready. Shortly after crossing a cattle grid I saw lots of bird activity in the pastures on both sides of the road. Golden-headed Cisticola could be heard in the fields and Red-backed Fairy-wren, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, Rufous-throated Honeyeater and Black-faced Woodswallow were all noted in the vicinity.



Bar-tailed Godwit

I noticed a Cisticola not far away. It flew up several metres above the grass and then back down again. Surprisingly, it remained visible though too obscured to photograph. It was not calling like a Golden-headed so I thought I might have a Zitting. I trudged through the soggy paddock to get close enough for a decent shot and after a few tries managed get the bird on a barbed wire fence and nearby grass stalk.

It was a Zitting Cisticola all right, the broad white tail tip clearly shown in one shot signifies a breeding male. I was elated to have my second tick for the trip! If there is a lesson to take away from this experience it is to make use of the wonderful resources available, in print and on line, to stack the odds in your favour. Happy birding.

Michael Schmid

HOUSE SITTING

Am spending a couple of drizzly, wet, overcast, windy weeks in Malanda.

I have seen twenty-seven species in the yard of the house I'm sitting. It's a kilometre out of town on the Malanda – Lake Barrine Rd.

Some of the birds I have seen here include:- White-headed Pigeon (fabulous view), Spotted Dove, Helmeted Friarbird, Yellow-spotted, Brown-backed, Lewin's, White-gaped and Scarlet Honeyeaters. Pied Currawongs and Laughing Kookaburras greet every morning bright and early.



White-gaped Honeyeater Annette Sutton

On walking the dogs each morning and evening down to a well vegetated creek, I have noticed Guineafowl and Dusky Moorhen. Rainbow Lorikeets chatter overhead each day to and from their feeding areas – usually several groups consisting twelve to twenty birds each.

Today (21 April) Cec and I visited Mt Hypipamee National Park – yes a drizzling, wet overcast morning – however cleared up long enough for us to walk to the Crater and the Falls- quite a spill coming over.

Plenty of birds heard, but not many seen including, Rufous and Golden Whistlers, Brush-turkey and Orange-footed Scrubfowl (near the loos), Lewin's Honeyeater, Wompoo and Emerald Fruit-Dove, Pale Yellow and Grey-headed Robins, Catbird and Grey Fantail.

We then headed to Wongabel State Forest on our way back to Malanda and again the rain held off except for the odd drizzle. Hear we saw / heard, Figbirds and Red-browed Finches in the roadside trees. Further in we came across a Yellow breasted Boatbill (Cec), Grey-headed Robin, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Scrubwren, Victoria's Riflebird, Grey Fantail, Eastern Whipbird and Varied Triller.

Both areas are looking great, enough rain to freshen everything up.

Janet Cross



BOOK REVIEW

Lloyd Nielsen has republished his book *Birds of the Wet Tropics of Queensland and Where to Find Them*.

I was very pleased to hear this as years ago I trawled the internet and was finally able to track down a copy. The book was long out of print. So it is great to have the updated version.

This book is absolutely packed with information. When you first open it, it is obvious that it is not set out like the other field guides in taxonomic order. Rather, the first part of the book is organised using key features you see in the bird. This makes it excellent for new and casual birders but still very handy for the more experienced when it comes to comparing very similar birds.

Bronze-Cuckoos are usually a bone of contention. Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo is mentioned in three places (some green, some grey and some barred plumage) and then further over in the book you can compare this bird to similar birds. Differences are listed and it makes separating the birds easier. Rainbow Lorikeet appears on four separate pages based on its plumage (multi-colour, red, blue and green). Then there is a page telling where it may be found.

There is a key to the "Key section". If you have a bird with a white rump, look at "Rump" in the key and it tells you to go to page 130. There you find all the white-rumped birds. The key doesn't just deal with the appearance of the bird, but in some birds, behaviour is a good clue. Look up "Teeters Tail or Body" or "Hovers".

Then there is a section on birds which are difficult to identify. So very similar birds are compared and ID made easier. The simplest example is the Black-shouldered Kite v the Letterwing Kite. Trickier birds are all the egrets, terns and shorebirds.

Next comes a section where to see birds. This is not illustrated but follows the more usual taxonomic order. Next is "Best Birding Areas". Here there are maps and descriptions of what can be seen in places on the map. Places are numbered. It is very useful when you go to these areas which are not as familiar as one's home turf.

There is a lot of other information in the book as well. The illustrations are all done by Lloyd Nielsen and are true to life.

I wish you could get a "Key" guide to all the birds of Australia. It would make life so much easier when you travel. But at least you can have this luxury in North Queensland.

"Birds of the Wet Tropics" is available at Mary Who. I fully recommend it. Also available at Lloyd Nielsen's website. <http://www.birdingaustralia.com.au/shop.html>

Annette Sutton



EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

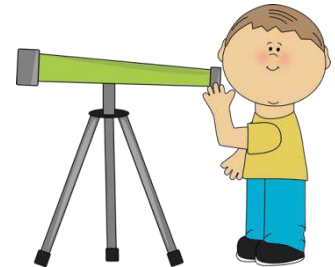
BirdLife Townsville Educators have been very busy since the beginning of 2016 with a variety of activities that included working with other organisations to promote the love of birds and birding in our area.

We started the year off by mounting static displays at the World Wetland Day activities at the TCC Sustainability Centre, Rowes Bay on Sunday 31st January and also at the CVA's event at Horseshoe Lagoon (Giru) event on Tuesday 2nd February. These types of events provide opportunities to promote the need to protect birds and their various habitats and also to promote bird-watching and the various activities of our branch in our district, and we should continue to support them on that basis. Our busy period continued with a visit to the Museum of Tropical Queensland on Saturday the 20th February as part of the World Science Week Activity organised by the Queensland Museum. There was a host of activities at this event for the public to enjoy and learn from, including many natural history displays and the preparation of museum specimens including bird taxidermy. Our role was to conduct "Bird-watching Tours", leading groups of children and adults through the museum to find and identify the many bird specimens hidden in the various mock-up habitats that form part of the permanent museum displays. Participants were provided with a sheet of coloured bird photographs, the idea being to match the specimens with one of the photos on the sheet. To add to the fun, there were many more specimens than photos. We also had a telescope set up and guarded by Wal Threlfall and Janet Robino. The children had a great time focussing on birds as well as people dining in a restaurant across the river. Many thanks to our members Janet Robino, Wal Threlfall, Janet Cross, Mark and Bonnie Horvath, Julia and Philip Haig, John Maddy, Rolf Jensen and Norm Rains without whose support the branch would not have been able to contribute to this popular event. MTQ has invited us to participate in similar events/activities as this later in the year so watch this space.



Members of the Sub-committee attended the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Reef Guardian Schools networking meetings held in Townsville, Ingham and Ayr during February and March. We are a recognised partner of the Reef Guardian Schools programme and as such are afforded the opportunity to address the representatives of the schools and other organisations who attend these meetings. This is where we identify potential clients for our various bird talks and presentations and the system has been productive for us over a number of years. One recent contact is the Rollingsstone State School

which has asked us to set up a system for surveying birds that frequent the school grounds during the year. It is expected that we will commence this project later in the year after the school grounds, which includes a large area of undeveloped bushland, have been prepared by controlling weeds and providing walking tracks. Watch this space as we will be looking for volunteers from within our membership to help with these surveys.



We have decided to upgrade some of our handout information to reflect what we do in the region and of course where to find some good birding spots. At the same time we are upgrading our static display material, especially our photographs, in order to have an excellent resource for display at community events and the annual October displays at the City and Aitkenvale libraries. The end result will be a coloured *Bird-Watching in Townsville* brochure plus a range of coloured photographs that not only show a good representation of many of our local species, but also relevant information about each bird including size, breeding season, local or migrant species, favoured habitat, feeding preferences, threats to survival and the like. We are very grateful for the members of BirdLife Townsville Photography Group for providing heaps of images to support these two projects and especially to Mark Horvath for his massive time and expert contribution to this cause.

Over time there has been a large amount of digital material in the form of Powerpoint Presentations and the like, donated by members of the Branch as resources for the Education Committee to further the aims of the organisation, particularly in the school environment. Unfortunately there are many "drafts", duplications and different versions of the same topics which has spurred the Education Committee to review what is on hand, identify information gaps and areas where new or modified presentations are required to suit our needs. The aim is to eventually create a master copy of those chosen as a resource to form the basis of our digital education library. All original works from current holdings that are not chosen as resources will be retained but kept separately as archived material. We may need assistance of willing members to upgrade existing material so please watch this space.

Members of the Education Sub-Committee recently visited the Southern Cross Catholic College in Annandale to make a presentation on Rainforest Birds. There will be a short article elsewhere in this edition of the Drongo that covered this visit.

Well that's it folks----Thanks for listening.

Norm Rains Education Co-ordinator

KIMBERLEY CRUISE

We didn't particularly pick our Kimberley Cruise for the birding aspect – we just wanted to see the Kimberley from the sea – so we were pleasantly surprised by how many birds we did see in the ten days– 80 species.

Of course it didn't take us long to realise that it would be worthwhile to always have our binoculars around our necks. Surprisingly, we were the only dedicated birders on the trip, though of course the lecturers and expedition leader were knowledgeable and keen birders (though they weren't familiar with the term 'sharpies'!).

We went on expeditions every day so there were plenty of opportunities to find birds while going to natural, historical and cultural sites. We saw many Sea-Eagles, Ospreys and Brahminy Kites and a pair of Peregrine Falcons who had taken over an Osprey nest. While cruising, it was mainly Brown Boobies and Bridled Terns.

We went ashore at Tranquil Bay and the combination of rugged red towering cliffs, green water and white sand made it a stunningly beautiful place to wander around. Two sets of croc tracks on the sand meant we weren't the only visitors. A pair of raucous Sooty Oystercatchers made sure we didn't get too close to their nest. A few of us saw White-quilled Rock-Pigeons and a Sandstone Shrike-thrush up on the cliffs.



Variegated Fairy-wren

In Vansittart Bay we walked over the mud flats to see a remarkably preserved floatplane wreck and, because the melaleuca trees were in full flower, the birds were prolific – Yellow-tinted and Bar-breasted Honeyeaters, Red-wing Parrots, Silver-crowned Friarbirds.

When we went ashore in Wary Bay to see some rock art and burial sites, we saw a Monjon (small rock wallaby) and tracks of turtle hatchlings. Unfortunately there were also crocodile tracks so it is doubtful that they made it to the sea.

There was an abundance of birds along the Prince Regent River. At one stage John caught sight of some crocs on the bank so the expedition boat was diverted to get a better look. This was fortuitous as it enabled us to get a lifer. Although it was great to see Striated Herons and Kingfishers and Mangrove Robins, and Cockatoos and Crocs, the prize of the day was the Chestnut Rail (which had eluded us in Darwin). It was running along the bank through the mangroves and with thirty pairs of eyes on the 'oversized chook' plus one high-fiving couple I doubt it will appear again for a while.

We visited Sheep Island in Camden harbour to see the Mary Jane Pascoe headstone. However, John and I heard the piping sounds of the Mangrove Golden Whistler so we couldn't resist a foray into the mangroves to search for it and bingo! Excellent view.

On one excursion at Raft Point, we walked up the goat track to a cave of Wandjina art. John concentrated on his birding instead and was treated to a family of Variegated Fairy-wrens displaying themselves only a few feet away (a a great photo opportunity).



Booby Chick

On an excursion up 3 Ways River, as we rounded a bend, we encountered a Great-billed Heron who was as surprised as we were and who then took flight further down the creek. It was a magnificent sight and this happened three times before he finally eluded us. Here was an abundance of Bee-eaters and we were pleased to see a White-breasted Whistler as well.

Montgomery Reef was intriguing with water cascading over its rocky ledges into turbulent eddies and we spotted Bar-tailed Godwits, Ruddy Turnstones, Grey Plovers, Eastern Reef Egrets (eating fish), Pied Cormorants and Terns. We had good views of green turtles from the rubber duckies.

Because we were blessed with good weather, we got to visit the Lacapède Islands. The night before we anchored nearby and when we woke the numbers of birds flying around the boat had exploded. The keen photographers raced around the decks to get the best shots of this bounty of birds. This is a nature reserve renowned for its 18,000 breeding pairs of Brown Boobies, its 20,000 Roseate Terns, its Lesser Frigatebird colony, Common Noddies and its breeding Green Turtles.



Lesser Frigatebird

There are strict rules governing how long you can be on the island and how many people at once and the limits to where you can walk and our guides strictly adhered to the rules. So we took turns in groups of six to walk

around the lagoon and when not on the island moved around in zodiacs or on our little expedition punt for great views of all the birds. It was a magical peaceful morning with glass-like clear blue seas.

Besides the turtles, we saw Shovel-nosed Rays, Stingrays and Bottle-nosed Dolphins. The fluffy baby Boobies were cute and huge Frigate birds coming in to land on their nests, precariously perched on top of the grass, were a sight to see. There were lots of Bridled Tern chicks shuffling about and common species of waders including, most notably, Ruddy Turnstones.

Other non-birding highlights of our trip were the Horizontal Waterfalls, standing under King Cascade (only a trickle, but exhilarating none-the-less), sightings of whales, the stunning scenery, particularly the rock formations, gorgeous sunrises and sunsets at sea, a wide variety of indigenous cave art, great food on board, and Staircase to the Moon while in Broome.

Chris Stewart

KOEL FAMILY REUNION – OR NOT?

Recently I noticed this juvenile koel hanging around our garden in North Ward. For at least five days (23-27 March) it stayed in the same palm most of the time and intermittently picked out the ripest fruits. It was obviously guarding the remaining fruit and chased away several bowerbirds and figbirds that approached.



At separate times, an adult male and an adult female koel fed in the same palm, while the juvenile was perched there. I didn't see any obvious interaction between them. However, on two occasions the youngster and the female koel flew in from the same direction and moved into the palm one after the other. On another occasion, when the female left the palm, the youngster flew off in the same direction after her but soon returned alone to its guard position.

Of course I wondered, were these two adult koels perhaps the real parents, reunited with their offspring after outsourcing the childcare until it had fledged? Has anyone seen similar behaviour?

Julia Hazel

GLUEPOT

If any of you are contemplating a visit to Gluepot reserve, 60 kilometres north of Wakerie, in the Riverland of SA, here is a rundown of a three night stay in February and a two night stay in March. Both occasions had hot and dry conditions with temps in the high thirties. Fifty kilometres of the road in is a single dirt road, with the first 10-15 kilometres being reasonably rough, enough to discourage me from taking my caravan in, although you could if you took it slowly. It helps if you have a passenger to open and close the four gates on the way.



Black-eared Miner

Camping is at one of four campsites, all with toilets and small rainwater tank for washing up. You need to take water in as it is in short supply. The sites are set amongst the Mallee and are basic but adequate for the purpose. Surprisingly, mozzies were plentiful at dusk, even with the paucity of water. There is a very good visitor information centre as you arrive with excellent maps and brochures of the area.

Birding is centered around five bird hides overlooking elevated water troughs, set amongst the trees, and several highlighted walks, several being six kilometres return. In the heat you need to plan carefully and do the longer walks early.



Crested Bellbird

On my first trip I was keen to see the Striated Grasswren, so spent hours on the 'Grasswren track' and trekking through the spinifex covered dunes in the hope of seeing these elusive birds, only to find out from the ranger late on day two that they have not been seen

on the property for two years. I did manage to see the Striped Honeyeater, but little else. I learnt early on that you can spend hours walking the tracks and through the mallee with few bird sightings, then out of the blue spot a gem. Some sites had lots of bird activity, others none. The trick is to discover the productive spots, which obviously change with the seasons.



Striped Honeyeater

By my second trip I decided to spend the first couple of hours from sunrise at one of the hides and was rewarded with numerous birds coming in to water, including a colony of fifteen or so Black-eared Miners. The colony comprised many hybrids with an estimated one in four being 'true' Black-eared. Another sighting at a second hide showed an even greater percentage of hybrids. Most looked like the dark morph, Yellow-throated Miner. Several honeyeater species, Mulga and Ringneck Parrots and, if you are lucky, Major Mitchells come in to drink as well as Ravens, Grey Butcherbirds, Grey Currawongs and Common Bronzowings. There is a constant stream of birds in the morning, not so good in my limited observation, in the afternoon.



Mulga Parrots

If you are not targeting a particular species, such as the Red-lored Whistler which is generally found in a specific section of the reserve, I find another productive bird technique was to drive until you saw bird activity at the roadside, stop and investigate the immediate vicinity. I saw the White-browed Treecreeper, Chestnut Quail-thrush, Gilbert's Whistler and Crested Bellbird in this manner.

To summarise I would say that Gluepot has many wonderful birds, but needs time and a lot of walking over different seasons to fully appreciate the diversity.

My total species count on both trips was a lowly mid thirties with a lot of effort expended, but the rarity and the knowledge of the possibility of a once in a lifetime opportunity to sight some species will see me return many more times. Get as much precise info from the rangers as possible and talk to fellow birders already onsite to save hours of fruitless toil.

Roger Mortlock

CANBERRA

I had a surprise visit to Mulligans Flat on a very recent visit to family in Canberra. They only live five minutes from there and already it's become a favourite place to visit.



Scarlet Robin

I was so excited to get there and start exploring. Small birds were calling in lots of places and I had a hard time deciding where to look first.

The Scarlet Robins were quite numerous; the males stand out so well with their red breast and the female was a nice bonus.

I was keen to see if I could find a treecreeper and was very excited to find one. A lovely White-throated male was busily chasing up and down the trees looking for food. He was obliging enough to stop still for me to get a half decent photo.

There were plenty of Grey Fantails chasing dinner and any bird that got too close to them.



Eastern Rosella

I have a dodgy photo of a Thornbill, I'm guessing a Buff-rumped. On the way out I came across an Eastern Rosella, who turned his back on me, but I've a good enough shot for id purposes.

We were not there for very long, small children and bird photography is not a good combination, but I tried my best. I was very happy to have seen and photographed the robins and treecreeper.

Annette Sibson

SCHOOL VISIT

This week we had Mr Rains, Mr Threlfall and Ms Robino from Birdlife Townsville visit our Southern Cross Catholic College. They had a really interesting slideshow that gave us information about different types of birds, how to find them, the Scrub Turkey, different threats to the environment and how to protect birds.

One of the birds we looked at was the Spotted Cat Bird. It was very interesting listening to the sounds of the birds as well.

BirdLife Townsville gave our school two sets of books - Rainforest Birds of the Southern Wet Tropics and Woodland Birds of the Burdekin Dry Tropics.



YOU JUST NEVER KNOW

We recently enjoyed the Mission Beach Bird Club outing and saw an abundance of Cassowaries (5). However, Ian hadn't yet seen a Mistletoebird and he was hoping to see one whilst out and about. Not to be. We travelled onto Cairns to visit my brother than onto Cobbold Gorge. Large numbers of Apostlebirds were around the camp site and resident Bowerbirds. The usual suspects were sighted - Kookaburras, Blue-faced Honeyeaters, Bee-eaters, large number of Little Friarbirds etc etc, but no Mistletoebird.

We arrived home, and there on the powerlines was a Mistletoebird.

PS: We had plenty of rain at Mission Beach, a downpour at Cobbold Gorge, none here I believe. Roads to Cobbold Gorge and return via Forsayth and Einasleigh have recently been graded and are in excellent condition. Fuel at The Lynd was \$1.18, fuel at Greenvale \$1.27.

Nina Doyle



BIRDS IN THE UK

Brin Crowther has been touring around the UK and he sent these photographs.



Jay



Kingfisher



Siskin

QUEST

Niel Bruce	316	11-11-16
Chris Ezzy	286	12-10-16
Len Ezzy	284	10-10-16
Ian Leach	242	29-08-16
Janet Robino	240	27-08-16
Marleen Acton	212	30-07-16
Rosemary Payet	209	27-07-16
Janet Cross	209	27-07-16
Pat Charlton	198	16-07-16
Wal Threlfall	184	02-07-16
Warren Charlton	182	30-06-16
Michael McMaster	180	28-06-16
Annette Sutton	151	30-05-16

CALENDAR

May

- 14th - Saturday - Committee Meeting (Noon) and General Meeting (2.00pm) "Birds and Mangrove Connectivity"
- 15th - Sunday - Ross River Dam Survey - Meet in the Dam car park for a 6.30am start. Leader Ian Boyd.
- 18th - Wednesday - Bush Garden Survey - Meet at end of Thompson St Mundingburra for a 6.30am start.
- 29th - Sunday - Outing - Herveys Range / Keelbottom Creek Meet at Redding's Cinema car park for a departure at 6.30am sharp. This is an all-day outing bring morning tea and lunch

June

- 2nd - Thursday - Wongaloo Survey - Meet for 6.30 departure from the Coles car park at the Annandale Shopping Centre, University Drive Annandale. Bring morning tea. Car pooling encouraged. Leader: Ian Boyd
- 5th - Sunday - Town Common Survey - Meet at the Town Common main gate for a 7.00am start.
- 7th - Tuesday - Photography Group Meeting - Theme: "Dead Trees" birds perched on dead tree limbs.
- 11th - Saturday - Committee Meeting (Noon) and General Meeting (2.00pm)
- 15th - Wednesday - Bush Garden Survey - Meet at end of Thompson St Mundingburra for a 7.00am start.
- 18th and 19th - Saturday and Sunday Birdlife Townsville Bird Quest Challenge Count. Leaders: Pat Charlton / Marleen Acton . (To count bird species and numbers in numerous areas within a 40km radius of CBD). Participants will be allocated a specific area.
- 19th - Sunday - Ross River Dam Survey - Meet in the Dam car park for a 6.30am start. Leader Ian Boyd.
- 26th - Sunday - Outing - TBA

July

- Saturday 2nd to Monday 4th - Townsville Show Long Weekend Campout - _Mt. Zero/Taravale Station. Leader : Ian Boyd. More details closer to the date.
- 3rd - Sunday - Town Common Survey - Meet at the Town Common main gate for a 7.00am start.
- 5th - Tuesday - Photography Group Meeting - Theme: "Feathers and Flowers". A 7.00pm start.
- 7th - Thursday - Wongaloo Survey -Meet for 6.30 departure from the Coles car park at the Annandale Shopping Centre, University Drive Annandale. Bring morning tea. Car pooling encouraged. Leader: Ian Boyd
- 9th - Saturday - Committee Meeting (12.00) and General Meeting (2.00pm)
- 13th - Wednesday - Bush Garden Survey - Meet at end of Thompson St Mundingburra 7.00am.
- 17th - Sunday - Ross River Dam Survey. - Meet in the Dam car park 7.00am. Leader Ian Boyd.
- 31st - Sunday - Outing - Clement State Forest. Meet at Readings 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: Ian Boyd

August

- 4th - Thursday - Wongaloo 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
- 7th - Sunday - Town Common Survey- Meet at the main gate 7.00am. Visitors welcome. Leader - TBA.
- 9th - Tuesday - Photography Group Meeting - Theme : "Head Shots" images that don't show the whole bird and preferably targeting the head and neck.. A 7.00pm start at a venue TBA.
- 13th - Saturday - Committee Meeting (12.00) and General Meeting (2.00pm)
- 17th - Wednesday - Bush Garden Survey - Meet at end of Thompson St Mundingburra 7.00am.