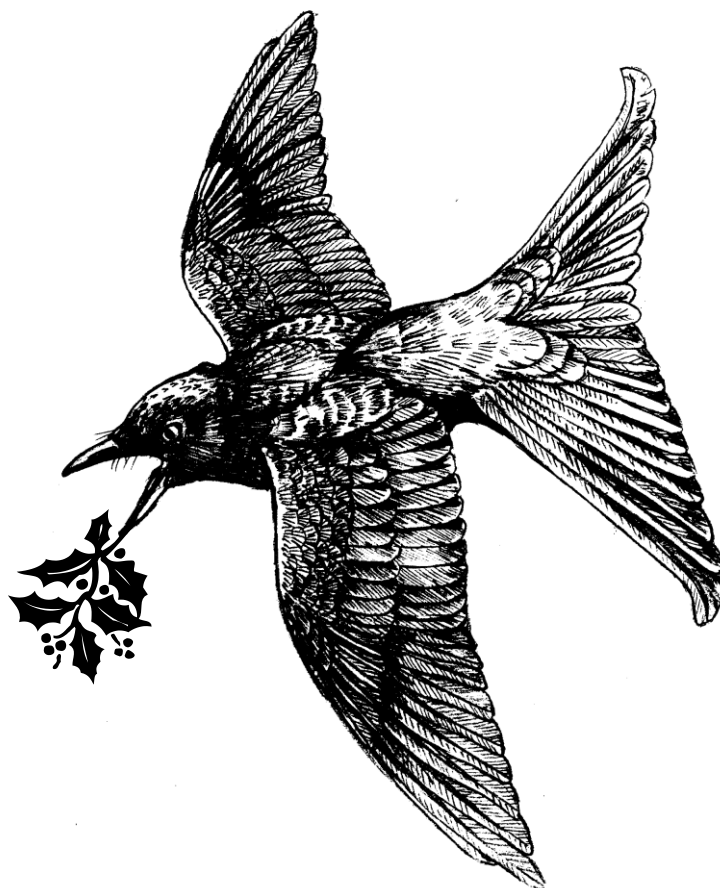


The Drongo

Number 140 November 2015



PIP Count Flamingoes Eagles



FROM THE PRESIDENT

BirdLife Townsville now has some good signage which will give a much better impression of the club at community events. All signs will be on display at the November meeting.

Golo Maurer will be the guest speaker at the November meeting. This will be a good opportunity for members to find out all about Golo's role in North Queensland.

The Christmas party will be at the Suburban Bowls Club again this year. It will be on Saturday 12 December so time to start limbering up for the big bowls contest before dinner. Make sure you have let Nina Doyle know you are coming. An email will soon be sent with all the details including costs and payment of same. Those who attended last year had a great time with learning how to play bowls, struggling to get the right answers to Nina's Christmas Quiz and eating a very nice meal.

Ray and Annette Sutton have been visiting family in England – and becoming grandparents once again – for the last few months. Despite being on the other side of the world, Annette is still managing to find time to put together the Drongo. Please try to make Annette's job a little easier by making sure she has plenty of interesting stories on hand to ensure the high quality newsletter we have all come to expect. Every item does not have to be an epistle. Sometimes it only takes a few sentences to tell a very interesting story. It would make Annette's life a lot easier if she didn't have to ask for stories at the last minute. As soon as you think you have a story that others would like to read, put it in writing and send it off to Annette at amsgreat@gmail.com.

The Black-throated Finch survey was held in October. I'm confident that all members who took part this year will agree with me in saying that the coordination by the BTF Recovery Team made it very easy to participate this year. The well designed mud-map made finding the allocated waterhole a piece of cake.....even for me!

As this will be the last Drongo for the year, it's time to think about who will be the committee next year. To keep the club vibrant it needs new ideas and energy, so give a thought to how you can contribute.

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

Newsletter Editor Annette Sutton amsgreat@gmail.com

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A BIRD FAIRY TALE

Once upon a time there was this lovely lady in Durdins Road, Bargara (near Bundaberg, Queensland) who used to feed and water birds in her back yard. In the bird world, this back yard had a reputation and was a well-known gathering place to share a meal with friends. The local birds were assured a daily snack of seeds, fruit and honey. It certainly was a colourful feast for the bird community.



Then one day, a Long-billed Corella started turning up at feed times. It was a loner, but loved the company and sharing the daily morsels with its friends. It was a happy time in Durdins Road, but there was something missing in this Long-billed Corella's world... Sadly it had no mate. Certainly this Long-billed Corella had a multitude of friends to dine with... but no one to actually come home to and share its very own tree-hollow.



As time went on, this lovely lady in Durdins Road decided that she needed for herself her own live-in companion; so she acquired a little dog. This dog was very possessive of its back-yard territory and would chase the birds away. The bird feeding had to cease here at Durdins Road.

This lovely lady had a lovely daughter, who lived seven kilometres away on the top of a hill at the beachside suburb of Innes Park. She too used to feed the local birds from feeders along the top of her back yard fence.



Miraculously, one day this same Long-billed Corella began showing up at the lovely daughter's feeding stations..., which, in itself, is an amazing coincidence.

Then one day, the whole happy picture was revealed; The Long-billed Corella had become something more than just friends with one particular local Galah and had quietly "shared a tree hollow" with this iconic Australian bird.

Together they had a baby. Congratulations to the happy parents... and a warm welcome to the new bird on the block; a little bit different; the **Long-billed Galella**.



And they all lived happily ever after.

Len and Chris Ezzy



Graeme Cooksley.

PIP ANNUAL COUNT

Mission Beach 21 November – more counters needed!

Birdlife NQ's annual count of Pied/Torresian Imperial Pigeons will take place on Saturday 21 November. The event starts at 1.30 pm at C4 Centre in Mission Beach.

The afternoon will begin with a screening of the short documentary film, "The Coming of the White Birds" (see below), followed by a briefing for counters.

Count teams then disperse to their allocated sites along the coast near Mission Beach, ready to start counting at 4pm. We meet afterwards for dinner at a venue in Mission Beach.

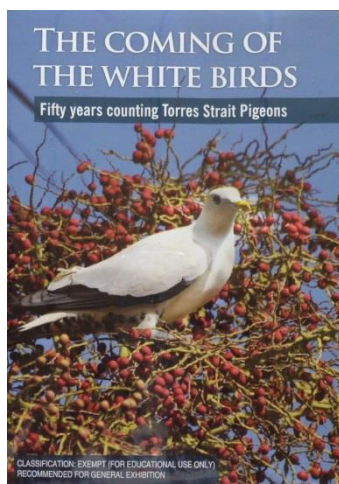
The past couple of years have been short of counters. Please join in this year if you can and encourage family and friends to come along, all welcome.

To assist with planning, please notify Trish Pontynen (tpontynen@yahoo.com.au) if you are willing to participate as a counter.

Julia Hazel

THE COMING OF THE WHITE BIRDS

The tiny Brook Islands north of Hinchinbrook once hosted vast blocks of breeding "Nutmeg Pigeons", the birds called Pied/Torresian Imperial Pigeons. By the 1960s, the Brook Island pigeons had been almost exterminated by recreational shooting on a massive scale.



At that point, something extraordinary happened: a couple of visiting southerners on a camping holiday intervened personally to prevent the slaughter of the few remaining birds. What happened next is told in a new documentary film entitled *The Coming of the White Birds*.

In 26 minutes of screen time, film maker Sarah Scragg has woven together beautiful imagery and personal accounts of many people involved. Chief story teller is Margaret Thorsborne who, together with her late husband Arthur, initiated this remarkable conservation achievement.

The Coming of the White Birds will be screened at the Birdlife Mission Beach meeting on 21 November, see above.

The film is also available on DVD from the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland. It would make a nice Christmas present and it carries a conservation bonus. From each DVD purchase \$5 goes to fund continuation of pigeon counts at the Brook Islands. To order a DVD email: townsvillebrolga@wildlife.org.au

Julia Hazel

Edmund Banfield wrote of Pied Imperial Pigeons in 1908 that in Dunk Island "fully 100,000 come and go evening and morning", with flying colonies as wide as two miles." However, the birds were subject to mass slaughter in the 19th and early 20th Centuries. Populations dropped rapidly before conservation activists such as Margaret and Arthur Thorsborne led a campaign to protect them and monitor their numbers.

MORNING STROLL

On a walk this morning from Kirwan, up Riverside Drive and over Vickers bridge back to the Weir School, I had a couple of interesting sightings. Apart from all the usual, Magpie Geese, Jacanas, Little Pied and Black Cormorants, Brown H.E., as I came off Vickers Bridge three Redwings flew into a tree ahead of me, and as I drew level they took off in the direction of the Ring Road.



A little further along there were three Pied Imperial Pigeons, and going across the Walkway to the Weir School, the usual number of Pacific Black and Hardheads in the River.

Barbara Reidy



THE GREAT BOWERBIRD

The Great Bowerbird is common around Townsville and thankfully they make good photography subjects.

They will build their bower almost anywhere. They are commonly found in suburban backyards and there is one to be found in most school yards.

I like to think the male is like a shop keeper. He lays out his wares as he knows some females like to go shopping. It is his way of attracting a female for the mating process. The more attractive the bower, the greater his success. When active around their bower trying to attract a female, they get up to all sorts of antics. Some can be quite frantic when it appears that a female near his bower is not interested!

Basically, the sole purpose in life of the male Great Bowerbird, like other bowerbirds, is to mate with as many females as he can. He has nothing to do with the female after the mating. Nor does he participate with the raising of his progeny. It is her job to build the nest, mate with a dominant male, lay eggs, incubate those eggs and raise the chicks through to independence.

The series of images show some antics of the Bowerbird around his bower and the diverse bower decorations found in different areas. The one with many manmade objects is in suburban Townsville, the one with the shells is in the dunes of an isolated gulf country beach and the one with the quite large quartz chips is on a property in central Cape York.

And people wonder why we like birds!

Ian Boyd



Gulf country beach



Cape York



Suburban Townsville



City Slicker

ROSE FLAMINGOES CAMARGUE FRANCE

My purpose in visiting Arles was to visit the Camargue in the hope of seeing flamingoes - and there were thousands! Rose Flamingoes that breed in a special area of the Camargue and feed throughout it.



www.aubergecavalierie.com

Operating by public transport, I was advised to visit the Parc Ornithologique, some kilometres out of Arles. It was a delight! A thirty minute bus trip had me at the Parc before opening time and not very far inside I was entranced by Rose Flamingoes feeding in shallow water, undisturbed by visitors and cameras. The morning sun highlighted their delicate pink bodies and deeper rose coloured wings as they fed. They paddle for food, using their feet to stir up food and their backward facing black beaks imbibe what has just been stirred up. Amazing to watch. Even more amazing to see them in flight with their long necks and legs (like Brolgas) and the red and black in their outstretched wings.

The Parc is set out around varying types of wetland habitat where each species finds a place to feed and breed. The vegetation is low and bushy as the area contains a lot of salt. The Flamingoes feed throughout the Camargue but are prolific in the Parc and breed in another section of the Camargue. You can walk the 10 kilometres of walkways (I did about seven), pop into the hides to get a closer view of species such as herons and waders or just sit and watch.

My watching companion on one bench turned out to be Philippe Lavaux, a very quiet Frenchman, who filmed the murmuration of starlings we have all seen, *Birds are Making Magic*, on Vimeo.com. It wasn't till he was leaving that I noticed his filming gear - all arranged on a small metal chair, wheels on the front legs, a cushion for comfortable sitting and film gear neatly enclosed under the seat of the chair, umbrella and other necessities all having their place. He lives close by in Avignon and

often goes to the Parc. Currently he is making

a film on birds at Lake Kerkini in the north of Greece.

Philippe informed me that young Flamingoes have black legs, white feathers which become grey and black before the birds gain their adult plumage. There were several in the Parc. These Flamingoes migrate to areas around the Mediterranean - Spain, Italy, Turkey, Greece and North Africa but there are always some in the Camargue if you get the opportunity to visit this remarkable area.

Next day I did a four hour trip in a Jeep to see more of the Camargue which filled out the richness of the area agriculturally and culturally but for me the highlight of my time in the Camargue was definitely enjoying the richness of the Rose Flamingoes.

Joan Wharton

SPRING AT CARLYLE

This year's waterless spring has been difficult for our birds, but we have been able to log quite a few different varieties which are actively chasing food, or breeding. As usual, the Masked Lapwings have produced some fluffy little chicks, of which there were four for the first day, but now a few days later, there are only three. One pair lost all of theirs about ten days ago. Not surprising, as this morning Ivor and I saw a Kestrel and a Brown Goshawk, hunting low down, almost together. However, the new parents are doing their guarding thing, but I've managed to walk past them without being dive-bombed, if I skirt around their particular driveway which they seem to have claimed as "home".



Bush Stone-curlew

It is good to note that drivers have been considerably stopping to allow them to move, albeit very slowly sometimes and with a great deal of screeching, off the road. Perhaps Ivor's monthly "Bird Notes" in our Chronicle are helping people to become more aware of our avian wildlife. We all know about the hordes of wallabies here, but few people notice the birds which sing so tunefully in their shrubs and trees. Mostly there are complaints thrown at

me about the horrible Curlews wailing, or the nasty Koel's persistent calling at all times of the day and night.

We have a large vacant block to the west of our village and this week I've been pleasantly surprised to see two Bustards wandering around there, as I hadn't seen them for months. Perhaps they are joining the twenty odd Little Corellas which have been enjoying the wild cucumbers which are fruiting at present. Strangely, a number of Cattle Egrets also seemed to be feasting on those, too. My two pairs of resident Black-fronted Dotterels, are no longer resident as there is no water in our Council drain where they have lived for about 10 years. I've missed chatting to them every morning and of course haven't been able to enjoy their new chicks, but hope they have bred successfully somewhere else.

Sunbirds, Brown Honeyeaters, Mistletoe Birds, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes, White-breasted Woodswallows, Friar Birds, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Black-Cockatoos, Fairy Martins and Black Kites are regular visitors or fly-overs during the day. There is also the continuous stream of Australian Ibis flying back and forth, while others wander around our lawns. North Queensland is a great place to live, where Nature's wildlife can still outnumber the humans.

Elna Kerswell

PINE CREEK NT



Hooded Parrot

We stopped at the Lazy Lizard Caravan Park in Pine Creek which turned out to be a good choice as the fellow in charge of the park was able to inform us of all the good places for birds. Within the park was a spot that they were trying to get the grass to grow for next season's camping tourists which was a drawcard for the Hooded Parrots when the sprinklers were turned on

each day. So this was the spot I haunted until I got my lifer. Also in the park were Grey-crowned Babbler and a Great Bowerbird's bower. At the front of the shop/tavern when they had their sprinklers going, Hooded Parrots and many other birds were attracted to the spray. One night there were about 20 Hooded Parrots sitting on the power lines! We had a meal in the Tavern, a very good feed prepared by the chef. I would highly recommend it if you are passing that way, and the price was right as well.



Gouldian Finch

We were told of a nearby creek bed with a couple of small waterholes to sit on for Gouldians, which of course we did and were rewarded almost straight away with Long-tailed, Masked and Gouldian Finches.

On our return through Pine Creek we stayed at Pussycat Flats for one night. Several hundred Red-tailed Black Cockatoos flew overhead, heading to their roosting spot. This was another great sight. Do not forget if you are in Pine Creek to visit the sewage ponds for Radjah Shelduck, Rufous-banded Honeyeater, (picked up Hooded Parrots there as well) and the cemetery for the biggest termite mound.



Marlene Acton

MUSEUM EXHIBITION

The journey to our first Bird themed Exhibition started many years ago. Julia Hazel and I agreed to learn Taxidermy from Roy Mackay, following a request at a Birdlife meeting. Jo Wenikie had been in the Taxidermy room at the Museum of Tropical Queensland for a number of years and was leaving to join her family in NSW.

We enjoyed our instruction but too quickly came to the time when Roy said we "just needed to practice".... Then came the Cassowary! A bird that size was way too difficult for two inexperienced taxidermists to handle. Thankfully, with help from Birdlife Townsville, Roy was again able to instruct and support us on this difficult project. The Cassowaries took about five weeks with lots of trips into and out of the freezer and now they stand in the Rainforest display, delighting all who visit them.

Over the years, we and many others have slowly improved and refined our skills. We were fortunate when others came and joined the team. Some like Jenny Sebba and Cecily Messer are there for the long haul. Others were able to contribute for a time before relocating with their family to other states or countries.

The Taxidermy team, work on Tuesdays and Wednesdays each week. Last year we decided to work towards setting up a display on Birds and their Nests. We were throwing ourselves into this task when 'our' cases, that is the two we had 'acquired', were needed for a display and somehow never came back! Fortunately this was close to the time of the library displays, 2014, and many of the finished mounts with nests were able to be displayed there.

We now have approximately forty different mounted nest combinations. The smallest is the Mistletoe bird, the largest the Sea eagle. The 'most industrious' would be a hard choice...the Fairy Martin with all those mouthfuls of mud or the tiny Lemon Bellied Flycatcher's nest with the pieces of lichen still attached. Perhaps the prize should go to the hanging nests of the Sunbirds or Brown-backed Honeyeaters, all with their external decorations and their internal soft furnishings. All are truly beautiful works of art.

We have received many donations of used nests from members of Birdlife Townsville and for this and all the specimens you collect, we say "Thank You".

This exhibition will use 'our' two cases as well as the four cases in the "Cultural corridor." This is the area you pass on the way to the lecture theatre. Besides the four cases there, we plan to have extra items suspended from the ceiling and others on the floor opposite the cases, protected by perspex barriers.

All Birdlife members will be receiving an official invitation for the opening on November 10th. It is a Tuesday but we hope most of you can attend to show the world how important our birds truly are. These invites come from The Director, Peter McCloud and Janet as Birdlife President. Janet will then follow the opening with a presentation in the theatre. Let's have it filled to overflowing.

The exhibition will be on display from November to March so lots of time for everyone to view it.

Hopefully in this time we can educate folk about the purposes of :-Bowers vs nests, the importance of tree hollows, the different types of nests...who suspends from branches, who prefers to hang beneath, whose preference is for the 'simple stick' structure, and who likes a snug dark hollow??

Please come and be a part of this Bird Exhibition. It has taken us seven years and we are hoping it will be such a huge success that we can start planning the next one very soon. Suggestions are welcomed.

Beth Snewin

BLACK-THROATED FINCH COUNT

The Black-throated Finch waterhole count for 2015 was held on Saturday and Sunday mornings 17-18 October. The count has been organised by the Black-throated Finch Recovery Team since 2004. The count is held on one weekend in October. This timing is intended to coincide with the season during which the birds have fewest options in terms of where they can find a drink. This year, even though the count was one week earlier that it is usually held, the landscape was very dry and some water sources that are usually reliable and regularly used by Black-throated Finches were completely dry. Recovery-Team members spend time before the count negotiating access to private land and evaluating water sources.



Black-throated Finch

The count followed the usual methodology. Each water source was observed between 6am and 9am on each of the two days of the count. Each observer records the numbers of birds drinking at the water source in each 15-minute interval. Other seed-eating species, in addition to Black-throated Finches, were also recorded in the same way: Double-barred Finches, Zebra Finches, Plum-headed Finches, Peaceful Doves and Squatter Pigeons. Recording the numbers of "drinking events" gives an index of abundance rather than an absolute measure of abundance as it does not attempt the often impossible task of determining whether individual birds come to water more than once.

Generally, Black-throated Finches approach a water source by landing in a nearby tree, often quite high up in the tree, often dropping to a shrub closer to the water's edge if one is available. They move to the water's edge itself. They may remain there for a very short time, sometimes only a few

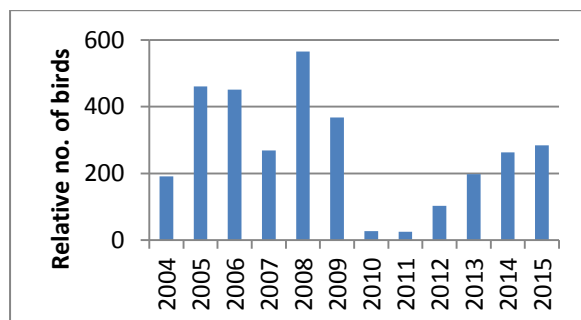
seconds. Birds may make contacts calls as they approach the water but are generally silent whilst at the water source.

This year 30 volunteers participated in the count, collectively covering 17 water sources. Most of these water sources were man-made. Black-throated Finches were observed at 5 (29%) of the water sources, watched with a total of 284 drinking events by Black-throated

Finches. Assuming that roughly the same birds were observed on each of Saturday and Sunday, and that some birds are likely to have drunk more than once, this number translates into fewer than 150 individual birds.

By comparison, the numbers of drinking events for other seed-eating birds recording during the count were: Double-barred Finches 1462; Plum-headed Finch 1146; Peaceful Dove 806; Chestnut-breasted Mannikin 215; Squatter Pigeon 35; Zebra Finch 2. The numbers of Plum-headed Finches and Chestnut-breasted Mannikins are considerably greater than in 2014, perhaps reflecting the fact that birds have moved into the district as a result of dry conditions elsewhere.

How the count of Black-throated Finches compares with those recorded during previous counts is shown in the accompanying figure. The relative number of Black-throated Finches was similar to that recorded in 2014 and well up on the numbers in 2010 and 2011 when early rains meant that birds did not need to come to water sources that were monitored. The dry conditions in 2015 gave birds fewer watering options, increasing the chances that they would be detected during the count. No doubt there are Black-throated Finches on the Townsville Coastal Plain that were not detected during these surveys. The effort is always limited by the numbers of volunteers available as well as access to likely sites.



Some of the other species observed during the 2015 count include: Brown Quail, Double-barred Finch, Pallid Cuckoo, Plum-headed Finch, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Great Bowerbird, Drongo, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Dollarbird, Leaden Flycatcher, Little Friarbird, Noisy Friarbird, White-throated Honeyeater, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Olive-backed Oriole, Pale-headed Rosella, Royal Spoonbill, White-winged Triller, Rufous Whistler, Sunbird, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Coucal, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Torresian Crow, Jabiru, Black Swan, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Weebill, Australian Reed-Warbler and Little Corella.

The Black-throated Finch Recovery Team would

like to thank all volunteers. The count is one way of systematically assessing trends in the distribution and abundance of Black-throated

Finches on the Townsville Coastal Plain. The species is clearly under pressure from land use change in the Townsville region. It also faces major threats in its strongholds in the Galilee Basin where approved and proposed large-scale coal-mining operations will, as they proceed, destroy large areas of high quality Black-throated Finch habitat.

Tony Grice

MUD NEST

My offside for the Black-throated Finch survey this morning was Graham Castle who was visiting from Newcastle for the week. We didn't get any Black-throated Finch on our waterhole, but we still had a pretty good morning. One of the interesting sights was the White-breasted Woodswallows (WBWS) happily sitting in a mud nest. According to Pizzey and Knight, WBWS 'May use old nest of Magpie-lark, Welcome Swallow' and this pair was obviously making the most of a previously-owned Magpie-lark nest. It also appeared that the Magpie-larks were not quite ready to give up their nests as Barbara Reidy and I had watched the WBWS repeatedly chasing a distressed Magpie-lark from the nest yesterday.



*Stolen mud nest
Janet Robino*

Graham Castle



From Angela Ward

KUNUNURRA

Loved Kununurra. Our camp site there was close to the bank of the lake. Within the park there were Shining and Paperbark Flycatchers, Nankeen Night-Heron and Crimson Finch.



Freshwater Crocodile

We did a cruise with Triple J down the Ord River and pulled in Black Bittern as a bonus. The cruise was amazing, 53km of Pandanus and Cumbungi fringed banks, with beautiful towering ranges almost for the entire length. White-browed crakes and Jacanas were walking over the waterweeds in several spots. One Jacana was even sitting on his nest with the boat almost on top of him. A few freshwater crocs thrown into the mix followed by superb reflections then a sunset adding to the enjoyment.

Afternoon tea was on the bank at a secret spot with pumpkin scones and jam, cake and pawpaw with lime squeezed over for a taste sensation, (the skipper's words).

Around Kununurra we picked up Star Finch, Yellow-rumped Mannikin, Wood Sandpiper & Buff-sided Robin.



Star Finch
Marlene Acton



SEA-GOING PARROT

During June 2015 or perhaps a little earlier, this Indian Ring-neck or Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*) suddenly turned up at Low Isles, a tiny vegetated sand cay in Great Barrier Reef waters north of Cairns.

No one saw the exotic bird arrive, but it seemed to be in good condition, not a storm-blown victim. The main shipping route through the GBR passes fairly close to the east of Low Isles, nearer than the Queensland mainland to the west. Perhaps this was an adventurous pet parrot that flew away from a passing ship.

Surprisingly, the ring-neck appeared to maintain good condition over several months, living in what seems very unsuitable natural habitat for any parrot, without the food supply it had presumably enjoyed as a pet.

The visitor was quite discreet and mostly quiet. Intermittently, it could be spotted perched in the small cluster of trees and shrubs on the cay. Presumably it found occasional edible items although I never saw it eating there.



Indian Ringneck

More surprising, I saw the parrot several times picking about on the wave-washed shoreline. There it tried repeatedly to prise off chunks of algae-covered beach rock, occasionally succeeded, and seemed to chew at them.

When fossicking along the shore, the parrot was often in company with a grey reef egret, the latter foraging in its normal habitat.

Reef herons, both white and grey morphs, are resident at Low Isles but they are few in number. It seemed more than mere chance that this parrot and a grey reef egret were often close together, but they did not seem to interact.

The parrot seems to have departed during September, just as mysteriously as it had arrived.

Julia Hazel

STRANGER

Yesterday I got a phone call from a neighbour wanting to confirm her identification of an 'odd' bird in her garden. She had looked it up in the book but just wanted to be sure what she had was an Orange-footed Scrubfowl.

This morning she rang to say, "The boy is back".

I walked down the road to check it out and there certainly was an Orange-footed Scrubfowl



Orange-footed Scrubfowl

scratching around in her garden. I managed to get one ID photo before it flew off across the road and through at least two backyards before we lost sight of it. She reports that it has been hanging around for a few days despite her Fox Terrier spending most of the day in the garden. I'm not sure if there have been any other sightings of Orange-footed Scrubfowls in this part of Cranbrook (just off Ellimatta Road, half way between Ross River Road and Charles Street).

Janet Robino

CRYSTAL CREEK

We were rather stunned that only eight people were keen to go birding to Crystal Creek on the September outing. We acknowledged that there are a few members away on holidays, some had family commitments – other reasons unknown. Perhaps some were waiting for the forecast showers!

It was high tide at 7.30 am so our first spot to go looking was down to the beach. We passed many campers along the track – there for the weekend or the school holidays. Tents, cars and boats as well as huts open and more cars and quad bikes. We thought we met the owners of the road by the way they drove. One problem of being the leader is that I was the first to face some of these people!

We were a little disappointed that there were very few waders around but perhaps this beach isn't a good feeding beach for these birds and the tide was quite HIGH! So we made our way gradually back towards the boat ramp on Crystal Creek for morning tea. We did stop at a

couple of bush spots and saw some interesting birds eg a Black Butcherbird, a Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove (when was the last time I saw one of these?), Lovely Fairy-wrens (again a long time between seeing these birds), amongst other bush birds. At the boat ramp, most saw the Mangrove Gerygone, a pair of Brahminy Kites soaring over the creek and a Pied Imperial-Pigeon.

Across the highway and off to Big Crystal Creek and later, lunch where again there were tents, cars and caravans with lots of people everywhere. For people getting "away from it all" there were strains of nearly every Slim Dusty song produced, generators running to power fridges, etc. We thought that birding here might be a waste of time and perhaps we should go to Jourama Falls. However we didn't get too far as there were plenty of birds to keep us interested. One member of the group got a lifer! Amongst the highlights in this area were seven Varied Sittellas – really going to town looking for insects in the bark of the trees, a Satin and Lemon-bellied Flycatchers, Black-faced and Pied Monarchs, Grey and Northern Fantails and many others. And overlooking the very crowded Paradise Lagoon, was a Nankeen Night Heron.



Brahminy Kite

One young couple from Germany wanted to know why we were quite excited – so I pointed out the not-so-common Sittellas to them. They were suitably impressed by such a pretty bird (their words). Other members of our party were also approached by some campers to see why we were calling back our friends. They asked if we get points for seeing uncommon birds! So it was a great day with lots of birds (64 but with some double ups for the two locations) – the big disappointment were the campers and fishermen who cannot read signs that said "No Litter"!

Warren Charlton



BOWER BIRDS

Townsville seems to be the epicentre for urban bowerbirds and I have been enjoying watching their antics and trying to photograph them. Malcolm Calvert alerted me to a very fine bower along the river in Cranbrook. It was a very busy place on the morning that I visited – up to six birds at a time and lots of chasing and some display. The dominant male revealed a crest the likes of which I had never seen. The feathers of his crest appear to be reddish underneath, and the way that he was able to change the shape and apparent size of his head was quite surprising.



Great Bowerbird showing crest
Hugh Sweatman

ATTACK

I heard a loud clang as something collided with the grills in the breezeway, quickly followed by a dull clunk against the glass door. I found a very distressed looking young peaceful dove huddled against the door. I could just see something moving behind the car. I managed to get a blurry shot of a pair of stalking legs which look very much like they belong to a Brown Goshawk. I tried to sneak around the car but the bird took off. It returned a few minutes later and tried to get back through the grill door but took off as soon as it spotted me. The dove sat in a crumpled heap with large staring eyes for about forty-five minutes before flying into the syzygium in the front garden and hiding itself deep in the foliage.



Janet Robino

SURPRISE

In a newspaper here in England it was reported that "Mrs Walker was getting ready for bed when she noticed something staring at her from inside the fireplace". A Tawny Owl had dropped through her chimney and landed in her fireplace.

I was quite surprised that it was a Tawny Owl because, after it had fallen through the chimney, you would expect a Sooty Owl.

The article went on to say that the children were excited as they were fans of the *Harry Potter* books where owls deliver Wizard mail. Mrs. Walker may have also been excited by the forlorn hope that the owl might have delivered a Wizard male just as she was getting ready for bed.

Ray Sutton

TRIP TO MELBOURNE

I have wanted to visit the water treatment plant for some time. Previous visits here it was not easy getting a permit etc., not knowing where to go. This time I used the good old Google and found "Birding Tours Melbourne". The owner and guide was Paul Hackett. He was excellent, full of knowledge of where to find birds that I had not seen. First we went to the You Yangs park. Lovely place to walk about. Some of the birds seen were Thornbills, Weebills, two different Cuckoos, Horsefields and Shining. Red Wattlebird, White-fronted Chat.



A pair of Striated Pardalote were building a nest. Strangely, it was at ground level up a hole in the bottom of a huge gum tree. An added interest on the way back to Werribee, we saw police cars, police bikes etc. coming our way. My friend and I thought we were in the middle of a crime scene!! There was a policewoman running down a creek. It was just like in the detective stories. (She was actually chasing a goat off the road apparently). No it was not a crime scene but an international cycling race, Australia's own "Tour de France", from

Melbourne to Warrnambool . The Peloton was huge, at least 350 bikes, it was a pretty good sight to see. The sheep in the nearby paddock did not think so, they took off.

We then headed to Werribee. What an eye opener. My friend and I went in thinking we would see "a pond or two" . Amazing set up to treat 90% of Melbourne effluent. That aside, the birdlife was amazing. I have never seen so many swans in one place. Thousands of different birds, Musk, Australian Shelduck, Chestnut Teal, Blue-billed, Hoary-headed Grebe, Australasian Gannet, Avocet, Banded Stilt, Fairy Tern, White-fronted Chat, Scarlet Robin, were some of the birds I had not seen before . An amazing place. I can understand why the treatment plant is world recognized.

Sue Rutherford

SHEARWATER ENCOUNTER

A couple of years ago my husband and I were out fishing on a lovely calm day, we were out near the Palm Island group.

I always take my camera with me when we're fishing, you just never know what you might encounter.

I had noticed a brown bird on the water some distance from us and was busy taking shots of it, wondering what it was. I realised that it was paddling closer to us, which makes taking photos much easier.



Then I realised it was actually paddling directly towards us. It came really close, so we chopped up some bait (pilchards) and chucked in a piece, which it promptly collected and gobbled up. My husband continued to feed it while I took photos. At times it was so close to the boat that it wouldn't fit in the frame of the camera! It dove its head into the water to collect sinking pieces and would snorkel around until it saw the piece. We fed one piece at a time and all up about 3 and a half pilchards were eaten. Then it allowed itself to drift away, stretched its wings, fluffed up its feathers, showing a very full crop and drifted off.

Typical teenager, comes begging for a feed then buggers off, was our thought!

It was obvious the bird was exhausted and

starving and we were happy to help. It was an amazing experience. We hope the bird made it to his destination safely.



Annette Sibson

WHAT BIRD?

My granddaughter loves to follow me around birdwatching.

The other day she said, "Grandma there's an owl in the mango tree".

I hurried down with my binoculars and looked and looked, but couldn't find any birds!

She asked for the binos, put them on the wrong way and said she could see a bird. There was a silence and then she smiled and said, "Oh, it's only a leaf bird grandma".

Wonder where she heard that from??

Cec Messer

BOOBOOKS

On Monday 31 August, I heard an unusual murmuring call just as it was getting dark, about 6.30pm, from the back yard. I knew that an owl was sitting on my clothesline frequently because of the droppings and the odd pallet left behind. I crept outside to have a look. I was treated to the sight of a pair of Southern Boobooks obviously getting very friendly. As they continued to make the murmuring sound one was preening his or her mate. As soon as they realised I was there they flew off.

Janet Robino



BUSTARDS AS PREY?

Please find attached a report by Joan Gordon of Mt. Pleasant Station via Binbee. The Family and I spent some time in Bowen during August and Joan told me this story during a visit to her property. She later provided me with a written report which I have transcribed with her permission.

Wedge-tailed Eagle recorded attacking Bustard and as prey?

"My Family runs a 2000 head ethical sustainable beef fattening property 60 Km SW of Bowen NQ.

It is based on a 64 paddock, 18 cell centre grazing system on 9600 ha Property.

As a consequence the cattle are moved daily for a period of time throughout the year and then onto 48 hour grazes as the season dries out.



There are quite a few Bustards over the property and there are leks easily observable during the breeding season at the main Homestead and at the top of Main Camp near the railway siding Binbee.

Over recent years while moving cattle through the cells I have observed Wedge-tailed Eagles feeding on two Bustards and on one occasion observed a Wedge-tailed Eagle actually hunting a Bustard on the wing.

In 2012 I found a WTE feeding on a freshly dead Bustard. The Bustard was on its back and the wings spread and the WTE feeding on the breast area.

Early in 2015 I had just switched the motorbike off to go and poison some Rubber-Vine when a Bustard flew past me with a WTE in hot pursuit of it. The Bustard was unable to out maneuver the Eagle amongst the timber and the Eagle eventually clipped the Bustard and the latter tipped and collided with the ground. The Bustard stood up and appeared to be uninjured, the WTE perched in a nearby tree and seemed to be observing the outcome of the attack. I ended up riding away as I had to get on with my job.

Late July I had just left the house at about 07.30. As I went through the gate 3 WTE's took

off from the ground. I walked over to observe what they had been feeding on and it was a freshly killed Bustard. The 3 Eagles perched close-by in the Ironbarks and Bloodwoods awaiting my departure no doubt. By the third morning all that remained of the Bustard were the leg bones, neck, backbone and feathers.



It seems they are quite capable of bringing a large bird down as prey and no doubt the impact with the ground after being clipped could benefit the Eagle especially if the bird is injured and unable to recover quickly.

I trust that you will find this note of interest for inclusion in your newsletter.

Jon Wren



Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year to
everyone.

Contributions for the next Drongo are due by 12th January 2016. Thank you to all this month's contributors. amsgreat@gmail.com

QUEST

Len Ezzy	386	31/12/2015
Chris Ezzy	383	31/12/2015
Niel Bruce	325	21/11/2015
Marleen Acton	298	25/10/2015
Janet Robino	293	20/10/2015
Pat Charlton	287	14/10/2015
Warren Charlton	279	6/10/2015
Mark Horvath	264	21/09/2015
Elna Kerswell	261	18/09/2015
Rosemary Payet	253	10/09/2015
Janet Cross	217	5/08/2015
Annette Sutton	184	3/07/2015

CALENDAR

November

Any day of the month for the Pied 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.

11th - Wednesday - Wongaloo Bird Survey. Meet for 6.30 departure from the Coles Carpark at the Annandale Shopping Centre, University Drive Annandale. Bring morning tea. Car pooling encouraged.

10th - Tuesday - Photography Group Meeting - Birds of the Suburban Backyard. 7.00pm.

14th - Saturday - Committee Meeting (12.00pm) and General Meeting (2.00pm) Held in the Townsville City Council Sound Shell meeting room Thuringowa. Guest speaker TBA.

18th - Wednesday - Bush Garden Survey. - Meet at end of Thompson St Mundingburra 6.30am. Leader Malcolm Calvert.

21st - Saturday - Mission Beach Pied Imperial Pigeon Watch Count. Leader Trish Pontynen. More details from Trish via email at tpontynen@yahoo.com.au or mobile 0417735410. (Note - This is not an official BirdLife Townsville activity)

22nd - Sunday - Ross River Dam Survey. - Meet in the Dam car park 6.30am. Leader Ian Boyd

29th - Sunday Outing - Cungulla for the Shorebirds - Meet in the Palmetum carpark for a departure at 6.30 sharp. Will be home for lunch just bring morning tea. Car pooling encouraged. Leader TBA.

December

Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th - BirdLife Australia National Challenge Bird Count. Leader TBA. Count to take place within a 40k radius of Townsville CBD. More details closer to the date.

6th - Sunday - Town Common Survey.- Meet at the main gate 6.30am. Leader Rosemary Payet.

8th - Tuesday - Photography Group Meeting - Your Favourite Photos for the Year. 7.00pm.

9th - Wednesday - Wongaloo Bird Survey. Meet for 6.30 departure from the Coles Carpark at the Annandale Shopping Centre, University Drive Annandale. Bring morning tea. Car pooling encouraged.

12th - Saturday - Christmas Party details See emails.

17th - Wednesday - Bush Garden Survey.- Meet at end of Thompson St Mundingburra 6.30am. Leader Malcolm Calvert

20th - Sunday - Ross River Dam Survey. - Meet in the Dam car park 6.30am. Leader Ian Boyd

28th - No Sunday outing. There will be an outing on the 1st January to welcome in the New Year and to start on your annual list. Details TBA.