

The Drongo

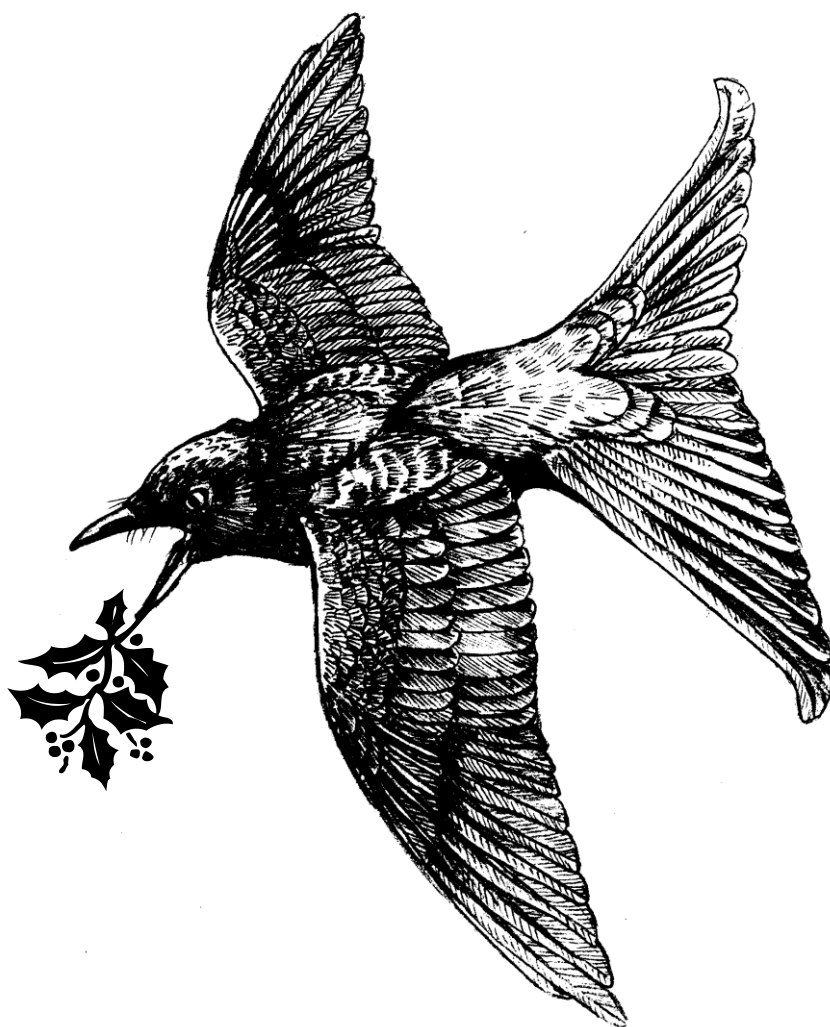
Number 144 November 2016

Out West

Skeletons in
the
Cupboard

Mungalla

Girraween





FROM THE PRESIDENT

We've had a few hiccoughs in a couple of our projects. The printing of our educational photographs has proven to be a much bigger job than anticipated. The shorebird set will be ready to be printed very soon. Mark has put an incredible amount of effort into acquiring the photographs and then formatting them to get ready for printing. It will be well worth the delay to get a high standard set of pictures which will be used for raising the awareness of birds and their needs.

Due to circumstances beyond our control, there has been a hold up in getting the Owl Boxes into position. Again, it is important to get these things right, so it's better to be a little late and get it done properly. Hopefully, the project will be back on track in the next few weeks.

The very small group of educators have had a very busy time with lots of school programs and Bird Week in October. Norm co-ordinated the set-up of Displays in each of the City Libraries for the whole month. Again, Beth, Jenny and the team at the Museum provided some wonderful exhibits. Feedback from the librarian was that the displays attracted a lot of attention and people commented on how interesting it was.

Unfortunately, we have had to cancel some club outings in the last few months due to a lack of volunteer leaders. There are a whole lot of 'little jobs' that need to be done to provide the educational programs, survey work and the fun stuff that BirdLife Townsville does. Too often, the whole load of these jobs falls to the same few people. If there is anything you think you could help out with send Wal an email on contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au to get involved.

Don't forget to RSVP for the Christmas Party! Check out the email with details. Looking forward to seeing you all there.

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

Newsletter Editor Annette Sutton amsgreat@gmail.com

THE BARE BONES

Over many months the taxidermy team have been working on a pelican skeleton. The skeleton has finally been finished and arrived in the taxidermy room where it waits for its case.



This bird was found semi-paralysed in Ross River. A plastic bag with old food was high on the suspect list. When a bird swallows a plastic bag it gets stuck. The bag can't pass it through the bird's gut and the bird can't bring it back up. Food won't go through either and so the poor creature dies of a form of food poisoning. This Pelican was taken to Deb Carter but died soon after. Deb contacted us and it joined MTQ's collection. After some time, it was decided that we would try to do a skeleton to match our previously done mount. This task required that I find someone who would teach us the intricacies of this delicate work.

Libby Moody from Western Suburbs Veterinary surgery suggested Vaughan Seed, who had great skills in teaching anatomy from his work at James Cook University's Vet school. When approached Vaughan kindly agreed to help.



The first step was to clean all the bones. The body was carefully cut into pieces, ensuring joints weren't damaged. Next, the pieces were individually wrapped in fine muslin, labelled and tied with string. The pieces were placed in a large boiler – borrowed from JCU's anatomy section for the purpose. The string was allowed to hang out of the boiler with tags alerting us to the various pieces inside. After taking time out for a cuppa inside, we would check on the cooking pot, (boiling happily outside). Carefully pulling out a parcel, we would check to see if the meat was falling off the bone. As each piece was 'done' it was removed.

Next time we gathered, it was to start, very carefully, removing the meat. We had to feel our way through the meat to ensure that very small bones like toes and knee caps were not allowed to go into the wrong pile.

As each piece was cleaned, the bones were labelled – (Right wing etc.) and placed into different solutions to ensure they would eventually be white. We had to watch the cleaning process very carefully to ensure the bones were not damaged. These were then rinsed and dried.

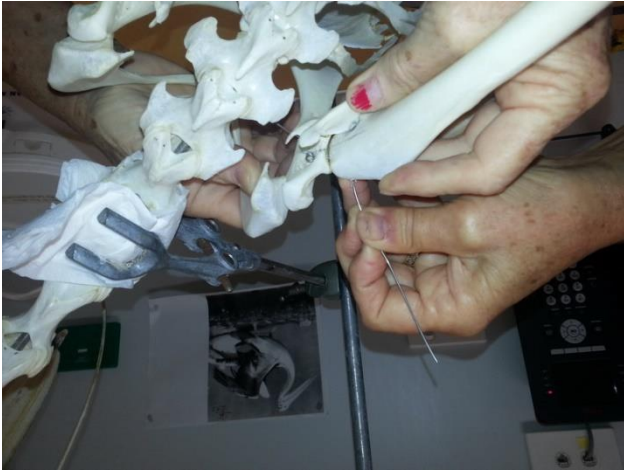
The process of putting all these bones back together seemed overwhelming. With Vaughan's guidance we started sorting which bone joined to which. That was very tricky. Then came the task of drilling tiny holes with dermal drills.

These holes were then threaded and glued with fishing line. The matching face could then be marked and drilled, after which the two holes would meet with the glued line providing a fragile join. The joint was then held and drilled again with fine wire being carefully guided through till both ends could be tightened with a special "Vaughan twist" which we had already practised. This process was repeated again and again. Sometimes only one joint would be completed in the 2-3 hours allocated.

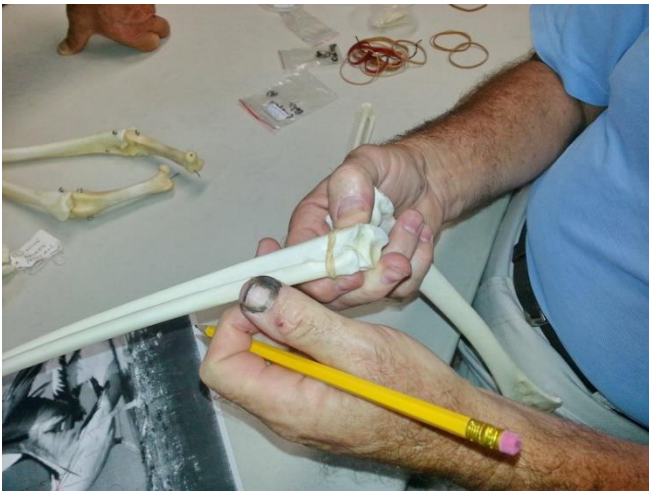


At times the project looked as if it might never be finished. Vaughan was called away and none of us felt confident enough to continue without him. Kerry Johns, a friend and the Veterinary Anatomy Technician, who worked with Vaughan, agreed to help us continue. The pelican bones were moved to JCU where Cecily and I continued to work under Kerry's watchful eye and with

Vaughan nearby in the Vet School if any difficulties cropped up. We were very thrilled when the last few pieces were glued/ wired into place.



We are very pleased with the Pelican ...although we feel it is destined be an 'only child'. Jason has agreed that the two Pelicans - one with feathers, who used to roost on the Pandora, and the skeleton will be given two cases and be displayed beak to beak. We look forward to this event. Till then the skeleton has to stay carefully balanced and untouched. The final tightening of the wires will be done only when it is in its permanent home.



We look forward to showing it to our fellow birders.

Photos in order

1. Finished skeleton
2. Vaughan, Ian and Cecily
3. Dremel drilling
4. Not much room – wiring the wing
5. Work in progress. Note the joints wired with fishing line in the ends. Vaughan holds a glued joint while ready to mark the drilling points for that joint

Beth Snewin for the Taxi Team

GIRRAWEEEN

Graham and I love Girraween National Park. It has easy and hard walking, good camping and free HOT showers. With relatives in the area, we often go to the park and have always found it to have interesting bird watching. On this visit we saw lots of our usual customers like the Spotted Pardalote, Brown Thornbill, Brush Cuckoo, a Wood Duck that seems to like to sit on a rock in the middle of the creek, the local Satin Bowerbird and his girlfriends (still haven't found their nests), Azure Kingfisher, Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters and a lot more.



Chestnut-rumped Heathwren



Spotted Pardalote

Most of the birds were actively collecting material for nests.

What was special about this trip was that we were very fortunate to see a pair of Chestnut-rumped Heathwrens. We have never seen them there before and were very excited. They didn't hang around for long and the female kept to the lower areas, and though we saw her, we couldn't photograph her. The male gave us a few chances, but he was in a hurry and they disappeared very quickly. We have been back twice hoping to see them but it looks like that might be a lifer for us.

Denise and Graham Holder

Where is it?

Huge granite boulders tower above open forests in the spectacular and popular Girraween National Park outside Stanthorpe. Camp at either Castle Rock and Bald Rock Creek camping areas or picnic in the shady Bald Rock Creek day-use area. Explore the park on almost 30 kilometres of walking tracks. Take the 280 metre Wyberba Walk alongside Bald Rock Creek; visit Granite Arch; climb The Pyramid for great views over the park; or spend the day walking to granite monoliths or to waterholes along the creek. Learn from displays in the visitor information centre and at the day-use area.

CLIFF CORELLAS

In July 2014 we did a trip across The Simpson Desert. On the French Line at a water-hole about 20km from Dalhousie Springs we found Corellas nesting / roosting in the cliffs above the hole. We had never observed these birds doing this before and were quite intrigued to see them. Has anyone else seen this behaviour? On referring to Slaters Bird Book it was mentioned that this behaviour had been observed at Carnarvon Gorge Qld.



Bob Murphy

SHOREBIRDS

I attended the monthly meeting on Saturday 8th October and learnt how to identify the shorebirds that we see around this area. On Sunday I attended the outing to Bushland Beach to put my newly learned skills into action. I have to admit here that I didn't do very well. But it was a wonderful experience anyway, John Lowry led the outing and taught us the previous day. He is very knowledgeable about his patch and keen to impart his knowledge.



I managed some distant photos of the Terek Sandpiper that visits very rarely. This was only the second sighting there since 2007. I also got to practice my flying bird photography. AA couple turned out okay. The group shot of the attendees shows how lovely it was out there. It was a glorious day and well worth getting up in the dark for. Thanks John.

Annette Sibson

BIRDATA WEB PORTAL

Birdata extract from BirdLife Australia website.

"The new, improved and easy-to-use [Birdata web portal](#) is now available, making it simple to submit your bird surveys. A free Birdata mobile app for [Apple](#) and [Android](#) users is now available from app stores. The new portal and app replace the old Birdata website, but don't worry: all of your existing data has been transferred across.

*To take advantage of this Birdata revolution, all you need to do is [register](#) for a BirdLife Australia username. This is really important, because **your old Birdata login details will not work on the new Birdata platform.***

As well as making things easier for you, the Birdata web portal has many new features that let you take control of your own data: now it's simple to keep your own lists (site, species, or the last month or year, for example) and generate distribution maps and site lists with the click of a button. You can even edit your records if you've made a mistake."

In January, BirdLife Townsville will be recording all surveys and club outing lists on Birdata. It would be good if members could have a look at the portal and give us feedback about how easy it is to use and whether it meets your own personal needs.

THE MAGIC OF BIRDWATCHING

In September a few of us went on the walk at the Lake Ross Dam. The number of birds seen along the levy bank was very few, very few water birds. The usual were seen –Brown, Yellow Honeyeaters and Little Friarbirds, and the usual Australasian White Ibis. Oh dear. I was asked, as the leader, to find them some more birds.

This is difficult to do except for the fact that I remembered that Mickey Mouse has new magic words (available to any grandparent). So I showed them the special stance and finger pointing that goes with the words "mischka mooshka". After all present repeated this sequence, magically the birding improved --- immediately two Red-winged Parrots flew overhead.

As we exited the levy bank, up popped Chestnut Breasted Mannikins, Sunbird, Rufous Whistler, seven Green Cotton Pygmy-geese in the pond along the road, twenty Green Pygmy-geese in the dam, two Forest Kingfishers and we had an excellent view of a female Koel followed by the male Koel in a nearby tree. Several other species were seen making it a great morning.

At the start of the October Lake Ross Dam walk, the four of us discussed whether we would need to use Mickey Mouse magic again. The magic was definitely still there with many of all the Egrets, Australian White Ibis, Royal Spoonbills, White-faced Herons, Black and Whistling Kites, Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants, Blue-winged Kookaburras and Brush and Horsefields

Bronze-Cuckoos calling, Red-winged Parrots and Pale-headed Rosellas also. I wanted to look in the last waterhole on the levy bank so the others followed with one spotting a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles just ahead—magic indeed.



Hardhead

Ray Sutton

Along the road the birds included Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, a Forest Kingfisher, four Brolgas, many Darters, and one Hardhead in the pond. The river proved an exciting place with three Great Cormorants in the water, thirteen Black Swans, two Pied Cormorants, five Pelicans, one of each Great Crested and Australasian Grebes, Darters --- and the pair of White-bellied Sea-Eagles sitting in a tree across the river.

As we crawled through the first gate on our way out, a Red-backed Fairy Wren pair were spotted. Last spotted were a pair of Kestrels.

Now was it good birding or some of that magic??

Cecily Messer

BUSHLAND BEACH

I live at Bushland Beach and have a large block with a many mature trees which are established in a creek bed.

Black Kites built a nest in one of the trees and produced two chicks which fledged but didn't survive. Lots of harrowing by other birds including Sulpha Crested Cockatoos. I'm unsure if the parent birds still occupy the nest.



Also saw two (I assume a pair) of Emerald doves about two weeks ago. They stayed for a few days but have now moved on - unusual sighting for me.

Bernie Davis

A GOOD SEASON

With summer almost upon us and the country drying out quickly. I would like to reflect on this beautiful winter spring season that has been experienced in Western Queensland. My work this season has had me fairly regularly in the area from the Drummond Range through to Avon Downs. There seems to be a lot of breeding everywhere I go. I had five juvenile Chestnut-rumped Thornbills around my campsite at Jericho, being supervised by a Red-capped Robin and two Striated Pardalotes. Geera Lagoon near Barcaldine has had a constant procession of waterbirds all year with Pink-eared Ducks, Pelicans, Cormorants, Black-winged Stilts, Black Swans, Wood Ducks, and Glossy Ibis all keeping company with the lonely Avocet that can't seem to attract a friend.



Carpentarian Grasswren

I've tried to camp in Bladensburg three times this year but have been rained out on every occasion. There is more winter herbage and wildflowers around than the local cockies have seen in years. You need to be driving much slower this year to avoid the lizards and small birds coming out of the roadside growth. Further to the northwest the spinifex is really coming to life. The Kalkadoon Grasswrens at Mitakoodi gorge are breeding along with the Black-tailed Treecreepers, Varied Lorikeets, and Grey-crowned Babblers to name a few.



Chestnut-rumped Thornbill

I spent many days in the Yelvertoft area looking for Carpentarian Grasswrens which I did eventually find, despite the almost continuous distraction from Red-backed and Variegated Fairy-wrens. I'm sure these little birds have a sense of humour. Maybe with another good season or two, the Carpies might even move back

into the McNamaras Road area. I was also happy to come across a pair of Australian Shovelers in a small dam just east of the Monument. They must have only been on a rest stop as I haven't been able to find them in the area since. Once again the reptile population has really exploded. I remember previous years when I would be excited to come across a bearded dragon or frilly but they seem to be everywhere in the spinifex now. The microbats are well represented also. They make it hard to go to bed at night in some places. With all the lights out they come in very close to feed. I think all the dead insects on the vehicle must somehow attract other moths. Maybe something to do with pheromones in the grill.



Australian Shoveler

Another of my favourite camps at Nonda Lagoon is looking really good this year. The local pair of Black-breasted Buzzards are nesting near the lagoon again. They had no luck last year but if they can keep ignoring the hundreds of Black Kites they should do OK I hope. They are being helped out by three nests of Zebra Finches immediately below. I have spent much time trying to find out how the finches help but I obviously miss something. They don't seem to reduce the fly population at all. Maybe the constant fluttering around the poor Buzzards heads blows the flies away. It's obvious though why the finches have moved in with big brother - an old Black Falcon has taken up residence in the area. It seems that he is doing well on Rufous-throated Honeyeaters, Horsfield's Bushlarks and Pipits as well as the Zebbies.

Things get a bit different coming back towards Townsville though. The dam at Pentland will likely be dry by Christmas if they don't get any early rain. It seems that not everywhere has done so well.

Anyhow, get out west before it gets too hot. It's great even with a few flies.



Black Falcon

Paul Thompson

WATTLE I EAT?

I was highly expectant this September that the acacia tree in the woodland over our garden fence (*Acacia auriculiformis*, earleaf acacia) would perform as it had last year. Indeed, it had a great show of flowers, followed by the developing seedpods. But no, last year's spectacle did not occur.



Acacia seed

The seeds are interesting because of the nutritious elaiosomes attached to them, which are an attractant for animals (especially ants). Last year as the pods opened the seeds showed themselves and began to droop out of the pods, suspended by their elaiosomes. And that's when the fun started.

Waking early one morning I could hear quite an assemblage gathered, so out I went to observe. Over the course of a couple of hours, Figbird and Olive-backed Oriole (including juvenile birds), Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Little Friarbird and Great Bowerbird had all partaken. Meanwhile, Brush Turkeys were gathering seeds on the ground. Most surprising was a small group of White-breasted Woodswallows joining the party. It's hard to know how they knew where to look, given their normal feeding mode. Meanwhile, a smaller acacia was a little slower in seed development, and a Sulphur-crested Cockatoo was feeding on the green pods.



So, this year I was highly expectant. Seed production was not as profuse as last year, but elaiosomes were evident. However, as in other years, nothing much happened, except for continuing interest from the Brush Turkeys.



While we're used to seeing the coming and going of seasons, flowers and fruits, and attendant birds, it is interesting to see an apparently attractive resource only occasionally used. I guess we can only speculate why this should be so – other preferred food available? Fewer birds so other resources not limited? Unfortunately, I don't have the wherewithal to perform the controlled experiments, which may in any case be rather destructive!

Richard Pearson

OSPREYS NESTING

Update on Ospreys that were nesting on the powerline tower on the Port road. The parents successfully raised two chicks and both have fledged and left the nest.



Bob Murphy

MUNGALLA CAMPOUT

Dates: - Friday 26th to Sunday 28th August 2016
Leader Len Ezzy

A very cooperative eleven members participated in this Birdlife Townsville Campout, with seven camping on the property's designated camp area, two members staying in a soft bed in Ingham and the other two just a few kilometres down the road at Forrest Beach.



Australian Bustard

Len Ezzy

While others socialised and birded around the Mungalla Homestead, my Friday afternoon consisted of setting up camp, a brief induction from Mungalla's Manager, Jacob Cassidy, another induction with Hinchinbrook Shire Council to arrange legal group entry into the Hinchinbrook Community Wetland Reserve near the Victoria Sugar Mill, and then back to camp for a quick reconnaissance of the Mungalla property, just to see where we could safely get to and do some birding the next day. Unfortunately, the usually productive wetland east of the Cotton-trees precinct has been completely smothered by weeds, *Hymenachne*, *Parra Grasses* and more. No surface water was visible and therefore absolutely no waterbirds at all. A little open water was still visible behind the ruins of the old cattle yards though. There were huge numbers of cattle present on agistment on the property.



Latham's Snipe

Mark Horvath

Friday's Sundowner Session was used to plan strategies for our next day and a half. After a quick dinner, we slowly drove off, headlights blazing, for a bit of spotlighting. We had hoped to see some owls or nightjars; but it was unusually quiet, the only exceptions being a couple of Masked Lapwings and a few Bush Stone-curlews, as well as a herd of cattle that trotted through.

Saturday morning, we birded the main property paddocks, cattle yards ruins and the forested area near the south of the property. Seventy-five bird species all up for the day on or over Mungalla. Mentionables: A Large-billed Gerygone was building a nest which enthralled the photographers amongst us. An Australasian Bushlark (Horsfield's) posed for a photo shoot on a fallen tree limb beside our car. There were huge numbers of Magpie Geese and almost as many Cattle Egrets present. A couple of juvenile Australian Bustards practicing their dance and display techniques created some comic relief in our three car convoy.



Horsfield's Bushlark Len Ezzy

Just before lunch we visited the Hinchinbrook Community Wetland Reserve and birded around the ten settling ponds of reeds and open waters edged with ribbons of planted native trees, shrubs and vines. Here we saw a total of twenty-six species in about an hour. Picks of an expected bunch were three Glossy Ibis, two White-browed Crakes, a Restless Flycatcher, two Australian Reed Warblers and the ever-present Crimson Finches. On the drive back to camp, a couple of lucky birders found a Latham's Snipe on the banks of the lagoon beside the Mungalla driveway.



Large-billed Gerygone Mark Horvath

For the rest of Saturday afternoon we convoyed down to the recently revitalised eastern sand-dune area, where the old bund-wall has been intentionally breached in an attempt to return the artificially locked and fresh water weed-infested wetlands behind the wall, back to their natural salt/brackish state. That project has been one of the great successes of the Mungalla property with weeds being naturally eradicated. Birdlife is returning to these habitats. An impressive Aboriginal Interpretive Walk has been completed in an area beside the "new" wetlands. Best birds for the afternoon here was a new species for the Mungalla bird list, the delightful Mangrove Robin.

Saturday night, six of our group drove into Ingham to do some spotlighting on foot around Tyto Wetlands. We saw not a single bird, but we did hear the distinctive clonking calls of Large-tailed Nightjars coming from a few different locations as well as the unmistakeable wailings of a couple of Bush Stone-curlews.

Returning to Tyto Wetlands next morning told a completely different story with seventy-one bird species seen on our five kilometre bird-walk. Best birds - four White-browed Crakes and even one Spotless Crake in the wet just before the viewing mound, four Fairy Gerygone in a shrub beside the curved footbridge, a Northern Fantail, Yellow Honeyeaters nest-building, a couple of White-browed Robins, Rufous Whistlers, Brush Cuckoos, Tawny Grassbirds, Silvereyes, Metallic Starlings and Red-browed Finches nest-building. A wonderful morning's birding.



Rufous Whistler Len Ezzy

All detailed bird lists for the weekend's campout may be viewed online at Eremaea eBird

<http://ebird.org/content/australia/>

Despite the disappointing weed invasions on the Mungalla wetlands and some of the property tracks becoming impassable, there were still many opportunities to find, watch and photograph some great birdlife activity. Thanks to all who participated.

Len Ezzy

WINDOWS

The dangers of reflective film on windows. Earlier this year I submitted a photo of a male Superb Fruit-Dove. It had been taken in my backyard and some of the club members came and had a look and took photos. About 3 weeks after that I found a female of the species that had been killed after hitting a fixed glass window at my house. We had reflective sun film fitted to all our windows when they were installed. I now have had security screens fitted to all the fixed panels. This allows the birds protection from the reflection of open sky, which had been tricking them into thinking they could fly straight through. Over the years we have had numerous bird strikes to our windows, not all fatal. Some were just stunned and flew away. Some that did not make it were the Superb Fruit-Dove, a Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove and a Little Kingfisher.

Bob Murphy

BOWRA

We had intended to visit Bowra Station near Cunnamulla on our way home from Alice Springs but unfortunately it was closed for feral animal eradication for a week. No-one was allowed there, not even the caretakers. We didn't want to hang around for a week so we put it on hold.

A few weeks after we got back we got itchy feet again so we decided to give Bowra another try and we could take in the whales at Harvey Bay on the way. We were lucky and saw quite a few whales and they did a bit of bouncing about so that was nice.



Major Mitchell

Ray Sutton

We headed off for Dalby, around the back of the Bunya Mountains. A railway siding with huge concrete silos was quite close to the caravan park. As we drove out in the morning we saw a host of birds feeding on the road where a truck had dropped a pile of grain. Cockatiels. It was raining and they were a bit bedraggled but it was great to see fifty or so of them, flying up on to the wires every time a truck went by and then flying down again for the unexpected feast.



Bourke's Parrot

Ray Sutton

We pushed on through Moonie and eventually came to a little village called Westmar. On the western side was a layby right off the road with toilets so naturally we stopped. Another truck had dropped some grain and this time there were Galahs and four Red-rumped parrots feeding on it. Again it was raining but they weren't wasting a minute. Further on we found some Australian Ringnecks in some trees in a layby.

We arrived at Bowra but once again we had attracted the rain that had dogged our Alice Springs trip. It rained such a lot this winter in the most unusual places. We were at Bowra for five days and it rained every day. All the property roads were closed except for the main entrance road. After a day of some sunshine and light rain it would rain heavily again so the roads never got any drier. So it was Shank's pony or drive the entrance road.

We parked our van near the shearing shed so we were set for mains power which was nice. Most days we walked down to the country past the shearers' quarters and across to the bore drain. Our first walk brought us to a flock of Chestnut-crowned Babbblers. They were playing around in fallen bushes.

A bit further on I spotted a Common Bronze-wing. It flew around a tree and on a bit, followed by Ray. After a few minutes he called out that there was a parrot there as well. I came around a tree to find it was a Bourke's Parrot. Good catch. Not far away we found a Horsefield's Bronze-Cuckoo.

After lunch the caretaker told us we could drive on the main road away from the homestead up towards the gravel pits and a bit further. Here we found Diamond Doves, White-browed and Masked Woodswallows, an Emu with chicks (still striped) and a Hooded Robin.



Splendid Fairy-wren

Annette Sutton

Behind the shearing shed we saw Spotted Bowerbird and Yellow-throated Miners. Everywhere around the camping area were Rufous Songlarks who never stopped singing. Brown Treecreepers were everywhere. They spent a lot of time on the ground and would walk right up near us. They were nesting all around the place. Down on the lagoon were some Black-winged Stilts. One pair had four young chicks. They were very protective and noisy, even if you were far away. Also there were dozens of Fairy Martins, all busily flying about or rolling up mud balls on the edges of the ubiquitous puddles. A pair of Welcome Swallows had set up a nest in the shearers' quarters.

In the open ground towards the bore drain we came across a family of White-winged Fairy-wrens and another of Variegated. Down along the main road out near where the powerlines cross the road we found a pair of Splendid Fairy-wrens. Their colour is so vivid. We couldn't find the Southern Whitefaces which we were told were there as well. When we were looking for the White-winged Fairy-wrens we could hear the Crested Bellbird all around. On the second day of looking we

eventually found it. We also found one Ringneck near the house. No Mulgas or Red-rumps. One morning a couple of Major Mitchells flew over but that is all we saw of them.

Out on the road to Cunnamulla we saw a little Eagle being harassed by a Magpie. In a paddock beside the road a flock of White-winged Choughs was feeding.



Humpback Whale

Annette Sutton

We had intended to go home through Longreach and Winton but once again the rain defeated us so we went back to Harvey Bay via the Bunyas to see more whales. The Bunyas provided us with the fourth Fairy-wren, the Superb as well as White-browed and Eastern Yellow Robin, Crimson Rosella and King Parrots, and Satin Bowerbirds.

Maybe we will get to Bowra again some time next year and it won't be such a wet winter.

Annette Sutton

Where the Pelican Builds Her Nest

The horses were ready, the rails were down,
But the riders lingered still
One had a parting word to say,
And one had his pipe to fill.

Then they mounted, one with a granted prayer,
And one with a grief unguessed.
"We are going," they said, as they rode away
"Where the Pelican builds her nest!"

They had told us of pastures wide and green,
To be sought past the sunset's glow;
Of rifts in the ranges by opal lit;
And gold "neath the river's flow.

And thirst and hunger were banished words
When they spoke of that unknown West;
No drought they dreaded, no flood they feared,
Where the pelican builds her nest!

The creek at the ford was but fetlock deep
When we watched them crossing there;
The rains have replenished it thrice since then,
And thrice has the rock lain bare.

But the waters of Hope have flowed and fled,
And never from blue hill's breast
Come back - by the sun and the sands devoured
Where the pelican builds her nest!

Mary Hannay-Foott

NIGHT PARROTS

A joint initiative by Australian Wildlife Conservancy and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) has uncovered the largest known population of the endangered Night Parrot on Diamantina National Park.

A field survey led by AWC Senior Field Ecologist, John Young - who in 2013 became the first person in over a century to find a living Night Parrot - has confirmed a significant increase in its known population and distribution.

Exploring remote sections of Diamantina National Park by helicopter, all-terrain vehicle and on foot, John Young located three nests, observed birds at these three nests and at another location, and identified birds at three additional locations by their distinctive call. John was assisted by AWC Senior Ecologist, Dr Rod Kavanagh, and by a number of experienced volunteers.

For more information go to
<http://www.australianwildlife.org>



CHILDREN'S BOOK

Daryl Barnes has used his wretched run with illness to fuel his passion for birdlife, poetry and writing.

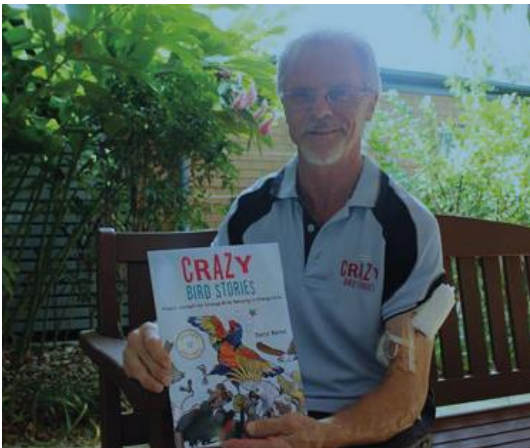
The 61-year-old Mackay man is currently living at Leukaemia House as he receives chemotherapy at The Townsville Hospital for chronic lymphocytic leukaemia. Despite being crook, Daryl is just about a month away from the launch of his second children's book, *Crazy Bird Stories: Benny's Dreamtime Adventure*.

"Having a project has really helped keep my mind off being sick and it is really exciting to have the second book almost ready to go," he said.

In 2010, Daryl was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease prompting him to begin working on concepts and stories for his first novel, *Crazy Bird Stories*. The death of his mother in 2014 prompted the project to become his major priority and the book was published in September 2015.

Daryl said he was introduced to bird watching in 2008 when he heard a radio interview about a nesting site of the Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher near his home. He said he went out to the site and observed the birds and was "hooked from that day".

Daryl said he hoped to be back in Mackay in early October, just in time for the release of the book.



He has donated three copies of his original book, *Crazy Bird Stories*, to The Townsville Hospital which are now at home at the children's and maternity wards.

A third and fourth book in the *Crazy Bird Stories* are already in the works.

"I've been lucky in having the opportunity to merge my passion for birds with my passion for writing," he said.

For more information about the book or to order a copy visit dbarnes02@dodo.com.au

Thanks to Blah Blah Blah Townsville Hospital

TENNESSEE

I had the opportunity in July to travel to east Tennessee, in the U.S.A., where I had fun trying (literally!) to take photos of the birds in the garden of the place I was staying at. New camera + no photography skills = not very many usable photos, but it was fun regardless. Identification was a bit tricky, but fortunately I was able to borrow a bird identification book for the area, which helpfully (and amusingly) sorted the birds according to the colour of the bird.

These are some of the most common birds which I saw. The Downy Woodpecker is the most likely culprit behind the charming decorative detail on the tree trunk image - the male is, of course, the one with the bright red patch on his head. Also pictured is the American Goldfinch (male) which was very suspicious of observers and the gorgeous Cardinal (male), which was entrancing as it flitted through the trees. I have included also a picture of a bird fishing in one of the local rivers, which I believe was a Heron. It was very large, perhaps even as big as a brologa.

In Florida, I was fascinated to see (we were driving so unfortunately I didn't get a picture) a flock of black vultures scavenging on armadillo roadkill in Florida. Based on the reactions of others driving by, this was the U.S. equivalent of Black Kites scavenging on wallaby road kill - i.e. nothing unusual.

One of my favourites, of which I only have a photo from an earlier visit to Tennessee, is of the hummingbird. They are such a delight to watch, surprisingly territorial against other hummingbirds, fly so fast and are just mesmerising as they hover in one spot to feed from flowers or the bird feeder.

Sheree Anderson



- 1 Cardinal
- 2 Goldfinch
- 3 Hummingbird
- 4 Woodpecker
- 5 Heron

QUEST

Chris Ezzy	343	08-12-16
Len Ezzy	341	06-12-16
Niel Bruce	333	28-11-16
Marleen Acton	302	28-10-16
Pat Charlton	294	20-10-16
Ian Leach	294	20-10-16
Warren Charlton	286	12-10-16
Rosemary Payet	279	05-10-16
Elna Kerswell	253	09-09-16
Janet Robino	244	31-08-16
Beth Snewin	220	07-08-16
Wal Threlfall	210	28-07-16
Janet Cross	209	27-07-16
Annette Sutton	181	29-06-16
Michael McMaster	180	28-06-16

What is the Quest

New members often ask what the Quest is. At the beginning of the year you give the treasurer \$2.00. Then you are in The Quest. You commence to record every species you see in the state of Queensland from January 1st. The idea is to have a different species for every day of the year. The good thing is you can bank your birds up. So you go out on New Year's Day (after you crawl out of bed) and find as many birds as possible. If you find fifty-four birds then you are OK until the 23rd February. Go out a couple of days later and you find 20 more. Now you are OK until 14th March (Leap Year this year so you have to find one extra). And so on. Now if you get to 150 birds and it is 30th May then watch out. You will fall off the perch next day as 30th May is the 150th day of a normal year. So Day 151 – only 150 birds – you are a goner. 150 is your Quest Total for the year. You can, of course, keep counting but any extras don't go in your Quest total. You now have to pay 150 x 5 cents to the Treasurer for the privilege of finding the birds. This goes to conservation. Every three months you email the Drongo with your total. If you remember.

So let's see lots of people joining The Quest next year.



*Kalkadoon
Grasswren*

Paul Thompson



Red-capped Robin

Paul Thompson



Yellow Honey eater

Rainbow Bee-eater

Len Ezzy



November

12th - Saturday - Committee Meeting (12.00pm) and General Meeting (2.00pm) Held in the Townsville City Council Sound Shell meeting room Thuringowa. Guest speaker: Beverley Anidja, Wildlife Carer

16th - 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: Cecily Messer

27th - Sunday Outing - Cunggulla Shorebirds . Meet at the Annandale Central Shopping Centre, Cole's undercover car park, Annandale, for a departure at 6.30am sharp. This is an all-day outing bring morning tea and lunch. Car pooling encouraged. Leader: Len Ezzy

December

1st - Thursday - Wongaloo Bird Survey. Meet for 6.30 am departure from the Alligator Creek Roadhouse car park, Alligator Creek. Bring morning tea. Car pooling encouraged. Leader: Norm Rains

Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th - BirdLife Australia National Challenge Bird Count. Leader: Pat Charlton / Marleen Acton. Count to take place within a 40k radius of Townsville CBD. Count species and number of birds. Participants will be allocated a particular area.

4th - Sunday - Town Common Survey.- Meet at the main gate 6.30am. Leader: Rosemary Payet.

6th - Tuesday - Photography Group Meeting - Theme: "Favourites / the best of 2016" six of your favourite / best shots taken over the last 12 months. A 7.00pm start at a venue TBA.

10th - Saturday - Christmas Party - Carlyle Gardens Retirement Village -- Details TBA

14th - Wednesday - Bush Garden Survey.- Meet at end of Thompson St Mundingburra 6.30am. Leader Malcolm Calvert

18th - Sunday - Ross River Dam Survey. - Meet in the Dam car park 6.30am. Leader: Cecily Messer

25th - No Sunday outing. There will be one on the 1st January to welcome in the New Year and to start your annual list. Details TBA.

**Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all
members and friends**

