

The Drongo

Number 159 August 2020



Annette Sibson

Stranded

Winton

Cassowaries

FROM THE PRESIDENT

During this period of Covid 19 restrictions the committee has been beavering away ensuring that BirdLife Townsville is ready to resume our activities as permitted. We have developed a Covid 19 Plan. This is available on the website. Please familiarise yourself with the requirements before you attend any club activities. There are serious consequences for any breaches for each and every attendee, the leader and BirdLife Townsville. It is incumbent on us all to ensure that we can enjoy the outings that can be managed at present and those we can get up and going again eventually. Please ensure you register for any outing you wish to attend by contacting the leader as per website Activities Page. Please check the website the night before any activity for any cancellations that may be necessary.

Birdlife Mackay sent us the following about Drones in June. It is a reminder that we all need to be mindful of our impact on local landowners when we are out birding.

One of the birders from Mackay wrote *'Today we stopped on Reed Beds Rd and started walking along the road when a car came rushing up and stopped behind us. The bloke jumped out and wanted to know if we had a drone. We didn't - I don't own one, but apparently just recently a lady stopped there and was birding with a drone - the drone scared the cattle and they went through a fence and off, so they are a bit jittery about birders there now'.*

There have been no further reports of problems with drones so hopefully it was a visitor to the region who will think twice before doing this sort of thing again after seeing the results of her attempts to get a closer look at the birds on someone's private property.

Sadly, the Conservation Volunteers Australia Townsville Office has been closed. Apart from all the other losses there will be for Townsville, it means we have lost access to a free storage space for our education materials and equipment. We have managed to find a very small Storage Unit which unfortunately cost \$61 per month. This is certainly not sustainable within our budget. We are investigating access to free storage facilities or a grant to assist with the financial costs. Hopefully, we will get an early resolution to this problem.

Janet Robino

EDITOR'S NOTE

We are now all very familiar now with the terms Covid 19, Coronavirus and Global Pandemic.

At the time of this edition being published, Melbourne and environs are under strict lock down, the rest of Victoria is under close restrictions and the wearing of face masks in Victoria is compulsory, with a few exceptions. NSW has some hotspots with community transmission.

Queensland has closed the borders to Victoria and NSW. Only essential goods and services can enter the state from these areas as well as footballers who we all know are essential. South Queensland is battling a local outbreak centred on the Wacol Youth Detention Centre. There are three cases in Townsville, crewmen on a ship off the coast. The community is very aware of the situation.

We are all used to leaving our contact details wherever we go, whether it is to a restaurant, a market or a Birdlife event. At least we can all still go birding within Queensland. Anybody who goes to NSW or Victoria has to go in to two week's hotel quarantine at their own expense on return to Queensland so that isn't happening.

Just some notes in case someone reads this in the future.

YOUR COMMITTEE

President: Janet Robino	Janet Cross	Annette Sibson
Secretary: Wal Threlfall	Mark Horvath	Julia Goldsbury
Treasurer: Nina Doyle	Jill Staunton	Peter Staunton

Newsletter Editor Annette Sutton amsgreat@gmail.com

Deadline for next Drongo is October 31st. Please send articles as Word documents, photos as attachments.

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

WARNING: CASSOWARIES NEXT 5KM

Anyone who has driven along the Atherton Tablelands will be familiar with this sign instructing us to proceed with caution as there are Cassowaries in the area. Inevitably, most of us have read it and shaken our heads while thinking that it's been a long time since a Cassowary has actually been sighted here, nevertheless, we slow down because we care.



On this particular day...a couple of weeks back now....as I was driving down the Palmerston Highway, it was fortunate that I did slow down. I had not long driven past one of these signs and my passenger (now in her early 70s) said, "I have been coming up to the Tablelands since I was a teenager and I have never seen a Cassowary anywhere near this or any other road up here."



It was as though her words had evoked its presence as it was only a few moments later that I noticed a dark figure on the verge on the other side of the road. As we neared it, it became obvious that the figure was a male Southern Cassowary. I slowed to a crawl. Much to my angst, it became curious, wandering out onto the road to get a closer look at us. To make matters worse, this was on a blind corner. Anything coming up the highway would have no chance of seeing it until it was too late.

I drove a far enough down the road that I could see around the corner and pulled over. My passenger and I then, from a safe distance (I was standing in the back of my pickup), tried to encourage it to turn back off the road but apparently Cassowaries have no comprehension of the word, "Shooooo," even when it's said loudly and with hand gestures. Instead of shooing, it came closer to us!

We decided that the best (and safest) thing we could do until it returned to the rainforest, was keep an eye out for vehicles and warn them to slow down. Meanwhile, the Cassowary, unperturbed by the potential danger it was in, had taken up position in the centre of the road and was carrying out some preening!



I don't mind admitting I was a bit panic-stricken about the bird's fate so when I spotted a delivery truck (followed by a sports car) coming up the range and at the same time, another car approaching from the opposite direction, I began waving my arms around madly like one of those advertising tube men that haphazardly wave their inflatable arms about in the air....It might have looked ridiculous but it did the trick although I suspect the drivers were slowing down to see what this mad woman standing in the back of a ute was up to more than anything else.

With four vehicles stopped and waiting, the Cassowary looked around to see what the fuss was about then, unable to fathom it, casually strolled back from whence it came. My relief was palpable.

I don't know whether or not it's because of my experience or just the reach of social media but I am hearing/reading about quite a few recent sightings of Cassowaries up on the Tablelands.... more than I've ever heard before. Unfortunately, not all the stories have ended as happily as this one so, if you're visiting the Tablelands please **Slow Down (there just might be) Cassowaries Next 5km.**

Anne Lawrence



ESCAPED AT LAST

Our year of Covid lock-downs and concerns kept us unable to hunt for birds for several months early in the year, but finally the gates were opened so Beth, Wendy & Roger and I headed west. Destination Winton. Bookings were made as soon as we knew what was happening and at the end of June we left town.



Australian Bustard

Annette Sutton

We called in at the Pentland Dam and were pleased to see water in it, with some of the usual water birds. The Burra Range easy hot-spots were decorated with masses of Grevillea Decora, but apart from Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, there were few birds. Hughenden with its new Lake was interesting, if you could find your way through the road-works in the town, but no interesting birds. We had seen four Brolgas and four Bustards along the way, which was good, but again, Mt Walker provided no special sightings, except for the wonderful views.



Zebra Finch

Ray Sutton

The journey to Winton didn't have the usual Wrens displaying on the fences, but large flocks of Zebra Finches, a Reed Warbler on the dam at Stamford and a plethora of Brown Falcons and Kestrels waiting hopefully on the electricity-line posts provided pleasure. Just north of Winton our first lonely Emu was sighted. We found out later from someone who had called at the Kynuna Pub that many Emus had become victims of the 2019 floods and their bodies had joined the thousands of drowned cattle hanging

in the fences. What a sad fate for all of them after years of drought.

Bladensburg – Budgerigars and a Brown Thornbill at the roadside dam en route, Halls' Babbler in the creek near the Woolshed and Diamond Doves, along with an elusive Spotted Bower Bird and many Spinifex Pigeons were welcome finds. The drive up to Scrammy Gorge was interesting as usual, but only Spinifex Pigeons were seen. No Wrens! Later, at the Sewerage works which had been 're-organized by the Council', a large flock of Plum-headed Finches flew into the reeds right beside us and prepared fussily to spend the night there. They fluttered and flapped and twitted busily in the gloom of the approaching night, quite unaware of our delight as we stood studying them. The usual Ducks and Grebes swam cautiously on the ponds, but no Pink-ears or Crakes were sighted.

That night we had dinner at the Australian Hotel with my two sisters and brother-in-law, who had just arrived via Cloncurry, from Karumba. Winton was all go, but with limits on numbers there was no hope of a tour of any part of the Age of Dinosaurs, but on Sunday morning we called there on our way to Hughenden, searching fruitlessly for any interesting birds in that dry scrub near the entrance. Nothing! However, we were pleased to see a good number of Jacky Winters spread along our drive. Normally we've rarely found any, and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters were also more prevalent.



Black-tailed Native-Hen

Ray Sutton

When we checked into our Cabin in Longreach Caravan Park, Beth asked if there were any interesting birding places in the area. The lady then enthused about the Lara Wetlands which are south of Barcaldine, where she and her family had camped for a few days. Instructions were provided, and we decided to visit the Wetlands on our way east. However, Longreach itself was only rewarding when we sneaked illegally into the Sewerage works and found a couple of Variegated Wrens. A Restless Fly-catcher and a large flock of Brown Quail which quickly disappeared from view as we approached their hide-out in the reeds. As there was nowhere else in Longreach worth visiting, and even our favourite Baker's Café was only selling take-away food and coffee, the next day

we drove out to Ilfracombe to visit the turkey nest dam there. Yes – good idea. More Variegated Wrens, a Pied Cormorant and Common Bronze-wings were ticked off. Back to Longreach for the night and dinner, along with dozens of others, was enjoyed in a Bistro Pub (forget name).



Tawny Frogmouth Ray Sutton

Next day to Barcaldine and on south to the Lara Wetlands – 28 kms south towards Blackall and 15 kms along their private, graded dirt road – and we were there. What delight! A beautiful lagoon full of old dead trees, ducks swimming happily, kids kayaking and riding recklessly around on the provided bicycles, adults relaxing with books beside their caravans or walking around the shores of the lagoon to find the swimming pool and birds flapping about in the bush trees.



Cockatiels Annette Sutton

A Tawny Frogmouth had found an excellent spot to imitate a hole on the side of a tree which did have a real hole on the other side from where he sat eyeing us belligerently. Both the Brown and the White-throated Tree Creepers were in small flocks paddling and splashing in the pooling water of a sprinkler while we sat in the car watching them from about 3 metres away. To further please us, about seven Pink-eared Ducks were seen sitting basking in the sun on a log beside the shore line and two Black-tailed Native Hens wandered along not far from them. We ate a very late lunch sitting on a log listening to Pied Butcher-birds, while watching the antics of the young kids who were being

active on bikes, or playing cricket with Mum and Dad. A great place to visit - \$10-00 for a day, or \$25-00 for a camper per day. Do visit it.

The journey home from there took us through Jericho –dead, sadly, so we bought a Nescafe in their little Café – Alpha, which was busy, and up through the Gemfields to Clermont, which was VERY busy and we were lucky to obtain beds for the night in a Motel. Their restaurant meal was delivered to our large room, as were the meals of all the other residents who seemed to be road workers. On those last couple of days, driving through the grain areas, several flocks (up to 200 in one flock) of Cockatiels were seen, but no Budgerigars at all.

Another very late lunch of fish and chips in Charters Towers allowed us to reach home, tired but very happy, after a most enjoyable and rewarding “escape from lock-down” trip out to our favourite places in the west. Our check lists for the year were greatly increased and so many lovely birds had lifted the spirits, which had been rather low for a few worrying months. Go west my friends. Go west and do visit the Lara Wetlands.

Elna Kerswell and Beth Snewin

STRANDED

A Story of Photos, Failures and Falcons (A cautionary tale)

After six days of being sand blasted at Bladensburg National Park and a quick lay-over in Barcaldine to have a proper shower, restock and refresh, we headed off to Moorrinya National Park, 65Kms south of Torrens Creek, where we hoped the weather would be more accommodating. We arrived mid-afternoon, set up camp and settled in for the afternoon. The weather was ideal and if it stayed like that our wishes would be answered. We decided that our first full day would be a quiet one with just a little exploring around the campground and Bullock Creek, on foot.

The first full day was relatively uneventful, with the usual species being present. There were large flocks of Masked Woodswallows, plenty of Zebra Finches, Rufous Songlarks behind every tuft of grass, Diamond Doves in their droves and a small group of Weebills that kept me occupied for ages, attempting to get a photo. I guess the highlight was seeing a Little Eagle chick in the nest and knowing that along Bullock Creek, just in front of the campground, was not only the nesting Little Eagle but nesting Whistling Kites, Australian Hobbies and the lowly Magpie-larks.

Day two, and after a leisurely start we headed off to Pigeon Dam for the morning. It has been a happy hunting ground in the past and we

hoped it would continue to be so. Alas it was quiet with very few photo opportunities. We did however manage a couple of shots of Australian Wood Ducks, Crested Pigeons, Zebra Finches, Budgerigars, Cockatiels, Grey Teal and Australasian Grebes. There were also plenty of Rufous-throated Honeyeaters, but they wouldn't play and stayed too far away for any decent images. Not the bonanza of species we have come to know it for. Late morning and it was time to move off as I wanted to explore the western part of the park, which we missed last time we were there.



Weebill

We arrived at Bell's Outstation where Bron wanted to take a couple of reference photos of the old asbestos riddled house and the windmill, so I dutifully pulled over. Photos captured, I had to reverse to go down the western track, as I had driven past it so that Bron didn't have to walk too far. Back up, go forward, go forward! No, the D-max didn't want to go further west. The engine was running but no forward motion in 'Drive'. No reverse or any other gear. Ooops! I've broken it.

I had a quick look around the vehicle for any obvious evidence as to why it wasn't playing. Nothing found. Okay, I had an inkling of what the trouble might be, but previous experience on other vehicles made me doubt I had the ability to rectify the problem. Question? What do I do first?



Bell's outstation

Do I spend maybe a few hours trying to fix the vehicle or attempt to contact someone via the phone or CB? We tried the phone first and, as

you are probably aware, there is definitely no reception out at Moorrinya. Not on 000 or 112. Next, we tried calling someone up on the CB. Emergency channel, various simplex channels and then the duplex channels. No avail and time was wasting. The next step was to put the CB on scan and see if I could find someone active on their CB. After a while we presumed that wasn't going to be a good option either as the CB remained silent.

We were in an isolated part of the National Park. We've been at Moorrinya for a week on previous occasions and seen no one for the entire time. The campground was empty when we left that morning and the rangers only come out once a month and that could have been last week. The walking option was not our favoured option as both the campground and the road were quite a distance away, 12.1Kms and 11.7Kms respectively, and does one of us stay with the car while the other heads off? The thought of the young fellow who had recently died just ten kilometres from his vehicle, in this part of Queensland, went through my head a few times. The campground was empty so that wasn't going to be any help anyway.

Alternatively, once the person got to the road they would have to wait for a vehicle and hope they could flag it down. Both options we quickly rejected as the authorities always tell you to "Stay with your vehicle".



So now we're at the point where we must decide if I waste time attempting to rectify the problem or take the easier option and set off the Personal Locator Beacon (PLB). Time was getting on and the thought of spending, at minimum, a night camped in the car didn't appeal to either of us so the PLB was duly activated. With the PLB activated there was nothing to do but set up the annex on the car, put out a couple of chairs and sit back and monitor the CB, which was still scanning.

Time passed with the PLB's constant beeping providing a comforting sound. Although it's occasional pause and change in tone did cause

us to question its operational status. A snack and a softie and time continued to pass although more slowly than usual. After two hours a small jet passed quite low overhead. Bron questioned if it is our rescuers. My response was to advise that if it is, they will do a turn and pass overhead again. They did. Three passes overhead and the CB came to life, on the emergency channel (5), with a call from Rescue 550 requesting information from anyone as to our situation. A cordial conversation between myself and Rescue 550 ensued and the rescue helicopter from Townsville was diverted. Rescue 550 advised that a ground party from Hughenden was on its way, but ETA was unknown.

Having consumed a softie earlier and not having emptied our bladders for a while we both needed to go. Problem was Rescue 550 was still circling overhead. To be discreet, one of us stood watch and advised when Rescue 550 was heading away while the other did their business. Quite funny really.

More time elapsed and Rescue 550 called to advise that the ground party was 40 minutes away. Time for another softie before the ground party arrive. Just as we were moving back to our chairs, something whooshed just over the top of the car. There right in front of us was a pair of Grey Falcons, in flight with talons locked. It was only a brief encounter but long enough for them to be identified. A confirmatory look through the bird guides was undertaken and yes, they were Grey Falcons. I would have gone after them, but as luck would have it, I really needed to continue to monitor the CB. Being stuck can have an upside.



Little Eagle

Time continued to pass, then Rescue 550 called through to advise that our PLB can be deactivated as the ground party had us in sight. Out of a cloud of dust came the Hughenden police. A couple of nice young chaps who were over the moon to see us both upright and unharmed. They were thinking of all sorts of scenarios that they may encounter when they arrived so to see us as we were was a relief.

Unfortunately, the vehicle they were in was a substitute one and did not have all the recovery gear they normally carry and as it is only Moorrinya, a place Bron and I know quite well, we didn't bring all that stuff either. Another lesson to learn.



Rufous Songlark

One of the officers began attaching a sorry looking piece of rope to the front of our vehicle but stopped and decided that attempting to rectify the fault might be a better option. I duly explained the situation and what I thought might be the problem. The young officer asked for a screwdriver and proceeded to pull the car apart, with a little help from me. Bingo! The problem found; the officer does what we used to call in the RAAF a 'farmie fix'. He being an ex-farmer fitted the description well. It may be fixed but its continued operation was doubtful, so the officers followed us back to camp. We discussed with the officers the actions we had taken and whether they thought we could have done something differently. Their response was one of reassurance that our actions were appropriate and that any delay may have made things worse. Especially delaying the activation of the PLB which would have meant the rescuers having to locate us in the dark.

We also discussed our options and decided that first up in the morning we would drive home, with their blessing. Bron was nervous about the continued operation of the fix so I wrapped a couple of large rubber bands around the issue and we drove home with them in place. You could say the car was held together with rubber bands.

What would we have done if we didn't have the PLB? Yes, in this instance I could have pulled the car apart and fixed the problem, but what if it had been something I couldn't fix? No communication, no suitable shelter and possibly no one around for days or longer. Think about what you have available to you if you are off the beaten track and you break down or get lost. Food for thought?

Mark Horvath



JUST A WHISPER IN YOUR EAR

I was putting some stuff away in our car at Pat's sister's place in Toowoomba a few days ago when I saw movement on the power lines across the road. There has been a family of Butcherbirds hanging around but lately I have only seen "Junior" regularly.

It was Junior that I saw but soon it was joined by a Noisy Miner (Junior was facing my way, NM the opposite). The Noisy Miner moved a little closer but there was little interaction, besides looking at each other at times. NM obviously didn't get its message across so it flew to the opposite side of Junior, again facing the same direction.

They both sat there for a few minutes, occasionally looking at one another. I didn't hear any chattering but the NM must have whispered something to Junior as it flew off to the north east to some tall trees where the Noisy Miners hang out. Junior sat on the line for another 30 seconds before flying off in another direction – so whatever was whispered or insinuated had the desired effect!



Noisy Miner

Ray Sutton

Regular visitors include Pied Currawongs, a pair of Crows, the Miners, Junior, a couple of Magpies, and a pair of Cockatoos. Irregular fly overs, but seen recently are a pair of each of Scaly-breasted Lorikeets, Cockatiels, and Pale-headed Rosellas. Being within a street of the Japanese Gardens and University, puts us close to where these birds feed during the day and roost elsewhere at night.

Warren Charlton



Nest Building

Once again, in late June, Brown Honeyeaters started building a nest in one of the *Nepenthes* vines in our garden. I am always impressed by the economy of the nest structure of strips of bark (with the odd bit of plastic fibre) held together with spider's web, and am especially impressed by the nest's beautiful smooth fluffy lining.



Gathering the lining from a cycad

This year I got photographic evidence of the source of the lining material – the birds made many visits to a cycad and gathered the pale brown fluff off the spikes (pinnae?) in the centre of the cycad's crown. Nest completed, the female laid two eggs on successive days, and after that there was almost always a parent sitting tight one metre from the car as we backed out.



Nest lining of cycad fluff

On the third day – disaster! The nest was torn from one side and one lay egg broken on the ground beneath and the other was nowhere to be seen. The only plus was that I was able to photograph the lining of the completed nest without disturbing the birds. I note (with slight embarrassment) that the vine comes from the Philippines and the cycad is from Okinawa (the local cycads have much less fluff on their pinnae). Clearly these ubiquitous birds adapt easily to whatever is available.

Hugh Sweatman

LOCKDOWN BIRDING

As we have all spent a lot more time at home since the Covid 19 restriction came into force in March, I have spent a lot more time with 'my' Great Bowerbird. He is a bit of a poser, unfortunately, usually when I do not have the camera in my hands. He often sits on the clothes line when I'm trying to hang out the washing. I figure he really has his eyes on the white and red pegs rather than just wanting to spend time with me.



Surveying the treasures

He has deserted my garden once more and has built a new bower just through the fence in my neighbours' yard. This is the first time he has re-used most of the structural sticks from the old bower. He also re-cycled a lot the display items from the old bower which suits me as there is less 'rubbish' for me to get rid of. Of course, he still takes the small green cumquats off my tree which means I never really get a decent crop. Interestingly, as usual, none of the stones were re-used.



New address

The Golden Penda, which towers over the back garden and patio has had a massive flowering. This has meant visits by lots of Little and Helmeted Friarbirds and big flocks of Rainbow

Lorikeets. It makes for a very noisy but entertaining back yard.

I've had a couple of very brief visits by the Southern Boobook. It perched on the TV Antenna for a couple of minutes just after sunset, gave a few calls and then took off. There is always at least eight Brown Honeyeaters in the yard at any given time. The Mistletoebird pops in very briefly most mornings, grabs some fruit off the Grewia, and takes off again. The White-gaped Honeyeaters were missing for a couple of months, but are definitely back now. They hang off the security screens while calling loudly and show no regard for the fact that I am still sleeping. House Sparrows nip in for a quick drink and a splash in the birdbath each afternoon.

I also have a daily battle with the Common Mynas. I constantly chase them away from the birdbaths as they are very aggressive and refuse to allow other birds to take their turn.

Janet Robino

WINTON

Like everyone else, we were relieved when travel restrictions in Queensland were relaxed and we set off for Winton.



Red-winged Parrot

Ray Sutton

First stop was Pentland, staying for two nights so we could spend a day at the Burra Range. A large flock of Apostle Birds (twelve?) entertained us at the park, stealing water from a dripping tap. There were two Great Bowerbirds but no Spotted.

There was a small amount of water in the dam with a few Black-winged Stilts, Black-fronted Dotterels, Grey Teal, Australasian Grebes and a flock of Wood Ducks.

The gravel pits only yielded a Rufous Songlark and a Singing Honeyeater. Not a lot more on the other side either. No sign of White-eared Honeyeaters at Sawpit Gully. However, the flowering shrubs made up for the lack of birds. We had Grevillea decora, pteridifolia and sessilis as well as cream bottle brush, orange Jacksonia and bright yellow wattles. Some of the wattles were still in bud.

We had no trouble getting a place at the Tattersall's van park attached to the pub in Winton. There were a lot of Eurasian Coot at the sewage works and a huge flock of Galahs. We continued on to the Long Waterhole just out of town. Here we found plenty of White-plumed Honeyeaters, Yellow-throated miners and a big flock of Red-winged Parrots. There was a small tree with a vine growing over it and the birds loved the flowers on the vine. It's not often you get a chance to see Red-winged Parrots in the one place for a long time so we were able to take photos at our leisure.



Spinifex Pigeon

Annette Sutton

Out in Bladensburg we came across small flocks of Zebra Finches and Black-faced Woodswallows. A couple of Bustards were parading near the dams as you drive in. Then what we had been hoping for – a few Spinifex Pigeons. They are so hard to see as you drive along. When we got to the Ranger Station, a small flock of Spinifex Pigeons were roaming around the water tanks. They don't let you get too close.

Out at Engine Hole, the Whistling Kites were still occupying their favourite dead tree, opposite their nest. No Budgies for them to feed on like the last time we were there. We did see a couple of flocks of Cockatiels.

We only stayed for a couple of days but it was nice to get out west again.

Annette Sutton



JULY 2020 LUCINDA BEACH SURVEY

A group of us met up at Reading at the appointed time and got ourselves organised for the drive to Lucinda. With Covid 19 restrictions in place, we had a string of five cars to get safely to Lucinda in time for morning tea, well to get the best of the tide actually.

Morning tea done and dusted and off we set. It was a bit cloudy and cool and some members wisely donned their rain coats. Memories of the previous trip came to mind, but surely it wouldn't rain - it's winter in the tropics after all.

A couple of groups of shorebirds were found, with the scopes being well used by those that had them to peer carefully at each bird. One group had a dozen Far Eastern Curlews, so that was lovely to see, considering they are on the endangered list. We saw Red-capped Plovers by the dozen, Whimbrels, Australian Pied Oystercatchers, Australian Pelicans, Silver Gulls, Crested Terns - both Lesser and Great, Caspian Terns, and Bar-tailed Godwit among others. It was great to see a number of different birds that were over-wintering.



There were large numbers of Varied Honeyeater visiting several flowering native trees; it was pretty amazing to see. Those with cameras had a lovely time; they would have gotten some great shots as the birds were coming very close.

Unfortunately we all needed our raincoats and covers for cameras and scopes as it rained on us again while we were still out on the sand. That large grey cloud just wouldn't leave us alone. Luckily it wasn't a tropical downpour and none of us needed to strip off clothing.

Lunch was eaten with an audience of a crowd of Bush Stone-curlew. They're obviously used to being fed scraps which was a shame to see. They got nothing from us. Those members with cameras at the ready got some great close-ups though.

We had a drive out to Taylor's Beach. It was windy and cool and devoid of birdlife. We headed back south towards home with a stop at

Toomulla to see if the Lovely Fairy-wren could be found. On the way back we were caught in heavy rain. It was pretty amazing given that it's July.



Toomulla turned on the Lovely Fairy-wren for those quick enough to see it. No photographs as the little guys were too quick.

And then it was time to head home. It was a great day with great company and we saw some lovely birds.

Annette Sibson

MOORRINYA

The lifting of the travel restrictions within Queensland meant that camping trips to western areas were again a possibility and a family discussion resulted in Moorrinya National Park being selected as the destination on the basis of interesting birds, beautiful sunsets and star gazing opportunities.



I had been to Moorrinya several times when we lived on the Atherton Tablelands (a day's drive), so the shorter drive from our new house in Townsville was much appreciated. The park was in good condition, with plenty of water in both Bullock and Prairie Creeks. Herrods Dam and Kennedy Bore Dam also contained plenty of water.

The birding was good, with the highlight being great views of eight Squatter Pigeons, squatting (of course) and walking beside the track.

Another highlight was seeing three Emus on the track beside Herrods Dam. We'd just stopped to look if there were any birds at the dam, and heard thump thump. Turning around, there were three Emus walking towards us, not alarmed at all. Owen got some great photos as he crouched on the track and one Emu in particular came within five metres to check him out.



We also saw both Red and Grey Kangaroos at a number of locations. It was great to get out and Moorrinya delivered on birds, sunset and star gazing – the only drawback was the flies!

Ian Sinclair

TAWNY FROGMOUTH

It mottles in with paperbarks
obscures the line between
what's animate and not.
Brow and beak point up
silent as a pharaoh.
It dozes through the hum,
carves a block of stillness in the day,
mimics light and shade
not quite an owl
or bird of prey,
half-frog, half-fish, half fowl
the wideness of its mouth obscene.
But at night this predator,
this strange unearthly fellow
will shed unneeded camouflage
and stab the dark with yellow.

Nana Ollerenshaw



NANKEEN NIGHT-HERONS

This winter we have found two juvenile Nankeen Night-herons in our travels.

One was at the Long Waterhole outside Winton. The other was on Gunnado Road, Woodstock, in the creek.

We don't often see these birds so two juveniles was a bonus.

Annette Sutton



Long Waterhole Winton



Gunnado Road Woodstock



Adult Nankeen Night-Heron

NOT IN VAIN

Wendy and Roger, Elna and I were off on a quick trip to Winton and Longreach last month. I was driving and about 50kms from Hughenden on the first day. As I was passing another vehicle and we were opposite each other, suddenly a covey of Brown Quail flushed on my right and flew up right in front of me. I braked but still heard that sickening thud. "I'll have to go back" I declared, and after a U turn, on the now empty highway, travelled slowly back to the sight of the incident. There in the middle of the road was the forlorn little body of a Brown Quail. I picked him up, somewhat relieved that he was very dead, having died instantly which is some consolation. I wrapped the tiny bundle in some toilet paper...as it was handy!. Next he went into a plastic bag, kept in the boot 'in case'. Next it was into the esky with the lunch items for the remainder of the trip into Hughenden.

That little quail has had a long migration into the freezer each night and spending travelling days in a Chinese food container nest. I filled a lock seal bag with water and laid this into the container with the body in its own bag nestled on top. The whole thing then travelled between two cold bricks and made it safely back to Townsville. The plan is to skin the Quail and make it into a scientific skin which will be sent to Brisbane for the State collection. Brisbane appreciates any specimens from the west as they are rarely sent in.

Beth Snewin

MEMORIES

The Emu July 1946 p 77

Hovering by Cuckoo-Shrike

This is an extract from notes made at Ravenshoe (Atherton Plateau, Qld.)

"The ten minute halt at 11am during the route-march today (4/8/44) was made more interesting by the unusual sight of a Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina novae-hollandie*) hovering. There was a slight breeze blowing, and the 'Blue-Jay', facing into it, was hovering as easily as any Kestrel, about 12 feet from the ground. Suddenly it closed its wings and dropped into the grass, only to rise again and continue hovering at the same height as before" Whistle-blasts, warning the troops to prepare to move, caused the bird to cease its performance and fly away.

P.A.Bourke, Wallsend, NSW 17/4/46

Contributed by Beth Snewin

QUEST

Name	Quest Number	Date
Anne Lawrance	269	25/09/2020
Janet Robino	256	12/09/2020
Paul Thompson	246	2/09/2020
Elna Kerswell	246	2/09/2020
Barbara Reidy	243	30/08/2020
Beth Snewin	237	24/08/2020
Ian Leach	237	24/08/2020
Christine Corbett	222	9/08/2020
Janet Cross	219	6/08/2020
Wal Threlfall	216	3/08/2020
Marleen Acton	215	2/08/2020
Beth Snewin	213	31/07/2020
Annette Sibson	211	29/07/2020
Rosemary Payet	208	26/07/2020
Wendy Kaus	201	19/07/2020
Pat Charlton	201	
Warren Charlton	191	9/07/2020
Annette Sutton	172	20/06/2020
Brigid Glass	160	8/06/2020
Julia Goldsbury	88	28/03/2020

A few shots from out west

