

The Drongo

Number 160 November 2020



Mark Horvath

Eungella
Honeyeater

Out West

Cane Toads

FROM THE PRESIDENT

2020 has certainly been a challenging year for everyone as we navigate the Covid-19 reality. BirdLife Townsville has successfully resumed regular outings and surveys under the current restrictions. I can't stress enough how important it is for everyone to adhere to our Covid-19 Plan which is available on the BirdLife Townsville website. Please remember to familiarise yourself with these requirements before attending any club activities. There are serious consequences for any breaches for each and every attendee, the leader and BirdLife Townsville. In these uncertain times, activities may be cancelled at short notice so make sure you check the website the night before any planned activity.

BirdLife Townsville is responsible to advise all attendees at meetings held in Townsville City Council facilities (eg Thuringowa Soundshell) to:

- Abide by all TCC Covid-19 signage and instructions
- Remain home if you are unwell
- Stay 1.5metres away from other people
- Cover your mouth with elbow to cough or sneeze
- Avoid touching your face
- Wash your hands frequently for 45 seconds with soap and water
- Please also refer to <https://www.cpvod19.qld.gov.au> or <https://www.health.qld.gov.au> for any updates

When attending any outings or surveys, please follow all directions of the leader. We are struggling to get members prepared to continue as leaders as a result of some concerning incidences. The main concern reported by leaders is attendees not staying with the group.

Please do not leave outing without notifying leader. Do not wander off alone. This can disturb birds before all group have a chance to see them - time is wasted waiting for 'lost' person - leader has no idea where to start searching if someone does not return to group. Remember, when you sign on for an outing you agree to '*follow BirdLife Australia's Policies and Procedures and reasonable directions given by the leader*'. We need to be kind to the leaders as without them there will be no outings to enjoy.

The Christmas Party is on Friday 11 December at the Sun Hotel. Please note that it is Friday this year. But all the good stuff will still be happening: We will be in the function room; Nina's Great Christmas Trivia Quiz; and Wal's photographic re-cap of the year's highlights.

It is time for members to consider nominating for the committee or volunteering to assist in our education programs (hopefully, we'll be able to get back to these programs in 2021). Nominations are due in January for the AGM in February.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Janet Robino

EDITOR'S NOTE

At the time of this edition being published, Victoria has eased travel restrictions within its borders but the wearing of face masks is still compulsory, with a few exceptions. They have had no new cases of the virus for nine straight days. NSW has very few hotspots with community transmission. Queensland opened its borders to regional NSW.

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.

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 January 31st. Please send articles as Word documents, photos as attachments.

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

EUNGELLA HONEYEATER

The Eungella Honeyeater (*Bolemoreus hindwoodi*) is a species of bird in the family Meliphagidae and is endemic to Australia.

This species is found only in a small area of plateau rainforest in the Clarke Range, west of Mackay (in fact it has one of the smallest ranges of any bird in Australia). Occasionally it can be seen foraging on the rainforest margin and adjacent open forest, particularly during the winter months.



For a long time, these Honeyeaters at Eungella were considered to be an outlying population of the Bridled Honeyeater (*Bolemoreus frenatus*, formerly *Lichenostomus frenatus*), but they were eventually described as a separate species as late as 1983.

The story of its discovery is very interesting. In 1975, the Australian and Queensland Museums conducted a joint rainforest study in the central coastal region of eastern Queensland. One of the study sites was in the Clarke Range, about 65km west of Mackay. There had been well-known birdwatching localities to the south (Rockhampton) and north (Townsville) of this region, both of which are on the Bruce highway.

This intervening region west of Mackay seemingly offered few ornithological attractions. Clarke Range was just far enough off the beaten track that birdwatchers didn't bother making the detour, and the area's ornithology was not well studied. A specimen of a bird obtained from Clarke Range during the 1975 study was lodged in the Australian Museum collection and labeled with the name *Meliphaga frenatus*, the Bridled Honeyeater. According to field guides available at the time, this was the species that occurred in the Clarke Range area, extending northwards through to the Atherton Tablelands.

The following year Wayne Longmore was working in the Australian Museum collection, sorting the honeyeater specimens. After

examining the Clarke Range bird, he realised that it was not a Bridled Honeyeater as labelled; indeed, it was not a species that matched any in the guide books. This inspired him to begin research into the identity of the mystery bird. He found that little ornithological work had been carried out in the Clarke Range. One of the few trips for which there were published details took place in 1959. This publication had subsequently become the source of the distributional information found in field guides. The authors had captured a bird that they identified as a Bridled Honeyeater and included a photograph of it with their article. Wayne saw that from the photograph it was obvious that the identification was wrong - the bird was not a Bridled Honeyeater at all. The bird in the photograph, like that in the Museum drawer, had an all black bill. That of the Bridled Honeyeater has a yellow base and a black front.



Bridled Honeyeater Ian Montgomery
www.birdway.com.au

Somehow this important point had been missed by everyone who had seen this picture - except Wayne. A new species, now known as the Wayne, by now employed at the Museum, worked with other staff to organise an expedition to Clarke Range to search for the misidentified black-billed bird. An initial trip in 1978 and a subsequent one in 1980 found the birds to be relatively common in a small localised area at high altitudes. Wayne and Walter Boles described it in 1983, officially naming it as *Meliphaga hindwoodi* (now *Bolemoreus hindwoodi*) in honor of Keith A Hindwood, prominent Sydney birdwatcher, honorary Australian Museum ornithologist and Wayne's childhood mentor. They gave it the common name of Eungella (pronounced yungella) Honeyeater, after the small township of Eungella (an Aboriginal word meaning 'mountains of the mist'), which is perched on the edge of the Clarke Range escarpment. The Eungella Honeyeater is one of the last new species of birds discovered in Australia.

Barry Deacon Mackay

WAY OUT WEST

When Alf and Marleen asked us if we were interested in going west for a few weeks, we jumped at the chance. They run a very good tour service. We didn't have to plan or book anywhere, just tag on for the ride. And we knew they would have a handle on where to look for birds.



An Emu at Aramac Annette Sutton

First stop was Torrens Creek. Nothing unusual to report there. Then we taped over the vents in the van and headed down the road to Aramac. There was about thirty kilometres of dirt and it was very ordinary. In Aramac we were greeted by quite a few Emus, Galahs and Little Corellas amongst others. We did the 200 kilometre Lake Dunn sculpture circuit where we picked up Red-necked Avocets, Red-kneed Dotterels and Pink-eared Ducks at Lake Dunn and a Grey-headed Honeyeater and some White-winged Fairy-wrens on the circuit.



Purple-backed fairy-wren Ray Sutton

We went down through Barcaldine and Ilfracombe on our way to Longreach. A Spotted Bowerbird danced around our morning tea spot at Ilfracombe and showed off his bower. Longreach saw more scrap metal emus on the outskirts of town. We checked out the sewerage works but there was not a lot around. Two Hoary-headed Grebe and four Purple-backed Fairy-wrens were the stars. Dozens of Little Corellas were fooling about on the power lines.

Next stop was Stonehenge, a part of Queensland Ray and I hadn't visited before, although we have been to its namesake in the UK several times. Instead of a great stone monument, there is a kind of little stone monument two kilometres out. Hundreds of people have written their names in small rocks and stones. It was started by a stranded mailman who wrote *Jundah* in small rocks as he awaited rescue. The caravan park was well watered and we found our first Mallee Ringnecks there. They were very busy in the bottlebrush that grew in the park. On our way out of Stonehenge we were greeted by three Minions made out of gas bottles.



Mallee Ringneck Annette Sutton

Then it was down through Jundah to Windorah. The Windorah Solar Farm is Ergon Energy's first solar farm trial. The plant uses five concentrated solar dishes or reflectors. This is expected to save up to 100,000 litres of diesel fuel per year. The integration of solar farm and diesel power was a first for Ergon Energy. It was commissioned in 2009.



Little Eagle Ray Sutton

The Nature Drive at Windorah is a twelve kilometre dirt track that winds its way through the red sandy country on the edge of the town to the black soil flats of Coopers Creek. Plant species along the route are signposted. We stopped by the roadside and explored the surrounding bush. We were well rewarded. First off, we had a Little Eagle fly in and perch quite close to us and not too high in the tree.

Next came Bourke's Parrots who were quite unafraid of us. We could hear a Crested Bellbird and finally spotted it on the ground. We had Hall's and Chestnut-crowned Babbler as well as a Brown Treecreeper. We came across a Mulga Parrot and Marleen spotted an Inland Thornbill. Then, to top it all off, we scored a Black-eared Cuckoo. Quite a day. Alf went back to the windmill near the beginning of the trail and had a heap of Bourke's Parrots come in. No effort required. We went back to the same place the next morning before moving off and scored Blue Bonnets as well as seeing the Bourke's and Mulgas again.



Bourke's Parrot *Annette Sutton*

We were sitting in the caravan park, having sundowners. The next thing we know, a Spinifex Pigeon comes wandering by. No need to go out in the hot sun searching for one. The first evening we spent on the big red sand dune just outside Windorah.

I have never seen so many Fairy Martins as on the whole trip. At the Windorah van park they had built nests under the roof of a shelter shed and there was mud all over the tables. The powers that be had hung up some CDs to blow around and scare them off but it was only partially successful. I found a Sparrow sitting in a Fairy Martin nest, looking very pleased with itself.



Spinifex Pigeon *Annette Sutton*

Next stop – Eromanga. But on the way we pulled in for a break at Lake Kyabra where we saw five Pelicans fishing in perfect unison.

Great to watch. Eromanga has the distinction of being the town in Australia that is furthest from the sea. So you can't get much more remote than that. Oil is drilled near Eromanga and refined in the town. The refinery produces high quality diesel fuels, heating oils and kerosene, as well as variety of speciality petroleum products for industrial uses. The refinery has been continuously processing up to 1,250 barrels per day of locally produced crude oil since it was commissioned in 1986. To fill up your vehicle with diesel, you drive to a pump situated at the refinery, serve yourself and pay by card. We have never had fuel direct from the refinery before. Fresh is best.

Just on the edge of the township were some bore drains. Most notable were some flocks of budgies, and three White-winged Fairy-wrens. We found more birds, including Blue Bonnets, at the waterhole at the back of the pub.



Bore Drain Eromanga *Annette Sutton*

There are some interesting signs in this part of the world. One warns you not to park for the next 1.5 km as the road doubles as an emergency air strip. Another, near Windorah, warns that there is no fuel in on the way to Birdsville or Bedourie, nearly 400km either way. Then you get *Eromanga – furthest town from the sea* and you realise you really are way out west.

On the way to Quilpie Marleen suddenly told us over the two-way to stop. She had spotted three Major Mitchell's Cockatoos. Great excitement. They flew into a tree near a creek but didn't hang around for long. Later in the trip, Marleen spotted another one. We had hoped to see more but no luck. We drove out to Lake Houdruman. New birds for the trip were Restless Flycatcher and, for me, a Brown Treecreeper. The latter were very used to humans and came very close.

Alf had a yen to visit Yowah, a small opal mining outpost. We only stayed there one night as bad weather was promised in a couple of

days but we could have stayed three. The shop, the van park and a few houses make up Yowah. But just outside there is a wonderful bore drain. This is where we found the Splendid Fairy-wrens. There was a family and the male, in full colour, was not shy. Yowah turned out to be quite a hot spot with more Bourke's Parrots (they came in quite close), Red-capped Robin, Crimson Chat, Purple-backed Fairy-wren, Cockatiel, Budgerigar, Pied, Spiny-cheeked and Singing Honeyeaters, Masked and White-browed Woodswallows and a Pallid Cuckoo amongst others. With all these wonderful birds and time being short, we totally ignored the opals.



Splendid Fairy-wren

Ray Sutton

Lake Bindegolly saw us freecamping for the first time. Otherwise we stayed in caravan parks as we wanted to help out the economies of these western towns.

The water in the lake was very low and we made our way down through the low bushy growth until we could see the water. There were Black Swans for the first time on the trip. More Pink-eared Ducks, a Whiskered Tern and a Caspian Tern. Most notable was a flock of Black-tailed Native-hens along the water's edge. There were at least twenty of them. Marleen spotted another Major Mitchell.

A short drive brought us into Thargomindah, about the most southerly part of our trip and the turning point for home. We had a few pub meals whilst we were away and Thargomindah stood out. The salad was to die for. It had about a dozen ingredients and wasn't smothered in dressing. All so fresh so far out west.

We didn't find many birds in Thargomindah as the weather was closing in as forecast. We were up bright and early and off to Cunnamulla via Eulo but the rain beat us. We drove through quite a bit of heavy rain but it was dry in Cunnamulla. The van park at Cunnamulla was on the Warrego River which had plenty of water

in it. Round the park itself we found plenty of birds. We had Little Corellas looking like Christmas decorations in a conical tree and Red-winged Parrots feeding outside our door. There were a couple of families of Purple-backed Fairy-wrens and a Spotted Bowerbird with his bower.

Late in the afternoon we looked at the sky. There was a big thunderstorm coming and in front of the thunder clouds there was a wall of red dust, reaching hundreds of metres up into the sky. It was quite eerie. Luckily the storm wasn't too fierce and, though it brought some strong winds, there was no hail. Thank goodness.

In between Cunnamulla and Charleville over the two way we got another urgent message to stop. There, on the roadside, were five Flock Bronzewing. They walked in a very leisurely fashion up the road, taking their time and not at all worried by us. What a score. In the Charleville van park we had two Collared Sparrowhawks mating in a tree. It was all happening.

Living on the coast, each year we hear about all the great Western rivers as they come into flood. To travel near all these wonderful waterways is very exciting. Names like the Paroo, The Barcoo, The Bulloo, Thomson River, Warrego River and Cooper Creek are very evocative of the outback.



Cockatiel at Yowah

Annette Sutton

Charleville, Roma, Rolleston, Capella and St. Helen's Creek near Calen were on our route home. We took a drive up to Eungella as a final hurrah. We didn't find the Honeyeater but we did pick up some Topknot Pigeons and Scarlet Honeyeaters. The van park itself was very pleasant and we scored a female Koel sitting high on an open branch. Another find was a White-browed Robin just near the vans.

The last thing I want to mention is the scenery way out west. The flora is wonderful. There

are miles upon miles of stunted trees and little low, round bushes in every shade of green, grey green and silver. We were lucky to see lots of wild flowers, as it had rained a few weeks before in some places. All these bushes and flowers are set against a backdrop of red dirt. It is just beautiful. As soon as the weather cools down next year we will be out there again.



Marleen recorded 159 species. All up we travelled for four weeks and had a superb trip. Thanks to our tour guides.

Annette Sutton

FAST FOOD

There I was sitting at Bucks Dam for the second day of the Black-throated Finch (BTF) waterhole count and still no luck with the target species.

I had chosen a shady spot under a Cocky Apple tree on the south-eastern edge of the dam. While diligently scanning the dam for any signs of the BTFs, I spotted a Great Bowerbird making a beeline for me. However, it landed in the branches not far above my head. Upon observation, I noticed it picking at a lump on one of the branches, so I duly raised my binoculars to get a better look. The lump was a paper wasp nest, and the Bowerbird was simply picking off the caps to the larval chambers, pulling out the larva and devouring them. Some larva appeared almost fully developed, to which the bowerbird seemed to take a little more care in how it swallowed them. While this was occurring, I did not notice any adult wasp within the vicinity. Where they were or what happened to them, I do not know.

Mark Horvath



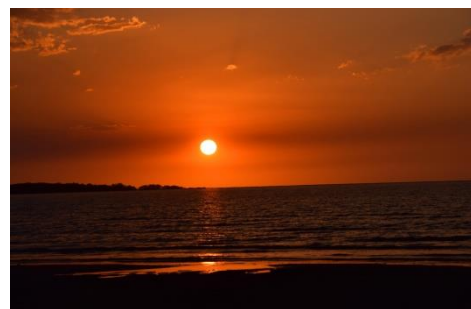
WANDERINGS

I don't think I've even seen any of you this year? After Annette's plea for material, I was just going to send you a bunch of photos, but realised as I was looking through, that there were quite a few stories attached.

I'm a Clinical nurse and after breaking both legs in a fall in Tasmania (second injury relating to photography) in 2018, I was told I'd never walk again (I arrived in Townsville 2yrs ago in a wheelchair). Prior to my two years in Hospital and rehab I had been doing agency nursing work all around Australia. I made a cautious return to work this year.

I was working in a Medical Centre in Townsville and I became intolerant of the issues, was bored and had itchy feet and a need for some birding. So I went back to doing agency work in August. I went to the Gulf for six weeks, back home for two weeks, then north again for three weeks, going out at every opportunity to look for birds. Working full time, studying and having to get assignments in to University made it hard to get out and about as much as I'd like. But I did my best.

First I went to the Gulf of Carpentaria, and flew to Weipa. Fortunately I was able to hook up with another nurse and birder who also lived in the quarters, who grabbed me whenever we were both off to do some birding. I only managed five outings in six weeks - renting a car was far too expensive there. I went to five locations around Weipa. To go further afield I needed my own car.



Weipa Sunset

The sunsets across the Indian Ocean on the west coast of the east coast of Australia were so stunning many of the residents and all of the tourists (the caravan park was near full) came out to see them. The foreshores were packed every evening.

Lake Patricia was low, but there and the foreshore were the only places to really find any

birds. Traipsing through the bush, or waiting at waterholes was mostly unproductive. However I did get to see a few new birds. The highlight of this placement was seeing Papuan Frogmouths (from afar & close-up) for the first time.



Papuan Frogmouth

INNISFAIL & SURROUNDS

The river was right beside the Hospital so I kept a watch there and saw a few bird passers-by in the stop-over tree outside my window including honey-eaters and Torresian Pigeons. The resident Curlews and Lapwings made their presence felt very loudly. The Plovers had four chicks but within 4 days, they had all vanished, along with the other parent. I saved two from traffic once and then a second time when there was only one parent and one chick and she was calling it across the road. How it didn't get squished I don't know, but I helped it up out of the gutter. After they and the male partner had vanished, the female called in the garden all night for her chicks for several days. Poor thing. I went to eight locations around Innisfail in three weeks. I went to the Botanical Gardens twice, and while I heard birds, I never saw anything. I went to Etty Bay three times hoping to see a wild cassowary. The only bird I saw there was a lone Mynah. The first visit there was a surfing carnival on.

On the Snapping Croc tour I saw a new bird, but was unable to get a decent shot as a child screamed just as I pressed the shutter to capture a Great-Billed Heron.

Eubenangee Swamp NP was the only really productive place, but I almost didn't find it as my GPS was determined to direct me (three times) to a private driveway. After I'd given up and was going to head back to the hospital, I found it. I heard more birds than I saw and with School Holidays, the weekend and all the local swimming holes all being chokkas, and carparks packed, I avoided those places. There was nobody walking about in the National Park. In

an hour and a half I saw only two walkers. Was delighted to see and photograph my first Pacific Baza. I could also hear a catbird, but never got sight of it.



Pacific Baza

CAIRNS

Cairns was way more productive. I went to thirteen locations around Cairns in four days and sadly had to spend a full day working. No-one was running any birding tours or were all away. Even the Daintree Boatman had only one taker, me. So I hope to go back.



Striated Heron Cairns

A trip to Kuranda's Birdworld focused mainly on exotics as I expected. What I wasn't expecting after I'd removed all my jewellery, was the naughty 18-month old and massive blue-and-gold Macaw to get into my bag and grab and take off with my car-keys! I was the only one in the enclosure and I yelled out Noooooo! and grabbed the bugger by the tail. It was so shocked it immediately let my keys go and they clattered on to the deck. There were quite a lot of birds for a small enclosure, but they all seemed to respect each other's space. I wasn't expecting to see a few Herons in there, and

another exotic - this time an Eclectus parrot bit me on the finger when I wouldn't give him a grape. Bad bird!

The Catanna Wetlands had a few birds, but not as many as I expected. I saw more insects than birds. Cairns foreshore had heaps of birds, so I ended up here every evening. On the attached Esplanade walkways, and despite hundreds of people and dogs all walking, playing netball and roller skating (the people, not the dogs), the nectar-filled trees were still attracting birds.



Torresian Imperial Pigeon

While watching a pair of mating Torresians, standing under a tree, camera in hand, a little aboriginal boy came up to me and asked if I was taking pictures. Yes. Then he asked what the birds were doing; making a baby bird" that must have been the right answer as the next question was "Will you take me home with you?"

I'm now looking for my next contract for November to the end of the year. Closed borders make it hard as I'd like to head back to WA to see my oldest daughter, but two weeks being stuck indoors, is not an option for me, let alone the cost and boredom. I'm currently looking at a town between Bowen and Mackay or Mareeba for placement for 10 weeks. Lots of great birds in those areas, so bring it on!

I hope you all have a safe and Happy Christmas and welcome in the New Year (with relief) and hope it is a better year for everyone. I'll be over on Magnetic Island to welcome in 2021 at a house notorious for lots of feathered and furry creatures in the trees and coming onto the verandahs. See you guys next year!

Cheers,
Melissa BEE

WESTERN HIGHLIGHTS

Listening to and watching a pair of Yellow-throated Miners with a pair of ever hungry young at our first overnight stop. Observing a Pied Butcher-bird sitting on a nest, interestingly the nest sitter was a mature bird and its partner was a young bird (still had brown plumage). Being woken by a Southern Boobook calling very close to us, I didn't get up, it was cold and raining. Listening to a young Galah whinging for its breakfast, they certainly know how to whinge!!

Seeing 2 flocks of Little Crow, 5 Emus, Squatter Pigeon, Wedge-tailed Eagles and a pair of Black-necked Stork (that was a surprise!) along the road to Georgetown.

Counting 14 species of bird visiting the caravan park bird bath. Sitting under a tree that was the final landing site for an adult Apostlebird with a beak full of grubs for the nestlings (in another tree). Finding a small farm dam with a Pacific Black Duck, a Hardhead, 2 Grey Teal, 2 Black-winged Stilt and 5 Australasian Grebes in it.

Being entertained by over 100 Red-tailed Black-



Apostle Bird

Cockatoo as they flew overhead from the roosting site, within the camping ground.

Early morning cuppa while watching a Banded Honeyeater call loudly from a nearby tree. Finding a White-throated Gerygones nest, with nestlings.

Watching a young Australian Magpie fight a Pied Butcherbird for a bug. Hearing the unmistakable 'talking' of Squatter Pigeons as they wandered through the camp site. Finding the Little Bronze-Cuckoo that was calling incessantly. Lying in bed listening to Grey Butcherbird then Pied Butcherbird calling as dawn broke.

Observing a pair of Australian Magpies harassing any raptor that entered their airspace - Wedge-tailed Eagle, Whistling Kite and unknown raptor carrying a snake were chased out ferociously. Must have been nesting there. Looking in every tree hollow I could and not finding an Australian Owlet-nightjar. Do they even exist? Finding another Pied butcherbird sitting on a nest just above our caravan.



Squatter Pigeons

Chasing a Babbler species until they went over the fence in an effort to get a dodgy photograph for identification purposes.

Feeding by the road to Mt Surprise - 5 Emu, do they only come in 5's around here? Were they the same 5 from Georgetown? Slowing down for a Black Kite as it dragged a Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo body off the road.



Young Galah

Faint glimpses of a Black Falcon and Spotted Harrier. They're so fast! Heading off to Ravenshoe and finding Grey Butcherbird in the caravan park, they're everywhere! Walking through the rainforest and not seeing the birds that were calling everywhere! But enjoying the cooler temperatures. Going on a spotlighting tour and not seeing any night birds!!

Annette Sibson

2020

What a strange year!

This year has thrown up a few firsts for me in bird behaviour. I conclude that I have more time in the one place to observe and therefore more likely to see new things. The first of the firsts happened while I was watching a family of Masked Lapwings in the open drain at Carlyle interacting with a family of Black-fronted Dotterels. Each pair had 2 chicks about 3 weeks old. The Lapwings had started as four chicks. The Lapwing adults were trying to see off the Dotterels when one of the Lapwing adults took off screaming straight at me. But as it passed over me a Black Kite came from behind me passing over the Dotterels and plucked up one of the Lapwing chicks and headed off with both parents in hot and noisy pursuit. Meanwhile the Dotterels made themselves scarce in the grassland and I didn't see them again until the next day. The Lapwings returned about five minutes later to supervise the surviving chick. I have never before observed a Black Kite taking live birds for food.

My third first involves a group of Australian Bustard that have been using the open grassland to the west of Carlyle for most of this year. I see them mainly in the morning headed for the open drain where they take a long leisurely drink before retracing their steps. This is the first time I have seen bustards drinking. It looks like a daily morning ritual. I am hoping they feel safe enough to breed here this wet season. The biggest threat is dogs both wild and domestic passing through in small packs.



Injured Young Dotterel Karen Doyle

The second first concerns the Black-fronted Dotterels. They stayed in the same area but I noticed after a week that there was only one

chick. There was something odd about this last chick and I finally noticed that it was injured and favouring one leg. I was finally able to see that its right leg had been damaged and was sticking out at an odd angle. There has obviously been another bird of prey incident. I thought it wouldn't last very long with such an injury. I have not seen it fly even though it is beginning to moult into adult plumage. If this bird does survive I hope it's a female, as a male copulating with one leg is not a pretty picture.

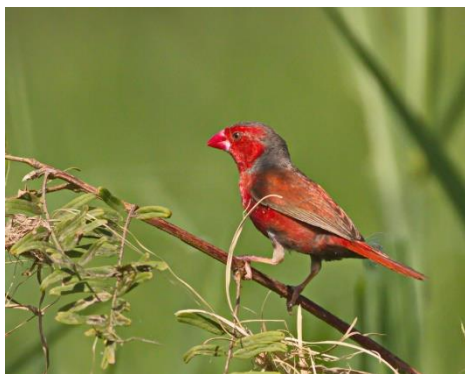
Ivor Preston

ROSS RIVER DAM SURVEY

This leisurely monthly walk led by Cecily Messer is always on the third Sunday of the month. It is generally around two and a half kilometres and takes 2-3 hours depending on bird numbers and participants. More participants quite often mean that more bird species are found. Afterall, not everyone looks in the same direction.

Each month you see the change in the amount of water behind the dam. This of course alters the bird habitat and the species of birds. Last month (October) there were Pelicans, Royal Spoonbill, egrets, cormorants and darters everywhere. But when we reached the river ducks, pygmy-geese, cormorants and swans were sadly missing. Kingfishers were also hard to find but honeyeaters and parrots were plentiful.

We did add a new bird to the overall list though, Crimson Finch.



Crimson Finch

Ray Sutton

The club has been conducting surveys here for about 10 years and the number of species for this site now stands at 213.

So, if you are like me down on birds for the month, this is a great outing to change your tally. With most months producing over 60+ occasionally 70+ species.

Marleen Acton

LUXURY

On a recent trip out to south-west Queensland we came across a camp site, within Currawinya National Park, that had a recently erected toilet facility. The building itself was constructed of corrugated iron in a snail-like layout with gaps both above and below the wall. There was no door and you just had to walk in and around the corner to the toilet. The toilet was the flushing type and there was a sink. Luxury! However, there was a flaw in its design. It had a roof.



Fairy Martins

On approaching the building, Fairy Martins came streaming out of the entrance like the bats at Dan Gleeson Memorial Gardens at sunset, only sped up fourfold. Once inside it was evident that the Martins had been in residence for some time as nests were complete and chicks could be heard chirping. The floor, sink and toilet were thickly covered in mud and grass and unusable in that state. Luckily, there was a tap accessible and a quick hose out ensued. All the activity didn't seem to faze the Martins as they continued to visit the site afterwards. Also, the toilet seat needed to be left up otherwise you would have to clean it again next visit.

We tried to limit our visits to the absolutely necessary and each approach was done slowly as to allow the martins egress time, without frightening them too much. This approach, however, didn't always empty the building of Martins so you had to go in with your head down and arm over your face in case the stragglers ran into you. Some did. I copped a couple of beauties on my chest. Once inside and seated you had a front row seat to the activity. Martins would fly in and hover right in front of your face while they decided whether to leave or enter their nests. Final decisions were mixed with some showing more bravado than others. It was a delight to sit there and contemplate your navel while watching the antics. However we did attempt to keep our seated time to its minimum.

At the end of our stay the Martins continued to use the facility, so I guess we weren't too much of an intrusion. Looking at the state of the campground also led us to believe that very few people actually visit the place as almost every possible camp site was overgrown with weeds.

Mark Horvath

MUNGALLA STATION

I was very excited to be going on my first trip to Mungalla station. I'd heard and read lots about it so was trying very hard not to get my expectations up.

The trip up was great, with lots of chat and birding on the way. The Brahminy Kites didn't disappoint; three were seen.

We arrived after the drizzly rain had started and weren't sure how the ground would be. It turned out to be not a problem, not enough rain had fallen to cause any mud issues, yet.

My first impression was wow, at the meet up spot there was thick green grass, water views and plenty of birdlife enjoying the plentiful food. Crimson Finch were so bold as to hop on the table and chairs in the lunch area.

Off we went through the gates. Being in the second car meant I didn't have to do gate duty, always a bonus. I wasn't sure where to look, it was all happening around us. Birds, insects, cattle, crocodiles - whoot!

We stopped at all the places for the bird count, seeing some great birds along the way. Too many to name all of them but some stand outs were the Australian Painted and Latham's Snipe, Curlew Sandpiper (a first for me), the Bustard squatting in the grass and Australian Pratincole, not forgetting the many dozens of Brolga that were feeding and dancing in the paddocks. Oh, and the crocodile of course.



Australian Painted Snipe

It was a great day's birding in great company.

How wonderful would it be to spend many days there, propped at each waterhole to see what turns up?

Annette Sibson

Mungalla Station is managed by the Nywaigi Aboriginal people, traditional owners in the Ingham area. Anyone can book a visit.

BRIDGE BIRDING

At Carlyle Gardens we have a large Council drain separating the two portions of the Village. Over the years, I have seen a wide variety of birds drinking, feeding, or flying over the drain while I've been standing there peering over the rails, just in case. Memorably, a Painted Snipe landed not far from my lookout one morning many years ago and I am always hopeful that it may land there again one day, but sadly, it has found another flyway. Usually there is a pair of Black-fronted Dotterels feeding happily in the sludge on the bottom of the drain. They breed nearby every year, sometimes successfully and at other times the chicks disappear within a few days or a couple of weeks. As a Brown Goshawk also hangs out in our neighbourhood, we suspect that he is the culprit for their demise.



Brown Goshawk

Annette Sutton

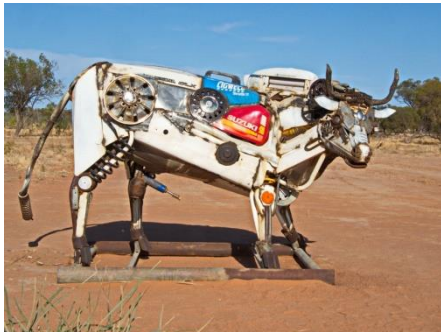
This morning, Ivor and I met by chance at the bridge, hoping to see the four Bustards, which of late, have been coming down to drink. Never having seen Bustards drinking anywhere before, we find that event very interesting and check on a daily basis. However, today, no Bustards and no Dotterels appeared, but we were graced by a fine list of other birds, which included a Great Egret in breeding plumage with a black bill, seven Great Bower Birds flying back and forth, three Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos which landed in the drain and proceeded to drink, three Little Corellas flying across, a Magpie, two Magpie Larks, a Little Friar Bird which landed in a nearby tree and a female Koel in another tree. A Channel-billed Cuckoo called loudly further along the drain, and the resident Masked Lapwings did their usual squawking, including mounting an assault on the Goshawk as it approached in a circle from the west. In the trees nearby was a Brown Honeyeater chatting to itself, while a Blue-winged Kookaburra tried to drown it out with its raucous call from the distance. Several Australian Ibis flew overhead, Rainbow Lorikeets screeched past and a bevy of Peaceful Doves padded around on the dry sides

of the drain. Later, Ivor saw two Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes heading that way, but by then I had heeded the call of breakfast and was heading for my house. How lucky are we to be able to enjoy so many birds within cooee of our homes. Who wouldn't live in North Queensland.

Elna Kerswell

LAKE DUNN SCULPTURE TRAIL

If you travel out west to Aramac, make sure you stay a couple of nights so you can do the Lake Dunn Sculpture Trail. You could base yourself at Lake Dunn and do it from there. We stayed at Aramac so we could do the 200km loop without our van attached as two thirds of the route is dirt.



The sculptures were made by an outback sculptor called Melinda Rogers. She started off with painting the trunk of a stunted tree with bushy regrowth and turned it into Sideshow Bob. The kids of the area loved it so she decided to add to the trail. Her sculptures are made from scrap metal and some are wrapped barbed wire. Her imagination and ingenuity are endless, not to mention her construction skills.

For bird lovers, you can find Bustards, Jabiru, Wedge-tailed Eagles and chicks, Brolgas, Emus and Cockatoos. There are kangaroos, pigs, goannas and a koala as well as a Red-claw crayfish and a brilliant echidna made from star pickets. Even Jonathan Thurston gets a guernsey. Pardon the pun.

There are three Emu chicks with the male Emu and their bodies are motorbike petrol tanks. The eye-brows of the kangaroo are dinner forks with the tines bent upwards. The hump on the back of the Brahman bull is an old washing machine wringer. There are about 800 metres of wrapped barbed wire in a goanna climbing a tree. She has even hidden Wally and if you are clever or lucky, you will find him hiding behind a tree. The car tracks going in give you a clue.

Harry Readford, who was the basis for Captain Starlight in *Robbery Under Arms*, was a famous cattle rustler. He stole 1000 head of cattle and drove them overland to South Australia. He took the same route that had claimed the lives of Bourke and Wills earlier. He nearly got away with it but he stole a big white bull which was his undoing. The bull was recognised and Harry was eventually arrested. He did get away with it, however, as the jury was so impressed by his bushman skills that they acquitted him. Melinda has included a great sculpture of Harry with his horse and dog.



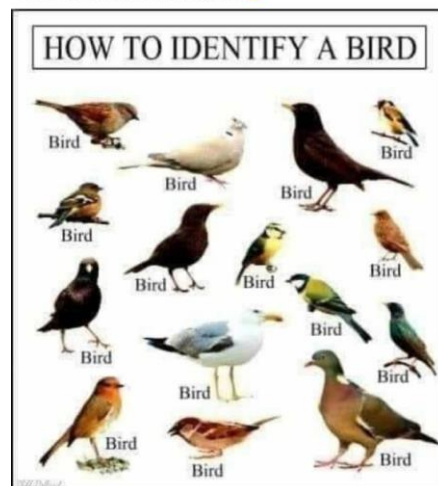
We did do some bird watching along the way. The more interesting species we saw were Grey-headed Honeyeater, White-winged Fairy-wren, Squatter Pigeon and Bustards. There were quite a few Emus as well. At Lake Dunn, where the water level was very low, the most notable birds were Red-necked Avocets, Pink-eared Ducks and Red-kneed Dotterels.

Back in Aramac, we were constantly entertained by a big flock of Galahs.

So if you are looking for somewhere to go, not too far away, give the Lake Dunn Sculpture trail a go. Maybe wait for some cooler weather, though.

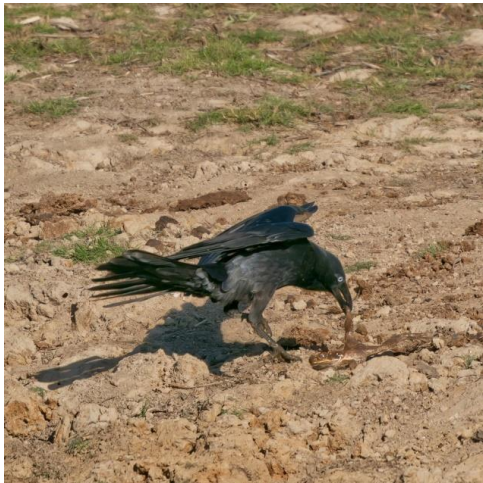
Annette Sutton

Just found this helpful guide 🐦



CANE TOAD

Not one for stories but during the Black-throated Finch survey last weekend I captured an Australian Raven retrieving a toad from Yellow Dam near Granitevale Station. It dragged it up the bank, then with much difficulty flipped it over and proceeded to eat it



through its stomach.



Stephen McLean



TOADS AND CROWS

Members of the crow family, the corvids, show a capacity to learn and solve problems that may be unrivalled in the bird world. It seems their greatest skill is an uncanny ability to turn new and tricky situations to their advantage.

Take the scourge of the introduced cane toad (*Rhinella marina*) for example. As this highly poisonous amphibian disperses across northern Australia, the numbers of predators attempting to eat them are crashing. The most notable victims are quolls, goannas and certain snakes, which have been all but wiped out in some regions. Crows, however, have learnt how to eat toads by avoiding the most toxic parts.

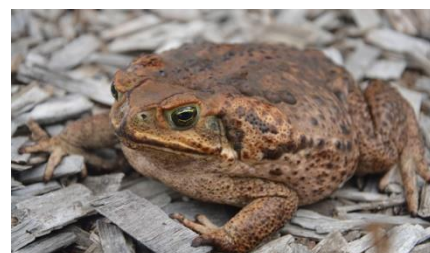
The large parotid glands on the toad's neck and shoulders are the greatest risk. When a toad is harassed, milky white poison oozes from these glands. Any contact with this ooze is a likely death sentence. In many cases they die before even swallowing the toad.

Crows avoid contact with the ooze by grasping them by the limbs or even the bony brow above the eye, avoiding the body itself. These clever birds have learnt to roll the toads onto their backs, sometimes doing so repeatedly if the luckless toad tries to hop away. Crows know which bits to eat – fleshy thighs, tongues, intestines – and how to get at these from below without contacting the lethal parts.

A Torresian Crow (*Corvus orru*) spent nearly 40 minutes manipulating its victim beside Lake Kurwongbah north of Brisbane. The toxic fluids, clearly visible on the toad's parotid glands, were avoided. During much of this process other crows stood and watched.

Were these observers teachers, students, or dis-interested bystanders? I don't know, but there has been some debate about whether these techniques are culturally transmitted. Scientists argue that the consistent use of the same safe and efficient methods across Queensland, the Northern Territory and presumably Western Australia has involved the transfer of learning, from crow to crow, as the toads' distribution expands.

By Steve Wilson • January 29, 2018 Australian Geographic



QUEST

Name	Quest Number	Date
Paul Thompson	320	15/11/2020
Anne Lawrance	308	3/11/2020
Janet Robino	288	14/10/2020
Barbara Reidy	284	10/10/2020
Elna Kerswell	246	2/09/2020
Wal Threlfall	242	29/08/2020
Beth Snewin	237	24/08/2020
Ian Leach	237	24/08/2020
Christine Corbett	222	9/08/2020
Janet Cross	219	6/08/2020
Pat Charlton	216	3/08/2020
Marleen Acton	215	2/08/2020
Annette Sibson	211	29/07/2020
Rosemary Payet	208	26/07/2020
Wendy Kaus	201	19/07/2020
Warren Charlton	191	9/07/2020
Annette Sutton	172	20/06/2020
Brigid Glass	160	8/06/2020
Julie Goldsbury	134	13/05/2020

Christmas Party



Sun Hotel



Friday December 11 2020

6.30 for 7.00 pm

