

The Drongo

Number 164 November 2021



Ray Sutton

Locked In
Cane Toads
Michaelmas
Cay



FROM THE PRESIDENT

The weather has continued playing havoc with our outing plans. The September Survey at Wongaloo Wetlands had to be cancelled because of rain and the Town Common Spotlighting Outing scheduled for 24 August had to be scrapped as there had been a widespread fire through the Conservation Park.

Torresian Imperial Pigeon Watch and Count is on for November, December and January.– Cape York to Gladstone – All month, you choose venue, what days and number of days all from 4pm to 6pm. Member,s this is another important survey and only requires a commitment of two hours. Your own personal count. Please check website for all details at: <http://www.pipwatch.net/current-season-piptip-coast-count>

For more information Contact: Julia Hazel (James Cook University) 0407431382 or Email: Julia.Hazel@jcu.edu.au

The Christmas Party is on Sunday 12 December at the Sun Hotel. Please note that it is Sunday this year as the venue was booked on the Saturday. 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. Make sure you register your attendance with Wal at contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au at least a week prior to date so we can notify numbers to the Sun Hotel.

As usual, October was a very busy month for BirdLife Townsville. Library Displays were set up in City, Aitkenvale and Thuringowa Libraries for the month of October with the aim of promoting Aussie Backyard Bird Count. According to Library staff, there was a lot of interest shown by library visitors.

Wal Threlfall and Janet Robino attended Townsville Retirees to do presentation on Birdwatching in Townsville. Shopping Centre Information Stands to promote Aussie Backyard Bird Count were manned by several members at Castletown, Kmart, Fairfield Waters. There was a lot of interest shown by shoppers. Mark Horvath, Annette Sibson and Janet Robino manned information stand at Townsville City Council Sustainability House Open Day. As usual the steady stream of visitors kept us very busy.

Several members took part in the annual Black-throated Finch Waterhole Survey. Wal Threlfall was an area steward. A big thank you to the members who volunteered to take part in the Surveys. It would be great to see more volunteers from BirdLife Townsville in the future. Janet Robino attended Black-throated Finch Recovery Team workshop. A 15 year Recovery Plan was prepared for submission to Queensland Government Department of Environment and Science (DES), Threatened Species Unit.

In between all the above, many of us had a good time participating in the Aussie Backyard Bird Count.

Once again, it is that time of year when I ask all members to consider nominating for the committee or to take a more active part supporting BirdLife Townsville's outings and community awareness and education programs.

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

Janet Robino

YOUR COMMITTEE

President: Janet Robino
Secretary: Wal Threlfall
Treasurer: Nina Doyle

Annette Sibson
Mark Horvath
Kathleen Vowles

Trish Jordan
Julia Goldsbury
Brigid Glass

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.

BLACK-THROATED FINCH COUNT 2021

In October Warren and I were part of a number of teams involved in the annual Black-throated Finch (Southern species) Count. This is a threatened species found in the Townsville area.



White-winged Chough

This year we were to survey Bucks Dam on private land not far from the Ross River dam. It meant that we had to be up at 4am, meet with our leader at 5am, travel to our allocated dam and be settled down to observe from 6 to 9am. Bucks Dam is a long dam so we had to separate to be able to cover the favoured spots where the finches may come in to drink. We officially count only drinking birds and they like to have a shrub or small tree near a flat area where they can have easy access to water.

On the first day neither of us saw any finches but on the second day I (Pat), saw 5 BTFs come to the beach area and drank with a flock of Peaceful Doves.

Other interesting species we saw were White-winged Choughs collecting mud. We assumed they were building a nest but didn't have the opportunity to find the spot. Also seen were Channel-billed Cuckoos, Wedge-tailed Eagles, Dollar Birds, Leaden Flycatchers, various honeyeaters, Scaly-breasted Lorikeets, Brush Cuckoo, Pacific Koel, Pale-headed Rosellas, Bar-shouldered Doves, Olive-backed Orioles, Coucal



Pheasant – a total of 43 species between us.

We also had the company of a number of cattle who were very interested in us and one kangaroo.

Pat Charlton

SUNBIRDS SUCK IT UP

Watching Olive-backed Sunbirds feeding from flowers, it is easy to be impressed by their long tongues.

After a bout of feeding on nectar, they will often flick their tongues in and out, almost as if licking their lips, showing that their tongues are at least as long as their beaks. The photo reveals that their tongues are not only long, they are also very manoeuvrable.

The bird in the picture is standing on one side of the *Grevillea* flowerhead and reaching over and using its tongue to feed from a flower on the far side. Since the flowers on the far side of the flowerhead face away from the bird, it has extended its tongue across and then curved it back through almost 180 degrees to insert it.



I cannot imagine the layout of the muscles that would be required to achieve such precise control – the more so since the diameter of a sunbird's tongue appears to be about the same as sewing thread.

Hugh Sweatman

DUCK PARADISE

On Saturday afternoon I headed over to Idalia Lakes to do a count for the Aussie Backyard Bird Count. There has always been a good number of ducks at this site but I was still surprised at just how many there were. I gave up counting at 251 Wandering Whistling-Ducks and 160 Plumed Whistling-Ducks. There were also good numbers of Pacific Black Ducks and Grey Teal.

On Sunday afternoon I had a walk around the Lagoon at the Palmetum to do a Count. There was one lonely looking Plumed Whistling-Duck and 2 Pacific Black Ducks. It seems the conditions at Idalia Lakes are just right for the ducks.

Janet Robino

WALTERGATE

On Friday evening, the 27th August, as dusk darkened the day, we met inside the gate of the Townsville Town Common Conservation Park at 6.15 p.m. as instructed by our intrepid leader, Wal Threlfall. Eleven of us gathered to undertake the first of two spotlighting surveys scheduled for the year. This survey had been cancelled following an uncontrolled fire that had ripped through the Common, then reinstated after Wal inspected the site and decided it would be safe to proceed with the excursion.

As we greeted each other, chatted and signed-in, two vehicles zipped through the gate and headed off down the Common track. Wal called out to the second as it flashed by, "You know the gate shuts at 6.30?"

A muted, "Yeah," shot out of the car's open window.

A third car entered, far more sedately, drove past us, did a U turn and promptly exited the Common. Then, a fourth vehicle, arriving outside the gate, simply U turned and departed without entering the Common.

We looked at Wal. "Maybe it's you, Wal. Maybe they think you're a cop." In a way, he did resemble the constabulary with his steely-eyed stare, short back and sides greying at the temples and his authoritative tone cutting across the dusk (or maybe it was just his big toe having the big G which gave him that certain air!).

"Humph!"

As the gates of the Common slid closed, Wal directed Peter and I to ride with him in his vehicle. We shared a moment's pang as our vehicle housed a range of tools and equipment – gear for getting us out of trouble if we needed it. We sucked it up though because this was Wal, our long suffering Secretary and team leader, and it was only the Common. We'd do a lap around it and go home, have a hot drink and hit the hay. No dramas.



The convoy set off, Wal leading the way and Marlene and Alf riding Tail-end-Charlie. We meandered leisurely along the gravel road through tall grasses, melaleucas, eucalypts, pandanus and acacia scrub without seeing a bird. We did stop once to debate the composition of a grey-white mass high in a leafy eucalypt – was it bark, feathers or fur? – and decided it was fur. A couple of little possums had snuggled up. We next encountered a small brown snake slithering across the gravel but there were no birds.

As we turned onto the track to Bald Rock, Wal and Peter exited the vehicle to unlock the gate. A few metres away was a Suzuki, one of the vehicles that had entered at closing time, snugly parked, windows up. The other car had passed us on its way out. It seemed that the Bald Rock gate was a landmark of significance. Wal designated Marlene to lock the gate behind us and when she'd done so the convoy set off again.

I'd never been across the salt flats and found them fascinating in the moonlight. Shadows shifted shading low-lying shrubs and grasses but the powerful spotlight cut through the dark night. Still, we saw no birds. Then, suddenly, there was a flutter of movement on the road in front of us and Wal identified a Red-capped Plover with a chick. We added a Sacred Kingfisher, a Barking Owl that Peter spotted, a few Bush Stone-curlews and a few more owls to our tally. All the while, flying foxes flittered overhead like wraiths. We drove on approaching the clearing where we intended to turn about and head back.



Then, rounding a bend, we saw a tree lying across the track blocking the road in front of the turning area. Having one tool at his disposal, Peter dug into his pocket for his Leatherman. Using the small saw, he chewed through some slender end branches to widen the gap so the vehicles could edge around the fallen tree and into the clearing without being scratched. It took a bit of manoeuvring. Cecily led the way, navigating the gap between the pruned end of the tree and a sizeable mound of earth. Soon, everyone had entered the clearing and parked. Wal opted to remain with the cars while several of us took a short walk down a sandy track. Apart from our subdued voices, there were no sounds as we walked in the soft sand, not even calling Nightjars that Wal said we should hear along the path. Before long, we returned to the vehicles and climbed in; happy to be heading back after a very quiet night.

It's funny how the return journey always seems faster. By 10.00 p.m. we were back at the Bald Rock gate and the Suzuki had departed. I considered getting out to help Wal and Peter open the gate, but really, why would they need any help and besides, I was tired. However, after what seemed an inordinately long time, I did get out of Wal's car and stroll across to them.

"How's it going?"

Peter, with the top of his hand in the thick metal cylinder encompassing the padlock, flicked a glance at me. "It's not."

"What? Why?"

"Padlock won't open," Wal said.

Knowing my husband, I refrained from repeating the *what, why* questions. Our vehicle, containing a multitude of handy tools, was parked seven kilometres away. Access to those could have opened possibilities – the padlock, the hinges on the gate, the fence? Who knows?

By now, two or three others had emerged from their cars like possums coming out to scent the night air. It quickly became apparent that the lock was cactus. It had opened to let us in but it sure as hell wouldn't open to let us out. Half of us 'had a go' hoping, like Arthur, to pull Excalibur out of the stone. But none of us was Arthur. Annette Sutton donated a tin of WD40 to the cause, to no avail. Someone put a very long flat screwdriver in my hand but I couldn't jimmy the padlock – the WD40 had made it extra slippery – but even so, located as the padlock was in the metal sleeve, it wasn't going to happen. Plan A was defunct.

Wal initiated Plan B – a phone call to Parks and Wildlife. The call went to voicemail and that was the end of that plan. Janet was indignant. "They know we're here tonight. You'd think they'd leave their phone on just in case." Bureaucracies? Just in case scenarios? Hmmm.

Peter came up with Plan C, namely, to detour around the end of the gate to the right. This would involve angling vehicles between the gate post and a large boulder on the edge of the salt pan, driving through some high grass and then over a portion of fence which would have to be temporarily rendered horizontal! After considerable debate about hidden stakes and slipping into the salt pan, this plan was abandoned.

Plan D was suggested to Wal – ring Fire and Rescue, make the triple zero call. Or we'd be here at dawn. Annette, pre-empting dawn, had already retired to her car to doze the rest of the night away. Barbara had also retired to her car because the mossies had discovered us and were happily feasting. Our insect repellent, like Anne's, was seven kilometres away. Digging into his pocket, Wal unearthed his mobile and, at 11 p.m., made the call. A few moments later a woman answered wanting to know what state we were in (literally or metaphorically, some of us wondered!). Then what town. Then what our problem was. Wal explained.

"Are you in a national park somewhere?" she asked.

"No. We're in the Townsville Town Common Conservation Park."

"Where's that?"

"Tell her, Emmerson Road," Anne said.

Wal explained it all again then added, "We need a grinder to cut through the chain on the gate."

"I can't send a fire truck out to you. I'll have to find a four-wheel-drive."

"No. We don't need a four-wheel-drive. We need a grinder."

"I'll see what I can do and I'll get back to you."

But she never did. In the intervening time, Ray came up to the gate and asked me where the DW40 was. A few of us had climbed through the fence to stand on the other side of gate (maybe we didn't feel quite so locked in there) and I was trying to jig the padlock again. I told Ray that Annette had taken their WD40 back to their car. Ray turned and walked away. In a couple of minutes, he was back with the can.

"Let's give it one more go," he said. He sprayed, then I tried the key. We 'gave it one more go' eight times before Ray surrendered to the superiority of the padlock. By then, there was barely a whisper left in the tin, let alone a hiss.

At 11.40 p.m., we suggested to Wal that he should ring Fire and Rescue again.

"But I'll get a different call centre."

"So?" Janet replied, "maybe we'll get someone who actually does something. Tell them there's a fire on the Common."

Wal unearthed his phone again, and from the comfort of his chair (he probably had more than an aching big toe by now) dialled 000 again. This time, the woman who answered sounded brisk and competent. She asked the same questions but her voice carried confidence and therefore reassurance. And she didn't talk about four-wheel-drives or use the 'can't' word. Anne reminded Wal to tell her, "Emmerson Road. Two m's."

Again, we waited, but Peter had had all the waiting for rescue he could handle. He decided to walk the seven kilometres back to our vehicle. It looked like I was in for a midnight hike too because I didn't think he should go on his own. We set off. If we met a rescue team along the road, brilliant. If we didn't, we'd drive back and see what we could do with the wretched gate, which was probably nothing but we'd all been standing around since 10.00 p.m. and everyone was over it.

Fifty metres into our trek, we glimpsed flashing lights in the distance. They were coming! The cavalry had arrived! Thankfully, there were no wailing sirens – just happily flashing lights – and a group of very happy birdwatchers gathered at the Bald Rock gate.

Our rescue team strode in with a pair of impressive bolt cutters, two toolboxes and two rings of keys. After five minutes of trying various keys, and a laughing comment about the amount of DW40 we'd used, they agreed that the padlock was bugged. The bolt cutters couldn't access the padlock so they gave their brand-new band saw a go but the positioning of the chain was too awkward to work with. They set to work with their angle grinder and

red sparks sprayed from the steel chain in glorious showers that promised freedom.

"Looks like we've woken up the birds for you!"

Midnight on the Common.

We climbed back into our cars and our convoy set off, homeward bound.

I just had to say, "That's your second adventure with a gate, Wal."



"I didn't lock it, Marlene did," he replied.

"But it was still a gate, Wal."

The CB crackled and Janet spoke. Wal answered defensively then Janet clearly said, "But it was still a gate, Wal."

Wal burst into laughter. "That's exactly what Jill just said."

They say things come in threes, don't they?

Jill Staunton

KIMBERLEY

Our original plan was to spend 4 weeks in the East Kimberley but due to Covid we had to spend 2 weeks in the Northern Territory.



We based ourselves at a small privately owned caravan park at Howard Springs (funnily enough not too far from the NT Covid-19 isolation facility) on the outskirts of Darwin, then Katherine and then

made our way along the Victoria Highway toward the WA border. Once in WA we would commence our long-planned Gibb River Road and Great Northern Highway excursion through the East Kimberley.

While not being a "birding" trip as such my partner has long ago gotten used to the phrase "quick stop the car. I haven't seen that *bird* before or suddenly slowing from 100kph without warning if I am driving.

I did manage some lifers. While not an accomplished photographer, I have attached a couple of photos as well. I suppose the most unexpected sightings were the White-quilled Rock-pigeon and the Partridge Pigeon.



Rainbow pitta

Strangely, after our initial sightings of these two species we saw them again several times. The same with the honeyeaters and the Gouldians which were quite common for the Kimberley section of this trip.



Red-collared Lorikeet

The most unexpected location for a "lifer" was the caravan park at Howard Springs which has a pair of resident Rainbow Pitta which wander through the pandanus palm/rainforest area and around the dam near the driveway.

Steve Burke

SEX AND GANG WARFARE IN THE BACKYARD

Chris and I spent October touring, birding, and camping with friends in SE Queensland for some amazing storm-filled times. We scored some terrific birds too, but that's not what this little homecoming story is about.

When we returned home last Friday afternoon, we were delighted to discover that a young male Great Bowerbird has begun building a bower in our back yard garden. The truth is, he's absolutely hopeless and has a lot to learn to make it to "Top Dog". But whatever he's doing, he must be doing something right. He does attract a particular female that is always interested and becomes mesmerised, hypnotised by his dances, displays, and antics. We have witnessed a couple of occasions when he has been sexually successful.



He arrives each morning about 6:30 a.m., and spends the better part of the day building, gathering, and dancing, as well as serenading his female/s. He leaves each afternoon about 6:00 p.m. He has been in a few ferocious fights with other bachelors coming too close to his pad. At one stage we counted eight Great Bowerbirds in the garden. Immediately after he departs for the day (for some much-needed rest no doubt), that's when all the bachelor raiders descend on his pad, stealing most of his daily collectables, and destroying his construction efforts.



So... the next morning he returns, bewildered and probably disappointed (I know I would be) only to repeat his entire process all over again. Reminds me of "Ground-Hog Day". I guess that is what it's all about... A bit of "Stiff Competition" & "Practice making Perfect".

The whole show is absolutely enthralling for us to watch, as we are part of the show too. They are totally unafraid of us as we go about our daily back yard business. We love sharing our lives and home with these amazing birds.

Len and Chris Ezzy

MICHAELMAS CAY

On 27th of October we went on a very memorable trip to Michaelmas Cay. Wow, what a magnificent place to spend some time.



On our approach you could see (through the binoculars) the cloud of birds above the cay. The boat wasn't going fast enough for me, I was so keen to get off and be on the sand with the birds.

We were very lucky and only had a small group of fellow tourists to share the boat with and none of them wanted to spend time on the cay. So, it was only myself and my husband Sam that got on the glass bottom boat to the cay. (The others went snorkeling)



Brown Boobies

It took me a few minutes of just looking and experiencing before I thought I'd better take some photos. I didn't know where to point the camera first. There were just so many birds to see, photograph, hear, watch, identify and enjoy.

There is a small roped area for human visitors to stay in. The birds were busy courting and nesting on the other side of the rope. How many birds? I have no idea; it would be impossible to count them accurately as they mass so densely in different

areas of the cay. Types – Brown Noddy, Sooty Tern and Brown Booby had the biggest numbers. Silver Gull, Crested Tern, Lesser Crested Tern, Black-naped Tern and Bridled Tern made up the rest.

One Great Frigatebird flew over during our time there and a Ruddy Turnstone was seen as we were leaving. It was certainly an experience I will not forget in a hurry. The photos show my first impressions, with birds everywhere and one photo of a Brown Booby family.

Annette Sibson

NORTHERN BREAK

On the 1st October we set off for a trip up north before summer really kicked in. I think summer beat us.

We had a few nights at Wongaling Beach and didn't see one Cassowary. Didn't even pick one up when we called in at Etty Bay. The Metallic Starlings were busy building nests in various places. The Golden Gumboot park had quite a few pairs and we found a colony at South Mission. They were flying around everywhere we went. A trip to the Tully Gorge landed us in a sea of March flies so we jumped straight back into the car and off. It is a pretty drive up to the gorge.



Metallic Starlings nesting

We moved up to Cairns and on the first afternoon there were quite a lot of waders who had made the long trip home. We saw about a hundred or more Great Knots, some Bar-tailed Godwits, one Black-tailed, Whimbrels, Eastern Curlews and Grey-tailed Tattlers. There were also stay at homes such as Great Egrets, Black-fronted Dotterels, Pelicans, and two Sacred Kingfishers catching crabs. Up on the bank were dozens of Pied Imperial Pigeons moaning away, along with Rainbow Lorikeets, Peaceful Doves and Varied Honeyeaters. The next day there were hardly any Great Knots but more Godwits. Who knows with birds? On a brief walk on Redden Island (too hot to stay long), I saw a Cicadabird.

Next port of call was the Daintree. Murray Hunt took us out morning and evening. He always does his best to find the birds and he is pretty good at it.

Probably the greatest prize was the Great-billed Heron that he found just on dark. It stood in the open for ages, stock still, waiting for something to eat. We did also see the Azure Kingfisher, one of our all-time favourites and lots of Shining Flycatchers. Another big buzz was two Black Bitterns, flying up and down the river. And of course we saw the obligatory crocodile and a beautiful Green Tree Snake.



Great-billed Heron

In the caravan park at Julatten we had Emerald Dove and Brown Cuckoo-Dove as well as Cryptic and Macleay's Honeyeaters. And heaps of Bar-shouldered Doves. The workers at the Abattoir Swamp leave the tap dripping slowly and water collects in a concrete bowl and heaps of birds come in for a drink. We saw Eastern Yellow Robins, Brown, Brown-backed, Yellow-faced, Yellow and Black-chinned honeyeaters.



Green Oriole

Off to Cooktown. We had heard Green (Yellow) Orioles ever since we left home but couldn't see them. They were chasing each other all over the

caravan park in Cooktown so we at last eyed them. Then, on a walk around Keating's Lagoon, where we were warned there had been a recent crocodile sighting, we saw an Oriole out in the open and he stayed there long enough for a photograph. Cooktown is such a go ahead little place. My great grandmother emigrated to Cooktown as a young 22 year old with her sister from Glasgow. Imagine two young sisters on a sailing ship for months, going to such a frontier town. She married a ship's pilot and had two daughters which is one reason I am here today.



Scarlet Honeyeater

We wound our way down the Mulligan Highway to Atherton for a few days where we picked up Eastern Spinebills and a gorgeous Scarlet Honeyeater around the back of Lake Tinaroo. We managed to find a couple of Double-eyed Fig-parrots at Lake Eacham. This time we were lucky to spot about four Black-shouldered Kites.

We are very lucky to have such lovely places close to home.

Annette Sutton

DOES THIS KOOKABURRA KNOW ITS SCIENCE?

On a recent mid-afternoon birding walk along the riverside not far upstream from Aplin's Weir, my birding mate Pete and I came across a male Blue-winged Kookaburra perched on a low limb 'dealing with' an item of prey in traditional fashion. Our attention was drawn to the bird by the gruesome sounds of flesh being flailed against the tree limb on which the bird was perched and while at first we didn't recognize the 'flailed' (or is it flaillee?) because of distance, it was obvious that it was a member of the frog mob from the legs dangling out of the wrecked and broken body held tightly in the bird's bill.

On moving closer we recognized the victim as a freshly killed small/medium sized cane toad. This ID was confirmed following several more minutes of robust flailing after which the kookaburra obligingly dropped the victim to the ground under its perch. I

must say the kookaburra seemed to be almost unaware of our presence, so intent was it in dealing thoroughly with its captive. A closer inspection of the corpse revealed the toad's belly was zipped open but bereft of most internal organs, with both back legs and one front leg intact. The broken spinal column was also poking out of the skin near the head.

The question is of course, have kookaburras discovered a method of detoxing cane toads so that they may be safely eaten or was this bird dicing with death? I believe it to be the former, given that several other Australian native species have adapted to feed safely upon cane toads; water rats, crows and keelback snakes come to mind. Water rats and crows, and no doubt other Australian species, all avoid poisoning simply by not eating the toxin glands located on a toad's shoulders. I have seen plenty of toads lying on their backs, dead, opened up and missing only their internal organs, always near fresh water. No doubt this is the work of Australian predators adapted to detox toads. On the other hand, science tells us that Keelback snakes (Keelbacks) have a natural immunity to cane toad poison, albeit limited, which allows them to make a meal safely of small to medium sized individuals. For some unknown reason (to me anyhow), Keelbacks swallow their prey rear end first rather than the conventional head-first strategy employed by most other snakes. Perhaps a well-informed reader may be able to shine a light on this behaviour for me.



Both Blue-Winged and Laughing Kookaburras routinely kill and eat green tree frogs and other amphibians of various sizes, a rather noisy and gruesome affair, the noise lasting only until the victim is dead or unconscious and uncaring. On the occasions I have witnessed this personally, the frogs were killed by flailing against a hard object, usually a tree branch, and the victims were further 'softened up' by robust flailing well after death before being swallowed whole.

The fact that the individual kookaburra, the subject of this article, kept up a sustained flailing long after the toad was dead and its innards and one front leg either dispersed into the surrounding bush or eaten as they became available during the flailing, in my view points to a purposeful approach by the bird to prepare toads for safe consumption. Unfortunately, as we came on the scene late while the flailing was in progress I am unable to report one way or the

other on the fate of the toad's innards or other parts before or during the flailing nor did we closely examine the corpse to determine if all toxins were expelled from the toad's glands during the flailing.



To cut a long story short, the bird dropped the toad and retrieved it a couple of times during the incident but I did not see it eating any part of the body, but that's not to say it didn't. Pete and I departed the scene shortly after the bird dropped the toad for the final time, and I can only surmise that it may have retrieved it later and continued the flailing until the legs and other edible parts separated from the rest of the body which by then may have had sufficient 'treatment' to be eaten safely. On the other hand the bird may have swallowed whole what was left of the carcass, adjudging it to be safe to eat after it's extremely rough treatment during which all traces of toxin may have been expelled. Another possibility is that, given the safe-to-eat innards were gone, the kookaburra was happy to discard what was left of the toad and move on. I guess we'll never know, but I am happy to cheer on these birds if indeed they have or are seeking to devise a safe method of disposing of one of Australia's worst environmental pests, one at a time. In so doing these birds are consuming healthy wild-caught prey rather than stolen sandwiches, treats and sausages from picnics in local parks and gardens. A win-win situation I would say.

Norm Rains

WOMEN OF THE RSPB

I have recently read *Mrs Pankhurst's Purple Feather – Fashion, Fury and Feminism – Women's Fight for Change* by Tessa Boase. I found it to be an enlightening and interesting read.

At the time that Emmeline Pankhurst was leading the struggle for equal votes for Women, Etta Lemon was leading a very different struggle. We all know of Emmeline Pankhurst but how many of us know who Etta Lemon was?

Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst wore an ostrich feather in her hat, supposedly to show that although she was a determined militant, she was essentially a very feminine woman. It was dyed purple for her political colours.

In the late 1800's, a small group of women lead by Etta Lemon were determined to stamp out the fashion for feathers in hats.

Huge numbers of wild birds were slaughtered for about fifty years between 1870 and 1920 for the millinery trade. The feather trade was one of the most lucrative commodity markets in the world at that time.

Etta Lemon and her group joined forces with another like-minded group of women from Croydon and another group in Manchester and formed the Society for the Protection of Birds. The Society was granted a Royal Charter in 1904 and became the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) which is today one of the most influential conservation organizations in the world.



Etta Lemon

Copyright Archant

Winifred, Duchess of Portland was president of the RSPB from 1891 until her death in 1954.

Janet Robino



*Merry Christmas
and
A Happy New Year*

BIRDLIFE TOWNSVILLE CHRISTMAS PARTY



DATE: SUNDAY 12 DECEMBER 2021

TIME: 6.30 PM for 7PM

VENUE: SUN HOTEL (FUNCTION ROOM)

Function Room: Bar Menu

COST: AT OWN EXPENSE

THE YEAR IN REVIEW: by Members

TRIVIA: by NINA

PRIZES TO BE WON

RSVP: contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au

"COME ALONG AND HAVE SOME FUN"

Quest

Name	Quest Number	Date
Len Ezzy	365	31/12/2021
Annette Sibson	338	4/12/2021
Marleen Acton	324	20/11/2021
Janet Robino	323	19/11/2021
Anne Lawrance	315	11/11/2021
Barbara Reidy	308	4/11/2021
Paul Thompson	293	20/10/2021
Beth Snewin	271	28/09/2021
Elna Kerswell	264	21/09/2021
Mark Horvath	260	17/09/2021
Wal Threlfall	247	4/09/2021
Ian Leach	246	3/09/2021
Warren Charlton	246	3/09/2021
Pat Charlton	245	2/09/2021
Wendy Kaus	225	13/08/2021
Rosemary Payet	225	13/08/2021
Greg Calvert	215	3/08/2021
Paul Thompson	213	1/08/2021
Brigid Glass	209	28/07/2021
Jill Staunton	207	26/07/2021
Peter Staunton	207	26/07/2021
Annette Sutton	205	24/07/2021
Kathleen Vowles	160	9/06/2021
Julie Goldsbury	134	14/05/2021
Trish Jordan	45	14/02/2021

Congratulations to Len

A few of Len's photographs



Azure Kingfisher



Little Kingfisher



Above Opalton Grasswren

Left Rufous-crowned Emu-wren