

# The Drongo

Number 165 February 2022



*Ray Sutton*

Wunjunga

Nordy

Moola



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Sadly, in December 2021 we heard the news that another long-term valued member of BirdLife Townsville had died. Tony Grice was Chair of the Black-throated Finch Recovery Team and was a very popular guest speaker to our general meetings to keep us updated on the efforts being made to ensure the future survival of this little finch. Those who regularly attended the Bush Gardens Surveys will remember meeting up with Tony and getting a 'head's up' on where all the birds were hiding out on that particular morning. Tony will be greatly missed.

Kathleen Vowles has had to make the difficult decision to not nominate for the committee again in 2022. Kathleen has been a very active committee member and has certainly left her mark. Apart from other inputs to the committee she set up BirdLife Townsville on Facebook and Instagram. The committee will really miss Kathleen, but we understand her need to concentrate on her PHD studies. We wish her every success with her studies and look forward to catching up with her when her busy schedule permits.

The BirdLife Townsville Facebook page has been well received. John Lowry has been assisting Kathleen in monitoring the page and has agreed to continue taking on this responsibility. A volunteer is needed to manage the Instagram Account. If this does not happen this account will be closed.

Cecily Messer is planning a permanent move down south. Cecily has been responsible for the Ross River Dam Monthly Survey. Mark Horvath has agreed to take on this role. This of course, means that we now need someone to take on the responsibility for the Town Common Monthly Survey. These surveys have been conducted regularly for many years and are an important contribution to conservation efforts. If you are interested in taking on this role, contact the Committee on [contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au](mailto:contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au) for more information.

Unfortunately, many of our activities have been cancelled in relation to the situation with the Covid 19 pandemic. At this stage it is hoped that the Annual General Meeting will be held in March. Nominations for the committee are open.

In these uncertain times it is important to keep a close eye on the Activities Page on the BirdLife Townsville website for any last-minute changes. Of course, everyone can still be kept very busy getting out and about to get those Quest numbers up. Remember to register your interest in doing the Quest by sending the secretary a quick email at [contact@townsvillebirdlife.org.au](mailto:contact@townsvillebirdlife.org.au).

On behalf of the committee, I would like to wish you all a Happy and Healthy 2022.

*Janet Robino*

### **YOUR COMMITTEE**

President: Janet Robino	Annette Sibson	Trish Jordan
Secretary: Wal Threlfall	Mark Horvath	Julia Goldsbury
Treasurer: Nina Doyle	Kathleen Vowles	Brigid Glass

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Deadline for next Drongo is April 30th. Please send articles as Word documents, photos as attachments.

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

## NORDY

A few days before Christmas last year, our son, Kyran, arranged for us all to go birding with Professor Scott Ritchie from the Cairns birding group. The professor was excited about introducing Kyran, and his family, to Nordy.

We met at the mangrove end of the Cairns Esplanade, in humid conditions, and Scott indicated the small recessed mud flat where he had sighted Nordy. However, Nordy was nowhere to be seen so we began a leisurely stroll along the esplanade to the Pier.



*Professor Scott Ritchie Cairns Esplanade*

The professor was happy to point out a range of shore birds along the way – Great Knots, Bar-tailed Godwits, Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, a Pied Oystercatcher, Black-tailed Godwits, Common Sandpipers, Curlew Sandpipers, Grey-tailed Tattlers, Terek Sandpipers, Whimbrels and an Eastern Curlew or two. But nowhere amongst them was Nordy. At the halfway point, we retraced our steps to our cars and drove to the far end of the esplanade.

Once again, we ambled along, perspiring profusely, to a very large ficus near the Pier end of the beachfront. Scott wanted to show us this very special nesting tree. It was lovely indeed, not only because it offered delightfully dense shade but also because it was an active nursery.



*Nordmann's Greenshank Prof. Scott Ritchie*

Nankeen Night-Herons had built nests in the upper reaches of the canopy and in the middle section, Torresian Imperial-Pigeons had claimed nesting rights. Adult birds were kept very busy feeding young in various stages of development. After resting and hydrating ourselves, the professor rubbed his hands together and said, 'Let's give

it one more go. Just one more look. Back at the top end. I've often found that one last look pays off.'

Needless to say, we drove back to where we'd begun and once more scanned the shore birds feeding on the small mud flat.



*Nordmann's Greenshank*

*Jill Staunton*

Within minutes, Kyran's voice cut across the focussed silence. 'Is that it?'

'Yes!' Excitement rang in the professor's voice. 'That's him! There he is! There's Nordy!'

And so it was. The bird Professor Scott Ritchie affectionately calls, Nordy. A Nordmann's Greenshank – one of only 1000 birds left in the wild, according to the 2017 publication of the CSIRO's reference, *The Australian Bird Guide*.

*Jill Staunton*

## COME TO THE FEAST

The sight and sound of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos is common around Townsville and Woodstock. However I was surprised to see 38 and then at least 100 on power lines just over Majors Creek. Why roost anywhere else when a local farmer grows grain after harvesting his potatoes? A feast for all.

*Joan Wharton*





## MT. LEWIS

In September last year we visited the Julatten area and paid a couple of visits to Mt Lewis. The first visit was in light drizzle and mist, which made it all very interesting. On arrival at the grassed area where the Blue-faced Parrot-finch hang out (but not today), we found our way up the track. We really had no idea where we were heading so just wandered along enjoying being in the rainforest. We turned back after a while and ran into a local fellow who gave us the gen on where to go on that particular track. So, we set off again and made it to the dam at the end. There was a Grey Fantail hanging around enjoying the plentiful bugs. On the way back we encountered a number of the rainforest birds I'd been hoping to see.



*Grey Fantail*

Top-knot Pigeons were feeding in amongst the fruiting fig trees and flying off noisily on being disturbed. We came across a family of Chowchillas so stood still and enjoyed watching them feed. There was mum, dad and a youngster with immature feathers still on its head, which gave the impression that it had a red head. Following the family was a Yellow-throated Scrub-wren and a Fernwren, which was interesting to see. Next up was a White-throated Treecreeper, busily feeding up the trees and calling. I managed to get a dodgy photo so that I could satisfactorily identify it later on. I wasn't 100% certain it was a White-throated. We had a small group of Mountain Thornbills feeding and fighting around us at one stage. It's always lovely to see and hear them.

On the way back down the mountain we had to stop in a hurry as there was a White-headed Pigeon standing in the middle of the road. No time for a photo but time for a close up look through the binoculars and the front windscreen. It was only the second time I'd seen a White-headed Pigeon.

We had another trip up to Mt Lewis two days later, when the weather was dry and sunny. This time we drove nearly all the way to the Golden Bowerbirds playground, but turned around at a beautiful little creek to have a nice rest and a cuppa. It was so nice sitting listening to the water ripple over the rocks and hear an occasional bird calling, very peaceful.



*Chowchilla*

We headed back to the grassy area where the Blue-faced Parrot-finches hang out, (none there of course). We wandered up the track again, this time walking down the right-hand track at the fork, it was pretty hard going, all down hill and the birds had been there foraging so it was muddy too. We didn't go very far before we turned around and headed back. This time we saw a few different birds on the way back. A male and female Whipbird were calling, with the female sounding very close to us. She appeared a few metres away and was busy foraging in a nearby tree, calling when she wasn't feeding. It was fabulous to watch her and hear that end call so close. A female Victoria's Riflebird flew into the same tree and found a few bugs to eat too. How wonderful to have both birds so close. We wandered on and found another party of Chowchillas, busily feeding and keeping in contact. This party was quite large, at least six birds that I could see clearly. They had only one follower, a Yellow-throated Scrubwren. Not long after this we had a pair of male Chowchillas wander about just in front of us, within stepping in range! Another male Chowchilla came along and gave chase, causing a ruckus. I love the calls of the Chowchilla, so raucous.

It was a fabulous trip and I'm keen to get up there again one day.

*Annette Sibson*



## BOWERBIRD TRIVIA

Delving into Cliff and Dawn Frith's 550-page tome on bowerbirds is fascinating but verging on information overload

The Friths lived near Townsville for some years late last century, so the section on the Great Bowerbird is pretty extensive. There are copious facts and figures on the species (in Darwin, males brought 4,000 - 5,000 sticks to their bower sites; out of 54 bowers in Townsville, 68% were orientated so that the avenue lay within 45° of North-South, etc.).

Two items in particular caught my eye. Firstly, an annotated list of birds of the Townsville region published in 1963 stated that the Great Bowerbird was "uncommon, seen occasionally each year" in the district. This is clearly not true today and the Friths attribute this to increased vegetation and the availability of town water.



*Classic*

Secondly, a note from 1953 by long-term resident birdwatcher, Nancy Hopkins, noted an unusual bower (based on her extensive experience) on the outskirts of the city where the bird collected red objects, as well as the usual white, grey, silver and green decorations. A survey of more than 30 active bowers in Darwin in the 1990s found no red decorations and considered that male birds avoided the colour, while by the 1990s, 93% of well-established bowers in Townsville had red decorations. Red items are probably even more ubiquitous on bowers in Townsville today. This could be an example of cultural evolution in the species (abetted by the corporate colours of the manufacturer of the World's favourite soft drink.

*Hugh Sweatman*

*There are many Great Bowerbirds around Townsville. If you go to Paluma you may see a Satin Bowerbird and out at Birthday Creek Falls, a Tooth-billed and Golden can be found. The Tooth-billed is interesting as its bower is a display of upturned large leaves.*

*If you want to see the Spotted, travel out west and a visit to O'Reilly's in the Gold Coast hinterland will often yield a Regents.*

## EVER HEARD OF MOOLA?

Last year, in October, my sister Rosemary and I drove to Moola, a very small farming community on the western downs, population 123. Along the road west we saw many Black-shouldered Kites and one pair of Letterwing Kites, yeehah!! The property "Rosebank", located on Bunya Mountains Road on Myall Creek, is an old farm house which has been done up inside to resemble the grandeur of the 1900's. There were horses (including Fresians originally from Scotland) in the front paddocks and cattle up the back with the dog and the cat following us around.



*Tawny Frogmouth*

What a bird haven it turned out to be. The next morning we saw a Tawny Frogmouth in a garden tree, no mate located, the Apostlebirds were busy, Galahs talking in the tree tops, Pied Currawongs calling and squabbling for the scraps with the Magpies. Pale Headed Rosellas flitted between trees along the driveway and Grey Crowned Babblers pecked on the ground in a family unit.



*Apostlebirds*

Walking along the mainly dry creek bed, we found Red-backed Fairy-wrens and Variegated Wrens. At the watering trough there was enough mud to have the Apostlebirds and the White-winged Choughs scooping it up along with some dried grass. These two species



worked in families with one sitting on the nest, squeaks heard, a couple reinforcing the mud nests, occasionally a change of nest sitter and a food gatherer, fascinating to watch. The Choughs have a large mud and grass bowl high in a gum tree and the Apostlebirds have a slightly smaller bowl with attendant family, almost as high as the Choughs. A Dollarbird was sitting high on a dead tree, scouting for food and disappearing into some shrubbery around a hollow in the tree, presumably where the nest was.

In the trees in the house yard was a pair of Red-rumped Parrots which we saw daily. The female has a delicate call and is hard to find as she is pale yellowy green with a green rump, and beautiful. The male is distinctive with the Red Rump and emerald green head, neck and rump. We did a lot of searching of hollows and watched out for movement but no nest located. Further west along Bunya Mountains Road there was a male Mulga Parrot on the power lines, good to see the difference. The Babblers had been around the yard for days so we decided to take the



*Grey-crowned Babbler*

binos and a cuppa and sit outside; that soon located their nest, a large oval grass and leaf structure with a funnel like entrance where many of the family went bearing food, a family affair. The loud noises came from the young whenever an adult approached.

It wouldn't be a complete list without the ubiquitous Blue-faced Honeyeaters, Crows and Ravens, Wedgies, Willie Wagtails, Magpie Larks, and Masked Lapwings.

As my sister Rosemary said as we drove home "That was great Cec, where are we going next time?"

*Cec Messer*



## A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

In November last year, Western Australia dropped Queensland's Covid status to Very Low Risk so we seized the opportunity to book a flight and head off to Geraldton to visit our daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren whom we hadn't seen in two years.



*Pacific Gull*

Whilst there, we managed to do some birding with our grandchildren and were able to list forty species around their home and on the beachfront, which they enjoyed doing after telling us they hadn't seen many birds.



*Banded Lapwing*

One interesting character was the Pacific Gull that we'd never seen before. It was quite a big bird with a massive bill to which the locals referred as the 'lipstick beak' – for obvious reasons. It was solitary, quiet and reserved, unlike the Silver Gulls surrounding it.

Another interesting group of birds was a family of Australian Wood Ducks that we almost walked into when going for our evening stroll around the dam behind the house. The two adults and their seven young had hunkered down on the top of the dam's bank and were so well camouflaged by the rocky soil that we didn't see them until we were a few meters away. Even then, the ducks remained motionless for a time before scarping down the bank and sliding into the water.

We listed Ospreys, Wedge-tailed Eagles, Singing Honeyeaters, Banded Lapwings, Laughing Doves and a

myriad of shorebirds in the time we had and it was wonderful to teach our grandchildren something of the birds in their area.

Jill Staunton



Laughing Doves

## PALUMA

Many thanks to Beth and Wendy for the use of their verandah at Paluma as a photography platform. Fellow birder Pete and I were able to capture some good images of local rainforest species in two separate trips, in December last year and again in January 2022. In most cases, these species are difficult to find in the lowland coastal forests closer to home or are simply not present in these local habitat types.

Our species list for both recent visits to Paluma include, in no particular order, birds sighted, heard and in many cases photographed in and around the township of Paluma, at Birthday Creek Falls, at the *Eucalyptus grandis* Forest and at Lake Paluma (the Paluma Dam). We managed between us to photograph those marked with an asterisk.

- Golden Bowerbird, both male\* and female
- Sulphur Crested Cockatoo
- Red-tailed Black Cockatoo
- Rainbow Lorikeet
- Chowchilla
- Brush Turkey
- Lewin's Honeyeater\*
- Yellow Spotted Honeyeater\*
- Graceful Honeyeater\*
- MacLeay's Honeyeater\*
- Bridled Honeyeater\*
- White-cheeked Honeyeater\*
- Eastern Whipbird\*
- Crimson Rosella\*
- Victoria's Riflebird\*
- Eastern Yellow Robin\*
- Grey-headed Robin\*
- Topknot Pigeon
- Little Shrike Thrush\*

- Golden Whistler\*
- Satin Bowerbird\*
- White-throated Treecreeper\*
- Spotted Catbird\*
- Eastern Spinebill\*

On both recent trips to Paluma we had hoped to get a shot of the Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher, which at first glance appears to be an Azure Kingfisher because of its buff- coloured breast. Closer inspection however reveals other specific differences, the most noticeable being the colour of the beak (black for the Azure—orange for the Buff-breasted), and the remarkably long white tail of the Buff-breasted when compared to the very stumpy appendage of the Azure.

Buff Breasted Kingfishers are summer migrants from Papua New Guinea and northern Cape York which breed from the latter couple of months of each year through to the first few months of the following year. Like some other kingfishers, their nesting chamber is located in a cavity excavated in an active terrestrial termite mound. They are often reported a short distance below Mountain Creek on the Paluma Range Road but unfortunately I have never sighted or been able to capture an image of them at this site. If you go looking for them, take care when selecting a place to park as there are few safe pullover spots in this section of the Paluma Range Road.



Bridled honeyeater

Paluma is a place well worth visiting for the birds and also has some other attractions. You can take in the views of the coast from McClelland's Lookout and of the inland from Star Valley Lookout. There are a number of good walking trails through the rainforest which often yield good sightings of local species. Camping is also available at Lake Paluma for those who have the urge to do so.

One important consideration when planning a trip to this enchanting rainforest village is that one has to be completely self sufficient as there are no fuel or food outlets once you leave the northern suburbs of Townsville. There are, however, good toilet facilities at the halfway mark on the range road at Crystal Creek and also at McClelland's Lookout, at the centrally located village park as well as at Paluma Dam.

Norm Rains



## NIGHT AT TYTO

We finally got ourselves organized for a night time visit to Tyto Wetlands. We stopped at Toomulla and unloaded our gear at the beach hut and lounged around until 5.30. The car was already packed with my camera gear, our boots and long pants. Hats could stay at home this time!

We headed straight to Lee's Hotel and had our dinner there; it was great. Then we headed off to Tyto. We pulled into the car park, opened the doors and could hear the Large-tailed Nightjars calling immediately! How exciting. I rushed to get my long pants and boots on, slung the camera around my neck and grabbed the torch, ready for action.



*Large-tailed Nightjar*

Off we went, listening to the calls as we went. We'd gone not very far, five minutes' walk if that, when we spotted our first bird, down on the ground and just sitting there. It was really close and I was pretty amazed. I managed to get one photo before it flew off. We headed on further up the track, stopping at the main look out first to check out the water. No birds, or eyes or anything. The football ground was in use, with the big lights on and we could hear people playing footy, with the siren going off every so often.

We headed off to the left to circumnavigate the waterhole, hearing the Nightjars calling pretty continuously. We saw a bird flying across in front of us, another Nightjar. There were some eyes way up in the top of a tree, another Nightjar. We could hear ducks calling at one stage, being disturbed by something. There on the ground, another Nightjar. A couple of Masked Lapwings took to the sky, calling loudly. We'd disturbed them too. Then there was another Nightjar; it was on the ground too. I tried twice more to photograph the Nightjars on the ground, but was unsuccessful. It was great just to hear and see so many of them. At one stage they all went quiet, not sure why. A couple of Bush Stone-curlews called but we couldn't see them. We disturbed a Peaceful Dove. It fluttered around in its roosting tree before settling again.

We looked long and hard for any grass owls, but were unlucky in that respect.

Back at the main lookout there was a Willie Wagtail calling up at the full moon. On the track on the way out again we come across a couple of Bandicoots. They're always nice to see.

We got back to the car and could still hear the Nightjars calling. It was a great trip around the wetlands, one I'm keen to repeat sooner rather than later.

*Annette Sibson*

## OUR BACK YARD

Every few days we put out some budgie seed and in no time we have Peaceful and Spotted Doves and Sparrows flying in for a treat. Occasionally, we'll have a few Nutmeg Mannikins join the party. We don't put out enough seed for them to become reliant on us. It's just a snack.

We did have about five Sulphur-crested Cockatoos who became very friendly but I stopped putting sunflower seed out and shooed them off after they started eating my precious plants in hanging baskets.

Beside the feeder we have a birdbath which we refill once or twice a day. There are branches close to the water so the birds can sit and preen. The Doves and Sparrows use the bath a bit, mainly for drinking. The Brown Honeyeaters visit every day and have a wonderful time. We get lots of other visitors though. Magpie Larks love a good swim and the Great Bowerbirds half empty the dish with their wild splashing.



*Oops!*



*Sorry -Im really quite fierce*

Over time we have had Koels, Blue-faced and White-throated Honeyeaters, Rainbow Lorikeets, Chestnut-breasted Mannikins, Zebra Finches and Pale-headed Rosellas. After cyclone Yasi we had a whirlwind visit by some Metallic Starlings.

But the most exciting visitor has been the Brown Goshawk. He has visited us several times in very hot weather. Needless to say, everything else makes a quick exit.

*Annette Sutton*



## WUNJUNGA

On a whim late one Saturday morning in early February, I suggested to my birding mate Pete Johnson that we could easily fit in a trip to Wunjunga that day if we got ourselves organized. After an early lunch I collected Pete from his place across the creek and we set off around midday for what I consider to be one of the best birding sites within a reasonable distance of home that yields waders and other wetland birds at this time of year. Our trip south along the highway to the Wunjunga turnoff, on the left a few kilometers south of Mt Inkerman, was uneventful with the usual road corridor species such as Ibis, Cuckoo-shrikes, Australian Magpies, Willie Wagtails, Peaceful Doves, Bar-shouldered Doves, Black Cockatoos, Rainbow Lorikeets and other common birds in good supply.

Before I get deeper into this article, please allow me a little rave about birding conditions on the day in this particular location. There had obviously been recent rain in the district as most lagoons and gullies in the broader landscape of the property over which Wunjunga Road passes, were full to overflowing with runoff waters crossing the road at the four (or is it five) concrete causeways. The deepest flow at around 300mm according to the depth gauge was no problem to cross. The overflow waters were clean, pleasingly, with very little discolouration by soil erosion. The other birding feature of this location is that most of it can be enjoyed from the comfort of your vehicle, and that includes the taking of bird photos as long as you don't have too many passengers. I reckon two to a vehicle for this activity is a good number. Generally, the road is sufficiently wide to allow passing and overtaking but as always, if alighting from your vehicle one should always park on the road verge wide enough to facilitate through traffic.



*Australasian Pipit*

No sooner had we left the highway at the Wunjunga turnoff when we had our first bird sightings, an Australasian Pipit and a Pied Butcherbird, both of which escaped without having their photos taken. These early

sightings sparked us up for a good day's birding and for the next hour and a half we enjoyed a slow trip along



*Black-winged Stilt*

Wunjunga Road until we stopped for a mid-afternoon cuppa at the first beach access point. In that distance and timeframe we recorded twenty-two species, with an additional six species at the beach. Listed in no particular order, with brief notes are our 'catches of the day'.

- Black Swan. These were in pairs and small groups, on or near the larger, deeper water bodies in the landscape
- Australian Bustard. A single bird seen on the road on our way home, not far from the Wunjunga turnoff with a small herd of fat cattle. The bird moved into the surrounding grassland after a while but we had plenty of photo opportunities both on the road and as it moved into the roadside vegetation at that spot. I feel this bird was probably taking advantage of the movement of the cattle in the grass to disturb insects much as cattle egrets do.
- Australasian Pipit. Plentiful numbers along the road and road verges and in bare areas near water.
- Pied Butcherbird only a single bird that flew off quickly to watch us from a distant tall tree.
- Black Kite. A few sightings both perched and in flight.
- Whistling Kite, A few sightings both perched and in flight.
- Horsfield's Bushlark. A single bird on a small shrub just off the road.
- Caspian Tern. An immature bird resting with Gull-billed Terns just on a sandbar downstream of a causeway.
- Gull-billed Tern. Resting with the Caspian Tern above.
- Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. These were in several locations, singly and in small groups, feeding in knee deep water and surrounding grassy areas.
- Common Greenshank. A single bird feeding in knee deep water

- Silver Gull. On the sandbank with the Terns mentioned above
- Maggie Geese. Singly, in pairs and small groups in and near larger, deeper swamps
- Pacific Black Duck. In pairs, feeding in shallow water in low shrubby vegetation.
- Buff-banded Rail. Two birds seen in separate locations at different times. One was quite timid while the other continued to chase and feed on insects in close areas dominated by samphire vegetation, and seemed to be unconcerned by our presence.
- Brolga. A small family seen in the distance near water.
- Black-winged Stilts. These were in plentiful supply, mostly in pairs with very few immature birds present.
- Little Egret. Singly and typically actively chasing their prey in and around overflow water in the road causeways.
- Plumed Egret. Mostly singly feeding in shallow to knee deep still water in all areas of the wetlands
- Eastern Great Egret. Mostly singly feeding in shallow to knee deep still water in all areas of the wetlands
- Red-capped Plover. Singly and in small family groups, (typically one immature chick), feeding along the shorelines.
- Willie Wagtail. Perched on a fence.



*Australian Bustard*

After enjoying a cuppa, the birds listed below were seen in a small mixed flock of about twenty, resting on a distant sandbar at the beach. The only exception were two flyover Osprey. Several 'oaf-driven four wheelers were seen on the beach and rather than further disturb the birds by approaching closer, they were identified from fairly grainy images captured over a long distance.

- Bar-tailed Godwit (10)
- Pied Oystercatcher (2)
- Whimbrel (4)
- Eastern Curlew (3)
- Eastern Osprey(2)



*Red-capped Plover*

In summary, our Wunjunga trip was both productive and enjoyable for us both. We managed some good photos and our close experiences with the Bustard and one of the Buff-Banded Rails were certainly memorable. I would recommend this place as a good birding prospect for this time of year (early wet after rain until around Easter) however like all other outdoor activities the success or otherwise is entirely weather dependent. Might see some of you down there one day soon

*Norm Rains*

## WUNJUNGA WETLANDS

Wunjunga Wetlands are located along Beachmount Road south of Home Hill. About 30km south of Ayr, after Mt. Inkerman, turn left on to Beachmount Road.

Keep going for about 5km and after the third cattle grid you come across the wetlands. They are ephemeral so the best time is after rain. Bird populations vary from visit to visit but it is usually very rewarding. Large flocks of ducks and geese, swans, Stilts and every kind of Egret can usually be found. There are often three species of terns. After rain the water flows over the road and the Egrets fish there.

Further on you travel through mangroves and then back into bushland. There is a park where there is often quite a selection of bush birds. Final, you come to the village at the end of the road which is situated on the beach.

The wetlands are well worth a visit.



## OUR HOPPY

I first saw and photographed our Hoppy on the 7 November 2020, sitting on our wooden fence. When I reviewed the photographs later, I discovered that Hoppy was injured, one leg was sitting at an odd angle and there was a patch of feathers missing from the back of his head. In one photo I could still see the blood from his leg injury. I will admit here that he hadn't been named Hoppy that day and I didn't think I'd see him again due to his injuries.



We saw him periodically over that summer and I bought some meal worms to try to help with his feeding. I'm pretty certain he never actually ate the meal worms. I was able to photograph him again in mid-February, sitting in the tree that hangs over the bird bath. By then we'd named him Hoppy.



It's easy to tell that it's Hoppy, no other Great Bowerbird sits on the branch, fence, bath the way Hoppy does. Again, we'd see him occasionally when we were out in the

garden. I was lucky enough to catch him in the bird bath in October. He was jumping around like the other Great Bowerbirds do, having a great time getting wet and cool. Obviously preening causes him a problem, but he looks pretty neat and clean so must manage as best he can.

I caught sight of him again just the other day (January 2022), so grabbed the camera for some more photos. This photo really shows his shortened leg and the gap at the back of his head where the feathers are missing. I'm surprised new feathers haven't grown there but perhaps the damage was too extensive to allow regrowth.

I'm still undecided if he's really a he or a she. I did see him pick up a stick from our yard one day and fly off into the neighbour's yard with it. I wasn't able to see any further activity that might have given me a clue as to his/her gender.

We feel very protective of Hoppy and get very excited when we sight him in our yard. I hope he stays around for a few more years yet.

Annette Sibson

## CHOWCHILLA

From the Wet tropics Management Authority website [www.wettropics.gov.au](http://www.wettropics.gov.au)

The chowchilla or Northern Logrunner (*Orthonyx spaldingii*) is endemic to the Wet Tropics and a significant ancient songbird. The former common name comes from the bird's early morning raucous call which sounds a little like 'chow-chowchilla'.

The chowchilla is an insect eater, scratching through the leaf litter in groups. It lays a single egg in a stick and debris nest on the forest floor after the wet season has finished. A most unusual characteristic of this medium sized upland species (usually above 450 metres) is that the quills of its tail feathers end in a short spine.



## A 2022 WOW MOMENT

Sometimes, we just happen to be in the right place, on the right day, looking with our binoculars at exactly the right spot at that right moment!

My WOW moment happened on our road trip back from Toowoomba in early January.

We enjoy the back roads, and were pleased that the flooded crossing on the Taroom-Bauhinia Downs Road at Gwambegwine was open on our return journey home. It had been closed on our trip south in December. This road runs from approx 20 klm north of Taroom to Bauhinia, and is over 100 kilometres of mostly well maintained gravel with several stretches of bitumen.

On 7th January, we left Wandoan at 7am, having checked out Waterloo Plains: Dusky Moorhens, Brown and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Plum-headed and Double-barred Finches, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, Eurasian Coots, Hardheads, Bar-shouldered Dove, Pacific Black Ducks, Black Swans, Superb Fairy-wrens, Rainbow Bee-eaters, and very noisy Reed Warblers.

We then detoured the 13km down to Lake Murphy for an early coffee. Beth and I have always been fortunate along this dirt road and again it provided us with several species for my Quest list. The campground/picnic area was deserted, and the 300 metre walk to the lake was flooded so we were unable to get to the lake. Lake Murphy is a perched lake that fills only when nearby Robinson Creek overflows, which obviously occurred in late November with all the heavy rains in that area.



*Double-barred Finch*

On the southern end of the Taroom-Bauhinia Downs Road, there are two freshwater swamps which we often stop roadside to check out. Along with Plumed Whistling-Ducks, there were the usual Pacific Blacks, Hardheads, and Teals. We drove slowly to the northern most end of the swamp, and again scanned the picturesque landscape with its fringing paper barks. Dead tree trunks, and numerous waterlilies added to the pleasant early morning vista. With binoculars raised from the passenger seat of the car, I spotted two Pink-eared Ducks paddling close to the trunk of dead tree. Yes! Another one for my quest list!

As I watched the adults, I saw a little plop, then another, and immediately I looked up the trunk of the tree. Sure enough, there were baby Pink-eared Ducks popping out of two "windows" half way up the decaying trunk, and making the metre or so jump into the water beside the parents. I couldn't believe my eyes as one, then another, then another, made their first jump into the water. It was over in a matter of 10 seconds!

Six little ducklings were soon paddling happily near the parents, and we drove off, incredulous at witnessing such a special sight!



*Pink-eared Duck*

Sometimes, you can be lucky! Why not tell us about your recent WOW moments whilst birding in our great outdoors?

*Wendy Kaus*

## QUEST RULES

See a different bird species for every day of the year. The aim is to achieve 365 different species.

The start date is the 1st of January and the end date is the 31st of December. However, you are given until the end of February to join the competition.

Each different bird species seen can only be counted once. Birds that can only be heard are not counted; they have to be seen.

To remain eligible in "The Quest" the number of different bird species seen must always exceed the number of days in the year that have passed. You can be as far in front of the days as you like, but once the days and the number of different bird species match, you are out.

Only bird species seen in Queensland are eligible to be counted. This includes feral species

See the web site [www.birdlifetownsville.org.au](http://www.birdlifetownsville.org.au) for the full rules.





## QUEST

Name	Quest Number	Date
Anne Lawrance	192	11/07/2022
Annette Sibson	183	2/07/2022
Wendy Kaus	180	29/06/2022
Beth Snewin	160	9/06/2022
Elna Kerswell	160	9/06/2022
Ian Leach	159	8/06/2022
Chris Corbett	156	5/06/2022
Janet Robino	148	28/05/2022
Barbara Reidy	140	20/05/2022
Malcolm Turner	125	5/05/2022
Pat Charlton	120	30/04/2022
Warren Charlton	116	26/04/2022
Jill Staunton	96	6/04/2022
Annette Sutton	92	2/04/2022
Marleen Acton	90	31/03/2022
Julie Goldsbury	72	13/03/2022



Paluma

