

The Drongo

Number 172 November 2023

*Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year*



Birding USA

Tasmania

Palm
Cockatoo



FROM THE PRESIDENT

September and October were extremely busy with a lot of community and school activities.

Hopefully, you all got to see the Library Displays. We were able to negotiate the use of some really good specimens from the Museum of Tropical North Queensland. Once again, the displays were very popular with the Library visitors.

Sadly, a lot of these activities will not be able to be managed in the future if we don't get more volunteers to get involved. A lot of our regular volunteers can no longer continue taking part in these activities after giving so much of their time and energy to the club.

The Townsville City Council fees for the use of the Soundshell for our meetings commenced in October 2023. This would be a huge financial burden for us. Fortunately, our application to the Townsville City Council to have the fees waived was successful.

The Townsville City Council once again partnered with Birdlife Australia to promote the Aussie Bird Count and offered some great prizes to encourage Townsville residents to take part. Birdlife Townsville will once again contribute some of our books and a birdbath to the prizes.

As 2023 is coming to an end, I would urge everyone to take some time to think about nominating for the committee in the New Year. Birdlife Townsville would certainly benefit from some fresh and interesting ideas, and some of the long-serving committee members would certainly benefit from having a bit of a rest.

On behalf of the committee, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy 2024.

Janet Robino



YOUR COMMITTEE

<i>President: Janet Robino</i>	<i>Annette Sibson</i>	<i>Julia Goldsbury</i>
<i>Secretary: Wal Threlfall</i>	<i>Mark Horvath</i>	
<i>Treasurer: Nina Doyle</i>	<i>Brigid Glass</i>	

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.

BIRDING USA

Where to start! Our son organized a 16 day road trip for all of us (four adults and two kids) up to Seattle and Vancouver Island.

We flew to Seattle, got our transport, food and were on our way. After dinner we went for a walk to the marina and found Canada Geese, the first of many firsts for me.



Banana Slug

Over the next few days, we travelled around and saw the wonders of the Olympic National Park, Washington. Waterfalls, rainforests, beaches, Banana Slugs, Sea Otters, Seals, Brown Pelicans, bush birds and many many different gulls. It is certainly a stunning part of the states with so much to see and do that we barely touched the surface.

I must mention Banana Slugs because on one outing the kids saw and counted just over one hundred of them, a great feat. The slugs live in wet rainforest areas.

One point of interest is that the beaches are often full of washed in logs. There are signs placed periodically warning people not to swim at high tide as the logs are a danger when floating in the water. The beaches are covered in grey rocks or grey sand too, not our beautiful golden sand. With the sea mist and the grey sand some beach visits were quite dreary, saved only by the wildlife to be seen. We mostly saw little rubbish on the beaches themselves, which was great.

The National Parks over there are well looked after with what seems to be many staff. The children are encouraged to become Junior Rangers, with booklets to fill in, mottos to recite and badges to be earned. And all Year 4 children and their families can enter the parks for free, an idea I would like to see initiated by our government/National Park service. A day visit to a National Park can start at \$30 per car. This money is then spent on upkeep of the parks. Each of the Parks has one (or more) Ranger Stations. You go there and get information from the ranger on duty, buy items, use the facilities, learn about the park and its fauna and flora. Fabulous places to visit and we visited a fair few.

Every so often I would shout 'look' from the back seat as I spied Turkey Vultures flying up above us. Fabulous birds to see, shame I never saw one up close.

My first sight of a Bald Eagle was at Ucluelet (a small town on Vancouver Island). I was wondering what the fellow with the camera and tripod was photographing. It turned out to be a juvenile Bald Eagle. Later that day I saw an adult quite close; it had roosted for the night and was happy to sit still while I checked it out. No photos I'm afraid. It was after dinner and I didn't have my camera with me. I was lucky enough to see a few more before we headed home. I even saw one in New Orleans while on a swamp tour.

Ucluelet was a place of firsts. I saw my first Great Blue Heron there as well as the Belted Kingfisher, Cedar Waxwings and of course the Bald Eagle. A great place that I'd go back to if I could.

I was using the application 'Merlin' whilst over there. It was fabulous at identifying bird calls and giving a list of birds that would be in the area we were visiting. A similar app for Australia would be fabulous.

Driving back to Victoria from Campbell River we were surprised by a large flock of birds flying low in the paddocks close to the road. They turned out to be Cowbirds. The flock looked to be many hundreds of birds.



Great Blue Heron

After we got back from Seattle and Vancouver Island, my husband and I flew out to Las Vegas for a week and then we flew to New Orleans for a week. Las Vegas was great for lots of reasons but we didn't see a lot of birds there. Probably the most interesting was a Great-tailed Grackle. They hung around the entrances to the motels and gas stations. Unfortunately they weren't in prime condition, but were still interesting to see. One other interesting bird seen there were some Gambol's Quail, seen while we were stuck at a gas station for three hours. But that's another story!!

New Orleans offered a large range of birds for me to photograph and see. We spent a bit of time of the Botanic Gardens and the associated park. It was nice to find another type of Whistling Duck, the Black-bellied Whistling-Duck. We heard it as it flew over. It sounds very like our Plumed Whistling-Ducks. The Wood Duck over there is a gorgeous looking bird; I managed to get some dodgy photos. The White Ibis seems to be a bit like our Australian White Ibis in habit, likes to hang around

where people hang out, snacking on human food when it can.

I was lucky enough to photograph a Limpkin (*Aramus guaranauna*) at the city park of New Orleans. On our swamp tour we were told that the Limpkin is extending its range from Florida to take advantage of the spread of the 'Amazonian apple snail' (*Pomacea maculata*), a destructive large snail that has been introduced via the aquarium trade and people chucking their unwanted snails into the local waterways.

It was exciting to get to see and photograph three different Jay species. Blue Jay in New Orleans, California Scrub-Jay in California and Stellar's Jay up in Seattle.



Limpkin

One lunch time in Thousand Oaks (California) we had a Cooper's Hawk chasing prey in the neighbour's yard. Luckily it stayed around long enough to get some nice shots. It's always good to have the birds come to you.



Cooper's Hawk

We got to see a range of animals as well as birds on our trip. Squirrels featured of course; they are just the cutest little critters. Up north we saw Humpback whales, seals, both Black and Grizzly Bears, and Sea Otters. And on a last trip to the local park near Thousand Oaks we saw two Coyote.

All up it was a fantastic trip.

Annette Sibson

PEREGRINE FALCON

ABC Central West By Lauren Bohane

Posted Tue 17 Oct 2023

A lone water tower standing tall above a regional city may not look like much but its inhabitants have captured the attention of bird lovers across the world.

The brick tower in Orange, in Central West New South Wales, is home to a family of peregrine falcons.

Their nest box was set up on the tower on the Charles Sturt University campus in 2007 when staff noticed a pair of falcons hunting in the area.

A year later, the first egg was laid

'Emotional interaction'

Charles Sturt University adjunct lecturer in wildlife management and biodiversity conservation Cilla Kinross has based her research on the peregrine project.

Migii, named for the Wiradjuri word for lightning, was the first chick to hatch in December, 2008. (Supplied: Charles Sturt University)

Dr Kinross says there are between 400 to 900 people watching the stream at any one time.

Most of the watchers are based outside of Australia, in countries including the US, Brazil, Japan, Russia, and Germany.

Griffith University behavioural ecologist Darryl Jones says part of the appeal was the familiar nature of the falcons' lives.

"The things that are often live streamed are the intimate family interactions, like mum and dad and the kids ... all that kind of drama that goes on with every family," Professor Jones says.

Watchers are able to participate in a live chat linked to the stream, where everything from the babies' sizes to Xavier and Diamond's parenting techniques are discussed.

"If you have an emotional interaction or feeling for something, you want to tell the world ... that seems to be what's going on," Professor Jones says.

Glimpse into private moments

For those watching from home, the live stream also offers an insight into what is usually a private corner of nature.

"What goes on where animals breed is usually incredibly secret and difficult to find. Most people have no chance of ever seeing something like that," Professor Jones says.

"It's just an amazing thing that it happens to be this incredibly wonderful animal, a powerful symbol of nature, that we can watch as well.

"I'm guessing if it was an ibis or a duck nesting on these buildings, we wouldn't really care that much."

Every TV show, every documentary, every David Attenborough show we ever watch has been manipulated to show really clearly what they want us to see.

"It's actually refreshing for lots of people to see what's really going on."

Role of citizen scientists

The constant monitoring of the feed has allowed Dr Kinross to document every second of the falcons' behaviour this season.

"Getting them to record the comings and goings of the birds on the chats. I find that more reliable than the technology."

While the citizen science is invaluable, Dr Kinross hopes the live stream will also leave people with a greater appreciation of the species.

"They come in better informed and realising what a wonderful asset it is to have this nest up in the tower," she says.

Professor Jones says it is hard to know whether there is a direct relationship between watching the live stream and being interested in the broader conservation of the species, but he believes it is a step in the right direction.

"People will only do something about things they care about. We protect what we love," he says.

"Being able to see these things ... in such an intimate, personal, direct, close-up way absolutely — without a doubt — changes your perspective on nature in general."

ABC Central West By Lauren Bohane

TRIP TO TASMANIA

In March-April 2023, Warren and I made a quick trip to Victoria to visit family – with a long detour to Tasmania starting on the Spirit of Tasmania. It was 40 years since our last visit – when we weren't keen birdwatchers so this trip had a different focus.



Tasmanian Native Hen

We started our bird watching adventure on day one when we saw Tasmanian Native Hens while enroute to visit friends at Greens Beach on the north coast. We didn't realise how common they were going to be. Around this area and along the Tamar River we saw Green Rosella, Grey Currawong, Superb Fairy-wren, Eastern Spinebill, Grey Fantail, Silvereyes, Black Cockatoo, Black-faced Cormorant, Goldfinch, Little Wattlebird, both Sooty and

Pied Oystercatchers, Red-necked Stint, hundreds of Masked Lapwing and White-faced Heron.

Travelling south and to avoid roadworks on the Midland Highway, we travelled via Poatine and in the mountains we saw two Wedge-tailed Eagles soaring above the trees.

Now in Hobart, exploring the Mt Wellington and Mt Nelson areas as well as Waterworks Rd and around Sandy Bay, we added Pacific and Kelp Gull, Crested Tern, Black Currawong, Forest Raven, Yellow Wattlebird, Brown Thornbill and more Superb Fairy-wren.

A visit to the Tinderbox Peninsula gave us good views of Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Yellow Wattlebird, Yellow-throated and Black-headed Honeyeater, Spotted Pardalote, Scarlet and Flame Robin, Dusky Woodswallow, Grey Shrikethrush and Tasmanian Thornbill.

Our next excursion was to Mt Field NP – enroute we added Brush Bronzewing, Green and Yellow Rosella, Swamp Harrier and, near the falls, we saw Bassian Thrush. Another excursion was to the Clarence area, including Ralph's Bay, Pipe Clay Lagoon, O'Possum Bay, South Arm – here we added Sea Eagle, Chestnut Teal, Australian Shelduck, White-fronted Chat, Crescent Honeyeater, Grey Butcherbird, Musk Lorikeet and Strong-billed Honeyeater.

From Hobart we moved to Bruny Island for three days. At the house we rented on the island we were met by several Red-capped Robins that were sitting on the fence when we arrived. Here we also added Brown Falcon, Hooded Robin, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo and Forty-spotted Pardalote. On a boat trip to the Great Southern Ocean, we picked up Buller's and White-capped Albatross, Sooty Shearwater and Australian Gannet. Warren's highlights of this area - the boat trip, Tasmanian oysters and blue trevalla (a delicious fish).

Leaving Bruny Island we travelled up to Campbelltown, then up to St Helens where the motel we stayed in had great views over the estuary and an abundance of waterbirds. A day trip up to the spectacular Bay of Fires and Eddystone light house added Tasmanian Scrubwren to our list. Then it was on to Branxholm and while crossing a misty Welsborough Pass, we were delighted to see a flock of Black Currawongs pass overhead and in the evening we had a great view of a Spotted-tail Quoll scurrying up the road. In this area we had an excursion to Ralph's Falls up a narrow dirt road and in the rainforest we were excited to see the Tasmanian Scrubwren feeding on the forest floor as well as Tasmanian Thornbills and nearby on a dam were two Great Crested Grebes.

From here we travelled on to our last base, Stanley and on an evening walk we saw Little Penguins returning to their rookeries – a fitting end to our bird list of ninety-three birds for our Tasmanian journey.

Pat Charlton

PALUMA CITIZEN SCIENCE WEEKEND

Friday 25 – Sunday 27 August 2023

The Paluma Community Centre was buzzing on Friday evening, as more than 40 keen citizen scientists gathered for a special Nywaigi Welcome to Country ceremony that launched the Paluma Citizen Science Weekend. The aim of the weekend was to engage citizen scientists (members of the general public) in helping to gather critical information about high altitude Wet Tropics Birds threatened or at risk from climate change, and the Endangered Southern Cassowary, a bird known to be resident in the Paluma Ranges, but rarely seen.



Nywaigi Welcome to Country at the Paluma Citizen Science Weekend opening.

Following a hearty curry dinner, the science part of the evening commenced with Amanda Freeman giving an introductory presentation about the Birds With Altitude Project (BwA). Amanda talked about how high altitude birds may be affected and therefore vulnerable to climate change, and the Wet Tropics birds identified as 'at risk' or threatened in the Action Plan for Australian Birds (Garnett & Baker 2021).

When Amanda asked participants if they had noticed any changes in local birds, Janet Robino, President of BirdLife Townsville, commented that she had noticed that birds were becoming harder to find, 'their numbers are down'. A Paluma local commented that 'peewees had moved in a couple of weeks ago'.

In response, Amanda spoke about the important role citizen scientists can play, looking for and recording valuable information about Wet Tropics birds. She then went on to describe the BirdLife standard survey methods used as part of the monitoring program (2ha/20 min area search and 500 m area search) and the use of the nationally recognised app, Birdata to record the information for use by scientists. The audience was then invited to join the surveys early the next morning, to get practical hands on experience.

Next came Wren McLean who gave a captivating presentation about cassowaries, their distribution in Australia and Papua New Guinea, life history, and her previous research including using camera traps. She described how previous cassowary surveys on the Paluma Range did not find scats, signs or sightings so information was extrapolated to estimate a population of about 16 adult birds (Westcott et al 2014). However, she said that the Paluma Range contains 22,050 ha of potential habitat and birds are sighted semi-frequently, so how many cassowaries are truly using the territory is a mystery. And that's where the citizen science part of the weekend was once again highlighted. Our challenge for the weekend was to search as many walking tracks through the Paluma Range as possible for evidence of cassowaries (sighting, scat, calls or footprints). And there were plenty of tracks to be explored, many to gorgeous locations such as lookouts and waterfalls. Everyone was eager to start.

Following the presentations there was a flurry of activity as teams were formed and tasks assigned for both BwA surveys and the hunt for cassowaries in the greater Paluma area.

Over the next couple of days, under Wren and Jim's leadership, together, participants surveyed approx. 70km of tracks for cassowaries. The teams' findings are summed up in the media link below:

- [Citizen science project aims to uncover population size of southern cassowary in Paluma Range National Park.](#)
-

Paluma Citizen Science Weekend Birds With Altitude Results

Surveys were conducted Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 August 2023.

Members of BirdLife Townsville and BirdLife Northern Queensland partnered to lead the surveys, with participation of other citizen scientists. In all 11 people participated.

A total of 34 BirdLife surveys were conducted, including 30 2 ha/20 min area searches and four 500 m area searches. All surveys were recorded in Birdata.

Sixteen unique locations were surveyed with sites varying in elevation from 510 – 940 m (most over 850 m).

Table 1 identifies the BwA target birds (threatened or near threatened Wet Tropics Birds: Garnett & Baker 2021), how many surveys and which type of surveys they were recorded in, and the elevational range at which they were recorded.

Atherton Scrubwren (*Sericornis keri*) and Mountain Thornbill (*Acanthiza katherina*) were not seen or heard during the surveys, and were not reported by team members over the weekend.

A total of fifty-one bird species were recorded, with a total of 479 birds observed (seen or heard) (see Table 2).

The survey results are a snapshot in space (location) and time. Repeat surveys over time are needed, to better identify the species present, seasonal changes and potential habitat preferences and altitudinal shifts.



Table 1. BwA survey results for fourteen threatened or near threatened Wet Tropics Birds.

Threatened and near Threatened Wet Tropics Birds (Garnett et al., 2021)	500 m area search	Altitude	2ha/20 min area search	Altitude
Wet Tropics King Parrot (<i>Alisterus scapularis minor</i>)	0		2 surveys	870 - 890 m
Tooth-billed Bowerbird (<i>Scenopoeetes dentiostriis</i>)	0		2 surveys	855 - 930 m
Golden Bowerbird (<i>Prionodura newtoniana</i>)	1 survey	855 m	2 surveys	855 - 880 m
Wet Tropics Satin Bowerbird (<i>Ptilonorhynchus violaceus minor</i>)	0		3 surveys	855 - 870 m
Little Treecreeper (<i>Cormobates leucophaea minor</i>)	1 survey	855 m	7 surveys	510 - 900 m
Fernwren (<i>Orescopus guttularis</i>)	0		3 surveys	880 m
Brown Gerygone (<i>Gerygone mouki mouki</i>)	2 surveys	880 - 890 m	19 surveys	860 - 910 m
Atherton Scrubwren (<i>Sericornis kerri</i>)	0		0	
Large-billed Scrubwren (<i>Sericornis magnirostra viridior</i>)	0		4 surveys	870 - 900m
Mountain Thornbill (<i>Acanthiza katherina</i>)	0		0	
Bower's Shrike-thrush (<i>Colluricincla boweri</i>)	0		5 surveys	880 - 910 m
Eastern Whipbird (<i>Psophodes olivaceus lateralis</i>)	2 surveys	855 - 880 m	13 surveys	870 - 910 m
Victoria's Riflebird (<i>Lophorina victoriae</i>)	2 surveys	880 - 890 m	7 surveys	855 - 915 m
Grey-headed Robin (<i>Heteromyias cinereifrons</i>)	3 surveys	880 - 890 m	14 surveys	855 - 940 m
Number of surveys completed	4 surveys		30 surveys	
Total number of surveys completed in Paluma KBA and town area 26 & 27 August 2023 = 34				

Table 2. Bird species observed.

Australian Brush-turkey
 Australian King-Parrot
 Barred Cuckoo-shrike
 Bassian Thrush
 Black-chinned Honeyeater
 Bower's Shrike-thrush

Macleay's Honeyeater
 Magpie-lark
 Northern Fantail
 Pale-yellow Robin
 Pied Currawong
 Rainbow Lorikeet

Bridled Honeyeater
Brown Cuckoo-Dove
Brown Gerygone
Brown Treecreeper
Chowchilla
Crimson Rosella
Dusky Honeyeater
Eastern Spinebill
Eastern Whipbird
Eastern Yellow Robin
Fernwren
Golden Bowerbird
Golden Whistler
Grey Fantail
Grey Whistler
Grey-headed Robin
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo
Large-billed Scrubwren
Lewin's Honeyeater
Little Shrike-thrush

Red-browed Finch
Rufous Fantail
Rufous Whistler
Satin Bowerbird
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet
Scarlet Honeyeater
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo
Silvereye
Spotted Catbird
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Tooth-billed Bowerbird
Victoria's Riflebird
White-cheeked Honeyeater
White-throated Treecreeper
Wompoo Fruit-Dove
Yellow-breasted Boatbill
Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Yellow-spotted Honeyeater
Yellow-throated Scrubwren

References

Garnett, S. T., Baker, G. B. (Eds) (2021). The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2020. CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to BwA survey leaders from BirdLife Townsville and to all survey participants who so generously volunteered their time and energy. And thanks to Wren and all participants in the search for cassowary. It was rewarding to learn from everyone's survey experiences at the Paluma Dam campfire on the Saturday night.

Submitted by Wal Threlfall

RAVEN VERSUS GOANNA

Mike and I had a busy morning doing the Tony Grice Memorial Black-throated Finch Waterhole Survey. This involves sitting in one position on the side of a waterhole for three hours (0600-0900) recording how many finches, particularly the Black-throated Finch, come into drink.



There were large flocks of Chestnut-breasted Mannikins, Plum-headed Finches and a small number of Double-barred Finches along with a good number of the target species

There were also some 'quiet' times between the visits of all the finches. To keep us occupied there was a lot of other bird activity. About 50 metres away from our position we were able to watch a pair of Australian Ravens feeding young in the nest. The ravens started acting very excitedly on the ground in amongst some large termite mounds. It eventually became clear what caused all this excitement when a rather large goanna dashed from one patch of ground cover to another with the ravens in hot pursuit. The goanna was harassed by two very angry birds until it disappeared into shrub about 100 metres from the nest tree. None of this seemed to worry the finches at all as they kept on feeding amid all this behaviour.

Janet Robino

ONLY IN QUEENSLAND

Queensland Department of Environment and Science
Did you know Queensland is Australia's most naturally diverse state?

We have 70% of Australia's mammals, 80% of its native birds and more than 50% of its native reptiles, frogs and plant species.



Golden-shouldered Parrot (*Psephotus chrysopterygius*)

The Golden-shouldered Parrot is sacred to the Olkola people of the central Cape York Peninsula.

Known for their striking appearance, male Golden-shouldered Parrots have vibrant turquoise plumage with orange hues, complemented by a black crown and bright yellow shoulder feathers. Females and juveniles sport a more subdued green, turquoise colouration.

Golden-shouldered Parrots nest in cone-shaped termite mounds which they excavate just after wet season when the mounds are soft.

Golden-shouldered parrots are granivores and often feed on the ground in grassy areas, which makes them easy targets for predators. Because of this, they have formed an alliance with Woodswallows. While the parrots forage for food, Woodswallows act as a watchful guard, sounding off when predators are nearby.

Once a common sight in large flocks across Cape York, the Golden-shouldered Parrot faces a concerning decline. Current estimates suggest that there are only between 780 and 1,100 remaining in the wild, restricted to a total area of 3,000km².



A Pied Monarch, found exclusively in North Queensland's Wet Tropics.

Pied Monarch (*Arses kaupi*)

To mark this year's National Bird Week (October 16-22), we're shining a spotlight on five captivating birds from Queensland that you won't find anywhere else in the world!

Measuring a modest 14-15 centimetres, the Pied Monarch boasts striking plumage of blue-black and white and features a notable blue ring around its eye.

Pied Monarchs are skilful nest builders. They craft woven cup-shaped baskets using dry roots, twigs, and spider webs, which act as a natural glue. These finely crafted nests are often found suspended amidst hanging vines.

Pied Monarchs are social birds, often seen in pairs, and while most are non-migratory some Pied Monarchs fly to the Eucalyptus woodlands in the Atherton Tableland for winter. Their populations are considered stable across Queensland.



Victoria's Riflebirds are endemic to the Atherton Tableland region in Far North Queensland.

Victoria's Riflebird (*Ptiloris victoriae*)

In the world of riflebirds, the Victoria's Riflebird claims the



title of the smallest, maxing out at just 25cm. Its presence, however, commands attention.

Being just one of a few Australian birds-of-paradise, the Victoria's Riflebird is known for its extravagant displays of courtship. During mating season (July-December), males

compete against one another for the top spot on traditional perches vying for the best chance to woo a female.

When attempting to capture a female's attention, a male distorts his body and fluffs up his feathers, showcasing its vibrant turquoise patterns. He extends his wings and gracefully sways, dancing until a female draws close and allows herself to be embraced.

This elaborate ritual is so ingrained in Victoria's Riflebirds that juveniles practise these moves in their nest.

Victoria's Riflebirds reside year-round in the Atherton

Tableland region in Far North Queensland.

Lovely Fairy-wrens are endemic to northeastern Queensland.

The Lovely Fairy-wren (*Malurus amabilis*) is one of 12 Fairy-wren species. They can only be found in the Wet Tropics and Cape York Peninsula regions in Far North Queensland, where their populations are stable.

They stand out as the most arboreal (tree-living) of all the Fairy-wrens, scaling trees to heights of up to 20 metres. Lovely Fairy-wrens predominantly occupy the fringes of rainforests, mangrove areas, and densely vegetated habitats.

Like most other Fairy-wrens, they reside within family groups composed of an adult pair and their offspring. Interestingly, little is known about Fairy-wrens, despite the large number of studies on them.

It seems that they establish permanent territories and stay there year-round.

When breeding, male Fairy-wrens exhibit distinctive features: a pale blue helmet, brownish wings, and a pristine white belly. In contrast, females and non-breeding males share a similar appearance, with complete white plumage extending from under their chin to their belly, while their backs, crowns, and cheeks shimmer in shades of blue.

Yellow Honeyeaters are found all throughout Far North Queensland.

Yellow Honeyeater (*Stomiopera flava*)



The Yellow Honeyeater is easy to identify(external link) thanks to it being mostly plain yellow and lacking distinct markings like stripes, bars, cheek patches, or wingbars.

You can encounter Yellow Honeyeaters in nearly any tree-covered area such as lowland woodlands and mangrove forests from Far North Queensland to as far south as the Central Queensland Coast bioregion. Keep an eye out for

them around gardens as well, where they can be seen feeding on nectar and pollinating flowers.

Our native birds are truly incredible, but sadly, they face an uncertain future. The ongoing clearance of habitat poses a major threat to all bird species. This is why we've pledged \$262.5 million over the next four years to expand the state's network of protected areas.

For more information on what we are doing, take a look at Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030 and Queensland's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

THANK YOU

Below is an email from one of the Townsville Port's Environmental Officers

Hi Norm,

I wanted to extend a very warm thank you to BirdLife Townsville for joining us at Environmental Park last week for a planting and bird count.

All of us at the Port really enjoyed it and learned a lot from you all. We have shared a post about last week's activities to our socials, which I have attached for your reference. BirdLife Townsville was tagged in the original post.

Happy Friday! Cheers, Brittany

THE SWIFT PARROT

From Trove Facebook page:

Are you in a flap about the Lathamus Discolor (Swift Parrot) being named 2023 Bird of the Year?

Then you'll love this article from 1936 that was featured in the Melbourne Weekly Times about how this wonderful bird got its scientific name: <https://bit.ly/46HZyfo>

Lathamus discolor is the scientific name.



In the first year, of last century, Dr John Latham, a famous ornithologist, published the first descriptions of a number of Australian birds. Our Swift Parrot was named in his honour, Lathamus. It is more or less nomadic in its habits, following at least in parts of its range, the blossom tide of the gums. Usually only a glimpse of them is gained as a flock of these parrots goes over, so swift is their flight. But their screeching notes are plainly heard.

Discolour, of course, means different-coloured and the Swift Parrot displays in its plumage green, red (shoulder tips, base of tail and the under wing) and blue (on the crown of the head and edge of the wings). Though chiefly a honey-eating bird, the Swift Parrot also nibbles eucalyptus blossoms and sometimes fills its crop with insect larvae. Like the musk lorikeet, it is greedy when at a gum-blossom feast. Some of those shot by John Gould, the great ornithologist, in a Tasmanian forest, had gorged on nectar. When one was held up by the feet, honey dripped from its beak.

An eruption of Swift Parrots in the metropolitan area, many years ago, is described in Campbell's "Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds," a wonderful book which has been a friend of mine since boyhood— I am always

browsing through its pages (more than 1000); and find it as interesting today as it was at a first reading. Well, Swift Parrots in hundreds appeared round about Melbourne, when the author of this book himself was a boy. The red-gum trees were flowering and alive with noisy little parrots after nectar. Many were shot, for in those days, people still made and ate, parrot pies; perhaps some folk— not bird lovers— do so now. Those shot by young Archie Campbell, destined to become Australia's leading bird man and his mates became besmeared with honey that exuded from their mouths.

November and December are the principal nesting months of the Swift Parrot which often chooses a hole in the tallest, most inaccessible tree it can find. A dead branch is preferred. From two to three eggs are laid to a clutch.

QUEST

Name	Quest Number	Date
Anne Lawrance	365	31/12/2023
Janet Robino	346	12/12/2023
Mark Horvath	284	11/10/2023
Beth Snewin	269	26/09/2023
Elna Kerswell	262	19/09/2023
Wendy Kaus	255	12/09/2023
Pat Charlton	234	22/08/2023
Annette Sibson	225	13/08/2023
Jill Staunton	221	9/08/2023
Warren Charlton	220	8/08/2023
Ian Leach	213	1/08/2023
Wal Threlfall	213	1/08/2023
Brigid Glass	186	5/07/2023
Annette Sutton	152	1/06/2023
Kathleen Vowles	127	7/05/2023
Julie Goldsbury	108	18/04/2023



Northern Pale-headed Rosellas Janet Robino

SOME MORE AMERICAN BIRDS

Annette Sibson



Blue Jay



California Scrub Jay



Steller's Blue Jay



White Ibis



Black-bellied Whistling-Duck



Wood Duck



*Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year*