

The Drongo

Number 174 May 2024



Mark Horvath

Rainy Days

Backyard
visitors

Club Outing



FROM THE PRESIDENT

At the Annual General Meeting there were some changes to the Committee membership. Julie Goldsbury and Kathleen Vowels have stepped down because of work and study commitments. Julie will still take care of all grant applications. Mike Griggs and Claire Willard were both elected to the Committee. Both have hit the ground running. Claire will now be Birdlife Townsville's representative on the Black-throated Finch Recovery Team. Mike has surveyed members to establish if there is an interest in birding trips including campouts. The responses so far show that several members are very keen. Keep an eye on the Activities Page for further information.

The weather has continued to play havoc with our regular surveys.

The Wongaloo surveys have had to be cancelled a few times as the roads have been too boggy. Hopefully things will get back on track now that the 'wet' season seems to have gone for the time being. The Lucinda Australian Shorebird Monitoring Survey went ahead, but was a complete washout. It was not possible to access the shoreline or even see more than a few metres ahead.

The guest speaker at the March meeting was an exchange year 12 Student from Brazil. Pedro Bernado Poltroniere Marcilio spoke about how his school encouraged an interest in birds and conservation and the methods used for surveys.

Unfortunately, the April meeting had to be cancelled as the venue had been vandalised. The Townsville City Council had repairs carried out quickly so meetings schedule is back to normal.

The April Herveys Range Birders Breakfast and Outing was well supported as usual and a great time was had by all.

Janet Robino



YOUR 2024 COMMITTEE

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

Annette Sibson
Mark Horvath
Warren Charlton

Brigid Glass
Claire Willard
Mike Griaq

Newsletter Editor Annette Sibson annette.sibson@bigpond.com

Deadline for next Drongo is July 30th. Please send articles as Word documents, photos as attachments.
The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Birdlife Townsville.

Rainy Daze

This is a little story of Bron's and my trip to Southern Queensland in March 2024. It is about the weather, the birds, and the wildlife we encountered. Mainly about the weather! We headed off from Townsville on a reasonable day, heading for Smalley's Beach. A small beach in the Cape Hillsborough National Park, about fifty kilometres north of Mackay. All was going well until we turned off onto the Mount Ossa/Seaforth Road, the last part of which is gravel. Upon reaching the gravel the heavens opened so much so that we had to reduce speed to a crawl and have the wipers on full speed. Still, we couldn't see the track less than thirty metres in front of us, and every time we entered a pothole, which we couldn't see, the water splashed over the bonnet. My darling wife suggested it might not be a good idea to camp. My reply "It's only water." We arrived, set up camp and settled in under the constant drizzle. Birding was difficult under the circumstances, and we only had short periods in which to conduct surveys. While the tide was out, in one twenty-minute rainless burst, we did get to eye several Grey-tailed Tattlers, a White-faced Heron, a Striated Heron, an Eastern Reef Egret, a Beach Stone-curlew, and a White-bellied Sea-Eagle. Unfortunately, that was it for the day. Rain! Upon waking the next day, we realised the weather was not going to change so we packed up and left, much to Bron's relief.



Next stop was Calliope. A free camp on the north side of the Calliope River. The weather was fine, and it gave us a chance to dry out. As we didn't have far to go the next day it gave me a chance to do a little birding in the morning. There were a few birds around with Tawny Frogmouths, Black-fronted Dotterels, and a Sacred Kingfisher being cooperative enough for me to get a photo. Just before lunch we packed up to travel to Goomeri where we would be staying at the Goomeri Caravan and Bush Camp.

By the time we arrived at Goomeri the rain had set in once more. Still there was nothing to do but set up camp sit back, relax and have a wine. There was very little bird activity here, although I think on a better day, things could be different as the place looked promising. We did get to watch a couple of hares prance around for a while and hear the usual crow squawk overhead. Next stop Brisbane and the relatives.

Story takes a break here as I'm sure you don't want to hear about family, although I did get to go out birding one

day. Went to Wynnum, which is a suburb of Brisbane on the coast where I had been informed by others in our club that the birding was worth it. Bah Humbug! Quiet as a church mouse although I did get to spot a Spotless Crane at Sandy Camp Road and a Collared Kingfisher at the Wynnum mangroves. They made up for the lack of other species. I also struggled through the Brisbane traffic to try and find the Powerful Owl, that I had also heard was a certainty at Kumbartcho Sanctuary. Dipped on that one too. After the family, we headed towards O'Reilly's. We didn't stay at O'Reilly's as we wanted to camp, and O'Reilly's wouldn't let us camp in their campground with our setup. So, we opted for a camp just down the range at a place called Spring Gully Stays.



Spring Gully Stays was a nice place with clean and well supplied Portaloos, a nice creek to swim in and plenty of open space or trees to camp under. It's on Sarabah Road which is just off the Lamington National Park Road and about thirty kilometres from O'Reilly's. The big bonus about staying here was it was fine, whereas each time we went to O'Reilly's it was overcast or raining. It was the wrong time of year to see the Regent Bowerbirds, however we did spot a young male, from the car park. After we did the tree-top walk, we walked through the back part of O'Reilly's when a gentleman asked us if we'd seen the Whipbirds yet. Our response was in the negative. He promptly asked us to hold on a moment and he'd get some feed and call them in for us. We all headed back into the rainforest where he, Glen, filled us in on his background and why he was in the area that particular day. Why? So, the Whipbirds don't forget who he is. Anyway, Glen proceeded to instruct us on how he calls them in. The first step is to ensure there is nobody around, otherwise they might think you have lost your marbles. He then calls out very loudly "Whipeee" once or twice upon which the Whipbirds show up and feed out of his hands. Marvelous! Other species seen were a White-headed Pigeon sunning itself in the treetops, White-browed and Yellow-throated Scrubwrens, and a brief glimpse of a couple of Australian Logrunners doing as their name suggests. I mustn't forget the Superb Fairywrens that were quite prolific. Next stop on our itinerary was Sundown National Park.

For those unfamiliar with Sundown National Park, it is to the west of the New England Highway, between Stanthorpe and Tenterfield. Basically, on the other side of the highway from Girraween National Park. I've always wanted to visit the remotest part of the park and that is where we headed, Burrows Waterhole in the north-west of

the park. Only seventeen kilometres or one hour and fifteen minutes from the park entrance. The road in is rocky, steep and narrow. Definitely low range 4WD territory. Bron was a little put out by the fact I didn't choose to stay at a more accessible part of the park, but she didn't find out about that until after the fact. Hee hee! Once again, the weather was not fantastic although it wasn't actually raining. I walked up and down the Severn River a couple of times and found a spot where the birds were bathing and drinking so after an obligatory morning tea, one morning I positioned myself under a bottlebrush and waited. Species of note during that period were Striped, Yellow-tufted, Fuscous, and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. A lovely couple of hours watching the antics of the various species.



Just out from our camp was a patch of herbage, to which the Turquoise Parrots would visit to feed fairly often during the day. That species was a lifer for us. While waiting patiently to get a nice shot of the parrots an Eastern Shrike-tit flew into the shrub behind me, and I was lucky enough to get a shot. Always nice to see, as we don't often get that chance. Once again, I shouldn't forget the Superb Fairywrens that would hop around under our chairs and almost jump onto our shoes. They were brazen little things. Other animals seen while at Burrows Waterhole were Eastern Grey Kangaroos, some of which fed close enough to us to be under the guy ropes of our annex, large numbers of Lace monitors; some of which got too close for comfort, possums, Red-necked Wallabies and Deer. Overall, a great three nights stay even with the overcast conditions. Next stop was the Bunya Mountains.



We pulled into the Dandabah camping area, in the rain, found a spot and set up. While sitting quietly contemplating our navels our camping neighbour went over to the BBQ shed for dinner. Noticing us sitting quietly he popped over and the first thing he said was "It's been raining constantly for twenty-four hours." That brightened our mood immensely. If you haven't been to this camping area recently, it now has a couple of cafes, a small grocery store, and a whisky bar and tavern. Not what we remember and not what we were looking for. The only good thing about the place, this time around, was it had hot showers and with the weather we needed them. Not only did we have to contend with the rain we also had to deal with the mist and wind. In the end we saw what we came for, Satin Bowerbirds, and decided it wasn't worth staying and would leave a day early.

We got up very early on departure day only to find it still raining and misty, and everything, and I mean everything that was not locked inside the vehicle was soaked from the mist. A couple of hot cuppas and we'd be off. While having those cuppas we heard a couple of tree/branches fall and thought, yep time to go, only to come across a fallen branch blocking our path on the road off the mountain. Some elbow grease and the road was passable. It rained most of the way to Rockhampton where we rented a cabin. If you'd like some embellishment on anything here just raise it with one of us when we next meet. I'm sure Bron could give you a more amusing recount of events. The end.

Mark Horvath

Battle for the Court 12 April

At 1745 (5.45pm) the pair of Bush Stone-Curlews which have been long-term residents in the Court were challenged by three intruders.



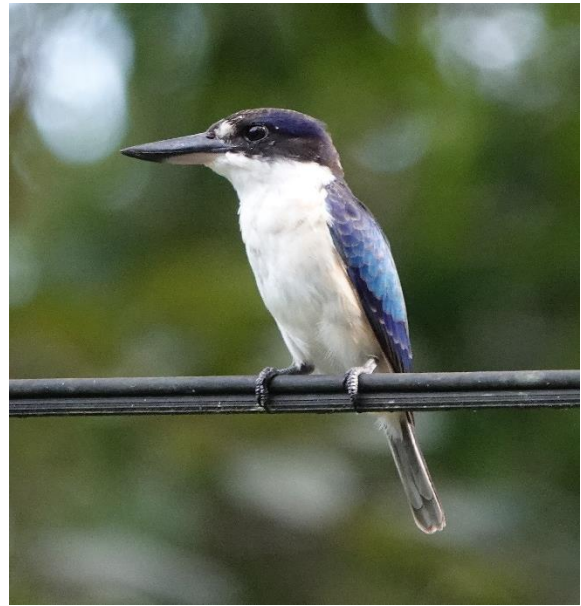
The battle consisted of a lot of walking around, flapping of wings, wailing and running at the regular pair trying to move them out of the Court and down the road. The loud wails and flapping of wings went on well into the night. I had to wait till the morning to learn the outcome. To my delight, the resident pair was standing in my front garden. I knew it was the usual pair as one has a big lump on one leg, which I noticed in 2021 and contacted Chris and Helen Bell – wildlife carers. After having a good look at the bird, they advised me that as it didn't seem to be having any issues with mobility, it was best to not stress it out by trying to catch it. They were proved right to leave well enough alone as this pair have gone on to successfully breed each year and still hold their position in the Court.



Janet Robino

Rock-A-Bye-Baby 26 April

Whilst gardening, I discovered a patch of bird droppings in the leaf litter under a large Penda Tree. After a few failed attempts to find the birds responsible I got serious. Tonight, armed with the spotlight and binoculars – success! It was a family of five Forest Kingfishers settled in for the night. I have observed a pair of the kingfishers in the Court over the last few weeks, so I figure they have brought their youngsters in for a nice safe night roosting spot.



Janet Robino

It's all about timing! 29 April

I went out to get two items off the clothes line. A small black and white bird swooped into perch briefly on the line. I looked up expecting to see the friendly little Willie Wagtail that hangs out in the garden. I was blown away to see it was a Restless Flycatcher.

Janet Robino



A. Sibson

Australian Painted Snipe

Fantastic work is being done to learn more about this fabulous Australian bird. It's one of our rarest breeding waterbirds. Listed as nationally and globally Endangered.

So far two birds have been tagged and are currently being tracked.

Bird one – Gloria, was tagged in October 2023 and after some months of being tracked has unfortunately lost contact.

Bird two – Marcelina, was tagged in January 2024 and one month ago she was tracked to Goyder Lagoon (far north-east South Australia)

It pays to keep your eyes peeled, even during the dry season, you just never know what might pop up. In 2020 a lone bird was seen along Black River Road, a number of members were lucky to see and photograph it.

Below are some links to fantastic information on these brilliant birds.

Web page – <https://paintedsnipe.com.au>

Facebook page -

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100087380940581>



Len Ezzy



Len Ezzy

20 years ago, in May Extracts from the May 2004 Drongo issue 72

Way back then the club was the Townsville Region Bird Observers Club of Australia (TRBOCA).

There were 14 members signed up for the Quest, 3 of whom are still challenging themselves in this years Quest. (2024)

There was a desperate call for articles from the then editor Marleen Acton.

Ed - Getting articles is an ongoing issue.

On a club birding trip to Toonpan there were noticeable differences in the bird species since the lowering of the Ross Dam wall. There were no waterbirds seen but a good number of Tawny Grassbirds were seen in the new grasslands.

The Easter Campout to Mt Zero and Taravale was successful. By all accounts a wonderful time was had by all participants, there were a number of articles written by different members about the trip. Mentioned in quite a few was a night walk that caused a lot of pain for some members and much merriment for the rest. Apparently, there was a close encounter with a Bull-ants nest which resulted in some disrobing and painful stings.

On a club outing to Paluma one car full of members were lucky enough to see a Cassowary on the Paluma Dam road. Glossy Black-Cockatoo was seen by some other members on the same outing.

One small item considered the cleverness of Little Corellas. A pair of Little Corellas had been seen using the drinking fountains at the Townsville golf course, one standing on the lever while the other drank, then they swapped places. Ed - I wonder if this still happens.

Members were busy tripping around to watch birds too – Karumba, Cobbold Gorge, Cairns, Africa, UK and Singapore all got a mention.

A crossword was included too. Here are a few of the clues to test yourselves.

Reddish brown colour (6 letters)

A Cuckoo is one (8 letters)

A diving waterbird (5 letters)



A. Sibson

Three endangered birds in Tasmania

Recently I and my husband spent 3 weeks travelling around Tasmania. What a fabulous state to visit, yes it got cold and rained on us, but we also had some warm weather and lots of sunshine.

First up are the Hooded Plovers. I'd never seen one before so they were on my list of must-see birds. We were over on the east coast staying at St. Helens, so Bay of Fires was on the list of things to see for the day. We headed north from there to The Gardens with a few stops along the way. The walk we chose to do was reached through a twisting path that ran beside an electric fence! No wobbling on that path. Once on the beach we headed further north, fingers crossed there would be some birds to see. I hadn't taken my camera, only my binoculars and mobile phone. As we walked, we were overtaken by a fellow who turned out to be a local. He chewed our ears off for a good few minutes but did come good with knowing about small birds with black heads. I showed him a picture of a Hooded Plover and yes, he'd seen those. He informed us that another local family had had them breeding down on their little beach just recently! He set off again at a great rate of knots and we followed along slowly. He waved and pointed to the dunes once he'd reached the second bay up. Whoot! He'd spotted the Hooded Plovers. Well, we walked more quickly then. The group of birds consisted of 3 adult birds and 3 juvenile birds. It was very exciting to see them, and so many. I took a couple of distance shots with my phone, and if you peer at it closely you can make out the 6 birds. We were lucky enough to see more Hooded Plovers at Denison Beach, just north of Bicheno. These were all adult birds. I certainly never expected to see so many.



Second bird up is Swift Parrot. This is a bird I never expected to see, I didn't have them on my list of maybes as I just thought I've never be that lucky. Well, how wrong I was. We'd driven down to Southport and stopped there for a cuppa. A lovely little spot by the sea. I could hear parrots feeding in the flowering eucalypts and just assumed they were Musk Lorikeets, which I didn't have any photos of. So I grabbed my camera and set about taking photos. Once the birds had flown off, I put the camera away and we headed off to explore some more of the area. Later that evening, at our accommodation, I was looking at the Pizzey & Knight bird app on my phone to learn about Musk Lorikeets and realized that that

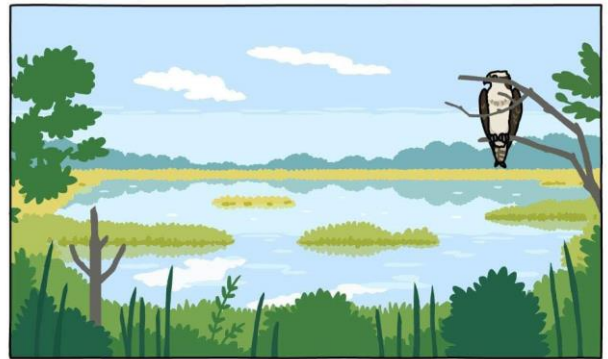
wasn't what I'd photographed at all. I had to check the photos on the camera to make sure I was right. I was right and got really excited and a bit embarrassed that I hadn't realized I was photographing Swift Parrots. There had been about 25 birds in the group that were feeding there.



The third and last bird is the Wedge-tailed Eagle. I had been looking and looking for these birds, all over Tassie. It wasn't until our last few days that we managed to see some. Two were seen on our way back to Stanley from the Tarkine drive, flying so majestically over the valley. Then on our very last full day we saw 4 birds all flying over the valley that held Lake Gairdner. No photographs I'm afraid but that's ok. It was a great way to finish up.

Annette Sibson

when you remember to bring your camera



when you forget to bring your camera



birdandmoon.com

Magnetic Break

We just spent four days on Magnetic Island, a nice break from town. The two Ospreys are still in residence atop the tower near Cockle Bay. We also saw an Osprey sitting on the powerlines above a creek at Nelly Bay, obviously on the lookout for a nice fish dinner. We saw Brahminy Kites at Horseshoe, Alma, Geoffrey and Nelly Bays.



Out on the stinger net anchors at Horseshoe Bay there were about thirty Crested terns in the afternoon but early the next morning, there were eighty of them, lined up along the floats of the stinger net.



On the road into Cockle Bay there is a saltwater lagoon on the left. The first day we were there, there were about eight Great Egrets and six Little Egrets hunting. They were being watched by a male Black-necked Stork. There were obviously plenty of fish trapped in the lagoon. A Great Egret had a hard time swallowing a large fish.

There were the usual Pied Currawongs, Helmeted Friarbirds, Welcome Swallows, and Black and White Cockatoos along with heaps of Rainbow lorikeets. Didn't manage to find the Orange-footed Scrubfowl but we did find his mound at Horseshoe Bay.

It was far too windy for any Brown Boobies to be perching on the harbour markers as we passed by.

Annette Sutton

Killarney Beach

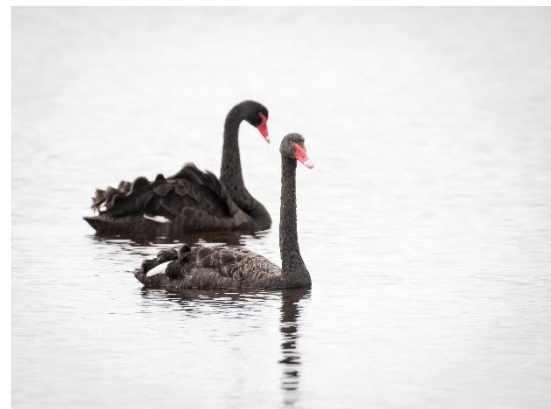
A place we always wanted to stay

With our daughter & her family living at Warrnambool (SW Victoria), we have found some good birding sites that aren't far away. There is Portland where Gannets are quite common as there's a colony there, Pt Fairy (besides excellent bakeries) we often see Sooty Oyster Catchers, Gannets flying past, the wetlands of Warrnambool & a small beach named Killarney Beach. There are lots of wetlands behind the sand dunes & we've seen some uncommon birds there. Then there is Tower Hill with lots of both bush & water birds & emus that become too friendly if you're having a picnic.

Killarney also has a caravan park – run by the Moyne Council. We've often said that it would be a nice place to stay at & this past March gave us the opportunity as Emma's in-laws were visiting from The Netherlands. The park surrounds a sports oval, is well coated with lawn, has good but basic facilities & includes both powered & non-powered sites. It is 21kms from Warrnambool & 12kms from Pt Fairy. You are also serenaded by the waves over the sand dune at night.

The beach is protected from horses & vehicles during the Hooded Plover breeding season, from August to March with plenty of signs telling people of the facts.

This time on the beach, in the wetlands & caravan park – yes we saw a few Hoodies (they weren't in the numbers we have seen before), Masked Lapwing, Silver Gull, Australasian Gannet, White-faced Heron, Singing Honeyeater, Black Swan, Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal, Australian Shoveler, Pied Stilt, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, lots of Sanderlings, Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, White-browed Scrubwren, Forest Raven, Willy Wagtail, Australian Ibis, Grey Shrike-thrush, Australian Magpie, Black-shouldered Kite, Swamp Harrier, Red Wattlebird, Welcome Swallow, European Starling, Eurasian Blackbird, House Sparrow, European Goldfinch & a New Holland Honeyeater.



A. Sibson

The highlight was a Willy Wagtail along the track leading to houses on the northern side of the wetlands – a leucistic (all white) bird. While I was changing lenses, Pat luckily took a video on her phone through the windscreen. By the time I was ready a raven had swooped in & chased it away. We checked every day up until we left the area but either something killed the bird or it had moved away.

Warren Charlton

Outing to Heritage Tea Rooms

Friday 26 April and 6.30am start from our meeting point and 25 keen members were ready to travel up the Hervey Range for our Birder's Breakfast and Outing at the Heritage Tea Rooms.

(It seems to me that the promise of breakfast always brings out the keenest Birders)

Arriving at our destination at 7am, members were quick to start birding and relaying sightings (at times it was hard to keep up with recording birds and numbers) from the front of the Tea Rooms and car park area – a Lemon-bellied Flycatcher was the most notable bird recorded. Moving on, we followed the track as it meandered around the property, sighting Scarlet Honeyeaters, Striated Pardalote, Spectacle Monarchs, Little Shrike-thrush, five very excitable Macleay's Honeyeaters and streaking above the foliage, Little Lorikeets and many more, including a Golden Orb Weaving Spider that members seemed to be very excited about!! (see pic)

Finishing at 9am after 2 hours of birding and 42 different bird species sighted (not a bad effort) it was time for breakfast. The owners of the Heritage Tea Rooms, Desley and Russell Ralph, as well as giving us permission to access their property, do a very good breakfast as our members can testify.

Wal Threlfall

Photos: Michelle Giuliani and Wal Threlfall



Quest as at May 7 2024

Mike Grigg	267	23/09/2024
Janet Robino	251	7/09/2024
Mark Horvath	227	14/08/2024
Anne Lawrance	190	8/07/2024
Pat Charlton	189	7/07/2024
Warren Charlton	184	2/07/2024
Wal Threlfall	180	28/06/2024
Barbara Reidy	180	28/06/2024
Annette Sibson	178	26/06/2024
Wendy Kaus	175	23/06/2024
Beth Snewin	171	19/06/2024
Elna Kerswell	161	9/06/2024
Ian Leach	142	21/05/2024
Chris Corbett	134	13/05/2024
Brigid Glass	130	9/05/2024
Norm Rains	123	2/05/2024
Jill Staunton	85	25/03/2024
Annette Sutton	85	25/03/2024
Colton Tinkey	80	20/03/2024
Julie Goldsbury	58	27/02/2024



Mark Horvath



Mark Horvath

