

The Drongo

Number 177 February 2025



Ray Sutton

Letter-
winged Kite

Emu

Lara
Wetlands



FROM THE PRESIDENT

The last twelve months started with a few hiccoughs with several outings and meeting having to be cancelled due to weather including Cyclone Kirrily with resultant boggy conditions, and vandalism of our meeting venue. Despite these issues we still managed to have a busy and active year. This has been possible because of more members participating in surveys and community programs, and new committee members. Claire Willard is now our representative on the Black-throated Finch Recovery Team. So a really big thank you to those members.

Once again, please check your membership status by contacting Birdlife Australia: Email: support@birdlife.org.au or Phone 03 93470757 (ext. 4). My own membership was 'to lapse early in February' due to non-payment, despite having a direct debit set up. This is the third time I personally have had 'difficulties' with my membership status. Birdlife Australia has not sent Birdlife Townsville a membership list for several years, citing cyber security as an excuse, so Wal Threlfall is unable to send reminders when members slip through the system. If your membership is current and you wish to stay on Birdlife Townsville's email address list, it would be really helpful to send an email to contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au including your membership number so we can update our records.

The Quest is well underway. Despite heat waves and rain, many members have registered to take part. This is our only fund-raising event for the year. All funds raised are donated to local bird and habitat conservation activities. If you're a late starter, you have until the end of February to join in. Check Birdlife Townsville's website Birdlife Townsville for more information.

Again, please, please register for outings and meetings. Last minute cancellations may be necessary. If registered, you can be notified by text or email. This will save you being disappointed by turning up when the Outing/Survey has been cancelled. It is important to register your intention to attend meetings for a couple of reasons. First and foremost, for catering purposes. The team of caterers – volunteers of course – are very important. What would our meetings be without the wonderful afternoon tea provided. It would make their life a lot easier if they knew just how many of us will expect a hot drink and something scrumptious to eat.

Birdlife Townsville has recently purchased a new laptop as the old one really needed to be retired. PowerPoint presentations at meetings will be much better to view. The Photography Group has had a preview of the new and improved images and members were all impressed with the improvement.

Birdlife Townsville extends its appreciation and thanks to Townsville City Council for its ongoing support in the waiver of fees for the meeting venue (TCC Soundshell) and the awarding of a grant to cover the cost of storage. These grants need to be applied for every 12 months, so hopefully we will continue to be successful in receiving these grants.

At the March meeting there was a presentation by Pedro Bernado Pocrtoniere Marcilio. Pedro was a Year Twelve exchange student from Brazil. Of course, he spoke about the wonderful birds of that country. His teacher in Brazil was a keen birder and introduced his students to bird and habitat conservation with many exciting weekend trips to observe birds.

In 2024 we were encouraged to join in the 'invasive Species Bug Hunt'. The main aim was to report any suspected sightings of Yellow Crazy Ants. For more information check the Townsville City Council website or www.invasives.org.au. In 2025 we are now asked to be alert to the presence of Bird Flu in our region. If you find dead birds, particularly around wetlands, that appear to have died without being attacked or hit by cars etc, do not touch the bird but report it immediately to Emergency Animal Disease on 1800 675 888.

The Paluma Range citizen science project which consists of two parts - a Southern Cassowary survey and a survey as part of 'Birds with Altitude project' was cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. It has now been rescheduled for July 2025, so check out the Club's Activities Page at Birdlife Townsville for details.

There were all the usual activities in October to promote the Aussie Bird Count: Library Displays; Guided Birdwatching Tour at the Sustainability Centre with TCC; Community Tree Planting Event, Lou Lister Park with TCC; Tony Grice Memorial Black-throated Finch Waterhole survey; and all regular surveys and outings. I feel exhausted just writing about how busy we were.

On top of all that Birdlife Townsville commenced monthly surveys at the Town Common to be conducted on the third Tuesday each month for three years in support of a NQ Dry Tropics 'Project' to attempt to eradicate paragrass from the

Freshwater Lagoon. Four (2 hectare x 20 minute) surveys are conducted at 0700 at designated survey points (Freshwater Hide, Jacana Hide, Bald Rock Freshwater Bund Wall and Tegoora Rock Freshwater Bund Wall). This is a pretty exciting project to be involved with. Eight volunteers are required to ensure the four surveys are conducted at the same time. It's an early start but you'd be home for a nice relaxed breakfast. For more information on the project, check out the NQ Dry Tropics website.

The Christmas Lunch at the Sun Hotel was well supported and enjoyed by all. As it isn't appropriate to have the usual Christmas activities at the open venue we did it all in July. The Quiz and all the other Christmas carry-on made for a great July club meeting.

Birdlife Townsville's Facebook Page is proving very attractive with around 1500 'members'. It is Birdlife Townsville members who volunteer to ensure that this page will continue. If you use and enjoy this page it would be good to consider joining Birdlife to support the club that keeps the page available.

I would like to extend a big thank you to:

- committee members
- members who volunteer to lead outings and surveys and participate in them
- Editor of the Drongo newsletter—Annette Sibson
- Members who assist with Community Awareness events
- Members who provide a very welcome afternoon tea at our meetings
- Members who monitor our Facebook page
- Members who attend and assist with surveys and outings
- Mark Horvath who leads the Photography Group

Without your vital support, Birdlife Townsville could not continue with its main aim of increasing awareness of birds and their habitat.

A special thank you to Secretary Wal Threlfall who does so much 'behind the scene' to make sure we keep running as smoothly as possible.

Janet Robino



YOUR 2024 COMMITTEE

President:	Janet Robino	Annette Sibson	Brigid Glass
Secretary:	Wal Threlfall	Mark Horvath	Claire Willard
Treasurer:	Nina Doyle	Warren Charlton	

Newsletter Editor Annette Sibson annette.sibson@bigpond.com

Deadline for next Drongo is April 30 2025. Please send articles as Word documents, photos as attachments.

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

RELEASE OF LETTER-WINGED KITE, NOVEMBER 11, 2024

Early in November our Birdlife Townsville secretary, Wal, wrote to members mentioning a Letter-winged Kite which was ready for release after spending time in care with Deb Carter of Fight4Flight.



The bird had been injured, after being found on Vallum Station between Hughenden and Winton. Wal wanted to know if anyone had heard of another flock of Letter-winged Kites as the flock had moved on from Vallum Station, and, as the species roosts and breeds in colonies, it was necessary to release the rehabilitated bird in an area where other birds were present.



As Beth, Elna, Roger and I had recently travelled by road out to Mt Isa, Boulia and Winton on a birding trip, and had been unsuccessful in seeing any Letter-winged Kites, we were interested in assisting the bird in care if we could.

We advised Deb Carter that we would be happy to do a run out to Hughenden, but the recent sighting (Oct 8) of these birds at the Julia Creek airport was another 263 kilometres further on.

I mentioned that our son was currently in the Julia Creek area conducting monitoring of waterholes for the Dept of Local Government and Water and agreed that I would ask him to keep an eye out for any flocks.

The Letter-winged Kite (*Elanus scriptus*) is a small, rare, and irruptive bird of prey that is found only in Australia. Measuring around 35cm in length with a wingspan of 84-100 cm, the adult Letter-winged Kite has predominately pale grey and white plumage and prominent black rings around its red eyes. Its name derives from its highly distinctive black underwing pattern of a shallow M or W shape, visible when in flight.

It is rated as near threatened, and is a predator of the long-haired rat, hunting mostly at night. The species begins breeding in response to rodent outbreaks and moves on in response to the rats' movements. Dry conditions lead to a fall in rodent numbers and dispersal of birds, which often starve if they fail to find prey elsewhere. Wikipedia



At 6am on Monday morning, 11 November 2024, Andrew texted me that he was pretty sure he'd seen the Letter-winged Kites on the Wills Developmental Road, as they headed north from Julia Creek.

He sent some photos, and we were able to confirm the sightings.

When, a bit further along the road, Andrew messaged again that they had seen a group of 20-30 birds roosting together, I called Beth and, by 10am, we had collected the re-habilitated bird from Deb Carter, strapped him in, and were on our way. Isn't retirement great!!!

It was 652 kilometres to Julia Creek, and another 20 kms further on to our intended release site! So, only time for one loo stop, a four min break for lunch, and an ice-cream stop in Richmond!! With only 100 kms to go, it was after 5pm. The sky was darkening all around us as an electrical storm built up, and we stopped at a red light just 60km out of town. The outside temperature was still 39 degrees.

Patience was wearing thin by this stage but, after 17 long minutes, we moved on. It was serendipitous really as we arrived in Julia Creek to find they had just experienced the worst storm in many years. Branches littered the main street, a few trees were uprooted, and two houses lost their roofs, although it was great to see water lying everywhere.

No time to catch Andrew, we kept going on to the Wills Developmental Road and the "pin dropped" locations we had received earlier by text. Fortunately, the storm clouds had cleared, and the sun had reappeared. We spotted our first Letter-winged Kite at the exact location, sitting high in an acacia tree – a special moment for us all as this was a life bird! This was the spot where Andrew had seen 20-30 kites roosting just that morning, so it was decided to release our friend. It was such a relief to unlock the cage, and see this beautiful bird fly free once more. He headed off swiftly without any encouragement and headed for the hills!!! No thank you or goodbye.



We had a drink to our successful release that evening and rested our weary heads on the only beds left in Julia Creek that night!



Next morning, on our return to the same spot at 6am, we were rewarded with some 25 Letter-winged Kites lifting from their roost and circling around above us. A great way to end our trip – and lots to reminisce about on the 670 km trip back home.

Thanks to Deb Carter for helping this bird back to full health. So happy we were trusted to set him free.

Wendy with Rog and Beth

3 LUCKY EMU

I'd like to share a journey my wife and I had in our back yard for seven months leading up to Christmas. We've been caring for injured and orphaned birds for about 12 years in Townsville since moving from Victoria and one species we'd yet to encounter and hoped not to, was emus.

In June an orphaned chick was handed to a vet practice in Mt Isa, the same week another chick was taken to Billabong from Macrossan. Emus are a specialist species along with Cassowaries, Raptors and various seabirds which includes pelicans, darters etc. To rehabilitate emus one has to be on at least a semi-rural property and no-one else we have knowledge of, is licensed. We had two options - euthanise or have a go.

The first chick arrived and was small enough to sleep in a porta cot to start with, as nights were still chilly and it had been sleeping with the vet. True! The second came a few days later and was slightly larger so they graduated to the aviary.



Our next obstacle was to get permission from the departments. This was the second hardest part of the exercise, almost to the point where we felt like criminals.

First permission was granted to care for them by Parks and Wildlife in Townsville then finally we were granted our Permit by DES (Department of Environment and Science). That was one load off our shoulders. A big thankyou to those that believed in us and wrote some very humbling references. While chasing permission the chicks grew rapidly, quickly outgrowing the aviary.

The required height of an enclosure is 2 metres and next door has a 15 metre x 30 metre enclosure which he offered for us to use. In the meantime we erected a 1.2 metre high fenced section in the back yard. Lucky for the emus, feral dogs got into next doors and decimated his whole flock of ducks and geese.

In August we got a call from workers south of Charters Towers, they'd found another chick but it was in bad condition. They took it to a carer who did a brilliant job

rehydrating with honey and water and organising transport.

On arrival it was still unable to stand and both eyes were glued shut. The other two were nearly twice its size, within a few days Helen had him up and eyes open.



Will they get along? Birds can be nasty if one is not up to scratch but it gave back any standover tactics used by the bigger two.

In no time heads are appearing over the fence, another star picket was added for height all round. There were long nights of cutting up cabbages, broccoli etc. A big thank you to two friends for supplying fresh rats, which the emus loved. Next obstacle, an appropriate release site.



We were hoping for an early drop of rain to put some greenery on the ground, luck was on our side.

Our original planned release site was explored. A big thank you to those concerned however we were extremely concerned with certain aspects. Where to next?

Our eldest son served in Afghanistan with a friend that gets access to a large cattle property, out past Hervey Range with Keelbottom Creek running through it. Permission granted!

Another reconnaissance and a thumbs up.

We were advised of a horse float we could use for transport. Another thank you. We positioned it through the back easement, re-adjusted the fence and were set to go.



Plan A failed miserably. Emus are not a silly bird by any means. No way were they going in together. We tried holding a large tarp to usher them in but panic set in and the mission was abandoned. What next?

The macropod carers sedate for transport so it should work for ratites, hopefully. Emails and phone calls to zoos and sanctuaries, vets and carers. We received replies but the most important was the offer from a brilliant young vet nurse and her partner. If it hadn't been for Shannen and Kieran, the whole exercise could've gone pear shaped very quickly.

Shannon works for the Great Artesian vet clinic in Hughenden (a thank you to them for the donation of required sedation) and Kieran has relocated adult emus on previous occasions. He was working way out west and on returning to Townsville did a four hour detour to get the restraints he had made.

The Australia Zoo had recommended oral sedation over IM (intramuscular), so the plan was to lace rats. A trial run on one of the larger birds worked well, underestimating the dosage on the safe side. Around half hour to work then again to wear off.

Monday 23rd December was release day.

Helen had left for Melbourne so unfortunately wasn't present.

Two carers, Lara and Janine. Vet nurse, Shannen. Kieran, with the troop carrier and was a one man army (he bagged, hooded and carried each bird). Lee,

Property contact. Three young ladies, Chloe, Grace and Jessica - emu spotters.



8 am. Sedation begins but not to plan. The same emu that was trialed takes his but the other two, no way. One was force fed but the other had to be jabbed, so almost immediate effect. Lee takes off to get the key, a detour, so hopefully is still in front.



Lara and Shannen with emus in the back of the troopie, restraining emus with sedation ready, if necessary. Luck was on our side, Lee is back in front after getting the key, so ease off and gates open, wheels keep turning. Two possible release sites, both with permanent water, the second site requiring a creek crossing, however at the first site three voices from the back seat are yelling, emus!!!

Couldn't believe our luck, once again Kieran carried each emu to the shade as the two adults watched curiously. Once all three were unrestrained, all remained calm. There was some concern as to the reception the young birds would get. Thankfully they joined the adults pecking away at the greenery as if it was just another day in the life of an emu.



Hope you enjoyed our adventure and thank you to all those involved, some of whom I failed to mention. They even ate prison rations.

Permission to name all present has been given.

Chris and Helen Bell

WISDOM

As at January 4 this year, Wisdom the Laysan albatross is incubating her first egg in 4 years. Wisdom's approximate age is 74.



Wisdom is in the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge at the northwestern edge of the Hawaiian Archipelago. Information from the USFWS Columbia Pacific Northwest.

HOODIES

On our trip south one of the target species on my list was the Hooded Plover. In mid-September we hit the eastern Victorian coast at a place called Shipwreck Creek. It's in the Croajingolong National Park, just south of Mallacoota. The weather was abysmal, and I spent little time on the beach. We then spent some time farther west at Cape Conran where the weather was kinder, and I could spend a little more time strolling the beach. Any effort though was to no avail.

The Victorian beaches weren't in reach again until mid-October when we camped at Big Hill in the Otway National Park. Our first excursion from the camp site was to go to Apollo Bay for a look-see. We were cruising along the Great Ocean Road, just short of Apollo Bay, when I spotted a 'Friends of the Hooded Plover' sign on the beach. A quick check in the rear-view mirror, onto the brakes, and pulled into a small parking bay. A short walk back up the road and there they were. They were obviously nesting and the 'Friends' had put up a rope fence and some signs to warn people. We remained on the road verge, well outside the fenced area. We stayed for a very short time due to our location on the verge. I took a few distant photos, said "tick" and moved on.



I didn't have to worry about missing Hooded Plovers though as before our time was up at Big Hill, a nesting pair was located on Lorne beach. I know this as it made the local news. Apparently, the location they chose is right in front of a large resort and the beach gets extremely crowded with people over summer. On our way to Geelong, I had to stop and have look for myself. There they were, fenced and sign posted, right in front of a massive holiday apartment complex. How easy is it to find Hooded Plovers in October!

Mark Horvath

RANGERS

Big Hill in the Otway National Park is about the only National Park campground where rangers visit frequently, that we have encountered. While there we met a ranger at least every second day.

That's not to say they didn't visit when we were out exploring. Anyway, this is a tale about local knowledge. On one of their visits three came to cut down an old dead tree. A supervising ranger, a chainsaw wielding ranger and a chainsaw novice. Let's just call them ranger 1, 2 and 3 respectively. While rangers 2 and 3 were felling the tree I had a conversation with ranger 1, and he advised that ranger 2 was also a birder. Once the tree was down and cut up ranger 2 came over for a chat while ranger 3 lent against the back of their vehicle. We talked in general about the species in the area and then I mentioned the Rufous Bristlebird. He suggested that I go to Split Point as they are seen there quite frequently. Ranger 3 piped up from the back of the vehicle, "If you sit quietly for five minutes at the Split Point lighthouse, you'll see ten". Obviously after that comment there was banter about reputation, bets, hunting ranger 3 down if the birds were not forthcoming, and so forth.



The following morning, we headed off to Split Point to find these bristlebirds. Unfortunately, it was a little late in the morning and there were tourists everywhere, however we were still able to spot six although getting a photo was tricky. Six is a little less than the ten promised but enough to keep us satisfied.



First thing the next day I sped off to Split Point again to hopefully get a photo. I arrived to find no tourists, although there were a couple of walkers and people with dogs. Halfway up the track, there were the bristlebirds moving around on the track. Getting a bird photo sometimes can be very easy.

Mark Horvath

LARA WETLANDS AUG 24

Binoculars and cameras were always ready as we relaxed in our comfy arm-chairs at our lakeside campsite. The birdlife was abundant, and all so confident with being relatively close to us humans. We stretched our legs regularly with the Wetlands' circuit walk. We also tried the 2 self-guided bush walking tracks and got to know some of the local bush birds. At Lara Wetlands the morning chorus' at sunrises, together with beautiful sunsets over the lake, were as brilliant as the millions of stars which punctured the darkness of the clear night skies.



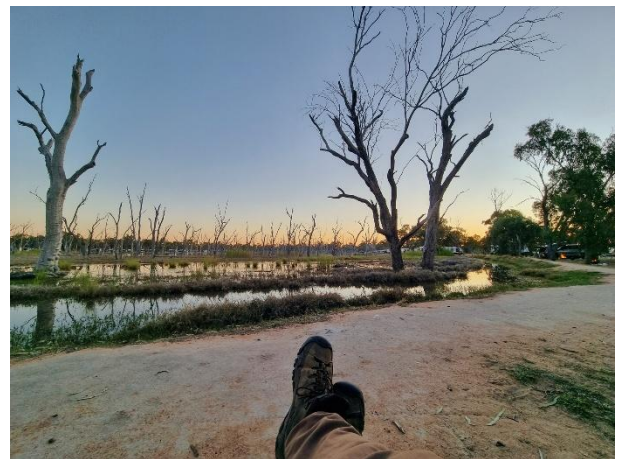
A Square-tailed Kite patrolled over the lake each afternoon. A Little Eagle visited often, but was always quickly despatched by the resident Whistling Kites.



We thoroughly enjoyed our wonderful bush/lakeside camp-stay at Lara Wetlands, late August 2024. Oh so much birdlife to enjoy. Our few days here provided some great birding experiences. Will we return? ... Yes! ... And yes again...

Len and Chris Ezzy

At camp: With Brown Treecreepers at our feet, Australian Ringnecks, Pale-headed Rosellas, Red-winged Parrots, Grey-crowned Babblers, and many more bird species coming in for drinks at the water's edge just metres from our armchairs, we didn't really have to leave camp to enjoy Lara's amazing birdlife. Striped Honeyeaters appeared everywhere we walked. Black-tailed Nativehens (with chicks) often walked through our campsite. Very welcome visitors.



On the wetlands: Right beside us, Black-fronted Dotterels fed just metres away. The Black-tailed Nativehens were devoted parents, relentlessly chasing away the Dusky Moorhens when they came too close to their gorgeous, downy chicks. The Pied Stilts were in territorial/breeding mode, as we watched some of their amazing aerial battles. Observing Yellow-billed Spoonbills, White-necked Herons, Australasian Grebes, many duck species, including our favourite, Pink-eared Duck families with chicks of various ages gave us much pleasure.

Lara Wetlands has a very informative website.

<https://www.larawetlands.com.au/>

When to visit: - Open 1st May to 6th October 2025 (Camping Fees and Day Visit Fees apply) (There is also one only Cabin Accommodation available)

How to get there: - Lara Station is a 15,000acre station stay. Access is well-signposted. Lara's 13km access road on the western side of the Landsborough Highway is just 28 kms south of Barcaldine. From the Highway intersection, a further 13km access road (red sand) brings you to Lara Station and its spectacular wetlands.

2025 BEGINNINGS FOR THE QUEST

Beth and I spent Christmas and the New Year with Wendy and Roger and all their family in a farm house near Canungra. There was a farm dam, a low, well-branched dead tree nearby and an open forest of eucalypts in which the Rainbow Rosellas and Scaly Breasted Lorikeets chatted and fed each afternoon in full sunlight. A King Parrot visited regularly to sip water from the gutters, which were obviously blocked. It often sat on the verandah rail inspecting us as we enjoyed our coffees. Pale-headed Rosellas flew by and Crested Pigeons sat in the dead tree. Noisy Miners nearly drove us nuts with their constant chipping but the Common Bronzewing which poked around on the lawn, made up for that and a family of Pied Butcherbirds also provided excellent entertainment. Egrets, a White-faced Heron, Willie Wagtails, Magpie Larks and the occasional fly-over of a Channel-billed Cuckoo added to our collection.

New Year's Day arrived and we were off to a large dam west of Beaudesert, where numerous water birds hit the list. One Great Crested Grebe, all the Cormorants except the Pied, Royal Spoonbills, Darters, Pelicans, Superb Fairy Wrens and a Red-backed Fairy-wren, Silvereyes, a Golden Headed Cisticola, a Wedge-tailed Eagle, a Kestrel, a Black Shouldered Kite and Double-barred Finches were among the delights seen that day. I must mention that the common Duck down that way is the Maned (Wood) Duck. They seem to be everywhere.



Wonga Pigeon

Len Ezzy

Day 2: Along with a thousand others, we drove up to O'Reilly's Rainforest Resort where the King Parrots and Crimson Rosellas were being fed by excited "others". The Red-browed Finches were also having a hay-day and later, two Wonga Pigeons joined in the pecking. While having smoko at the edge of the rainforest, we had good views of Female (or Juvenile) Paradise Rifle-birds feeding in a native fig tree. The boardwalk was next and it didn't disappoint - with an Eastern Whip-bird and Russet-tailed Thrush scratching around, three Scrub-Wrens (Yellow-throated, White-browed and Large-billed), several Rufous Fantails, Grey Fantails and a Golden Whistler being easily seen. Welcome Swallows flew around near the Cafe and to our delight, a Regent Bowerbird perched at the top of a tall gum tree within binocular distance, while we were enjoying our

expensive lunch.



Regent Bowerbird

Len Ezzy

Day 3: To Binna Burra. Showers of rain, a muddy track through the forest, uphill and down dale with steps to make it difficult for me, Rufous Fantails and Eastern Yellow Robins were a poor show in comparison to O'Reilly's. Not only that, but we had scrub itch afterwards. Ugh

Day 4: Mt Tamborine Botanic Gardens. Very beautiful and delightful, but birdless, until 2 Topknot Pigeons sitting high in a tree across from the car park, made it worthwhile.

Day 5: We took the Lindsay Highway to Warwick in order to get to our airbnb at Ballandean, near the Girraween National Park. The Bell Miners were heard but not seen, so only the sighting of Yellow Thornbills at our lunch spot provided an addition to our lists. The airbnb just happened to be at a vineyard so there were birds in the garden (Yellow-rumped Thornbills and White-eared Honeyeaters) while along the dirt road to Sunset National Park, both the Red-rumped Parrots and Eastern Rosellas were sitting on the electricity wires. There were also Reed Warblers in the vineyard dam.



Speckled Warbler

Annette Sibson

Day 6: To Girraween. Score for the day - Rufous Whistler, Noisy Friarbird, Little Friarbird, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters (the predominant Honeyeater), Leaden Flycatcher, Red Wattlebird, White-naped Honeyeater,

Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Sacred Kingfisher, White-throated Tree-creeper and - Speckled Warblers (lifer). As Beth and I were leaving, (in car, motor running) I just glimpsed something large and brown drop down behind a log in front of us. Two Tawny Frogmouths were sunning, or anting, themselves in the dust. A good day!



Bell Miner

Annette Sibson

In the Toowoomba area, we added Barking Owl, Grey-crowned Babblers, Black Swans, Dusky Woodswallow, Satin Bowerbirds, Black-faced Monarch, Bell Miner and Brown Gerygone. On the homeward trip, via Nanango, we added another 50 plus Great Crested Grebes, Apostlebirds, Spangled Drongo, Little Corellas, White-winged Chough, Pheasant Coucal and Oriental Dollarbirds, Squatter Pigeons, and many northern birds, including 3 Jabirus (sic).



Red-kneed Dotterel

Annette Sibson

WUNJUNGA: Marsh Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Pied Stilt, Australasian Pipit, Horsfield's Bushlark, Glossy Ibis, Greater Sand Plover (in beautiful breeding colours), Red-kneed Dotterel, White-winged Terns, Brolga, Torresian Imperial Pigeon, Australian Bustard,

Whiskered Tern and at least one other tern we couldn't really identify. There were hundreds of them sitting on the claypans. Great excitement to finish a wonderful holiday enjoying rain, hail, fog (Toowoomba), retracking from a flooded creek, being with family, finding wonderful birds and enjoying the Australian bush with all its pleasures.

Elna Kerswell

BIRD FLU

Avian influenza, also known as bird flu, is a contagious viral disease that can affect both domestic and wild birds. It is caused by influenza A viruses, like those that cause human flu. Many kinds of bird flu have no obvious symptoms and cause no or only very mild illness. However, highly pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1, commonly known as H5 avian influenza (bird flu), is a serious and contagious strain of bird flu. Overseas, this strain has killed millions of wild birds and tens of thousands of wild mammals.

What you can do to help

Never handle or remove dead birds and wildlife, or those with suspected bird flu.

Be safe when entering wildlife areas and keep your distance if you see sick or dead birds.

People are being asked to:

- Avoid contact with sick or dead wildlife and their environment. Do not allow pets to touch or eat sick or dead wildlife.
- Record what you see, the location the animal was found, and take photos or video.
- Report any unusual sickness or mass mortality events in wildlife via the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888. Reporting will alert authorities to the event so they can evaluate the need for diagnostic testing or other investigation. Even if testing is not undertaken, all reports help inform our understanding of the disease and how to manage it.

Bird flu is a notifiable animal disease so you must report if you have a reasonable suspicion that birds are infected.

Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888

Information taken from the DCCEEW (Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water) <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/invasive-species/diseases-fungi-and-parasites/birdflu>

QUEST

If you haven't signed up for the Quest this year, now is your chance. Just send Wal Threlfall an email on contact@birdlifetownsville.org.au

It's great incentive to get out and about looking for birds in our area. Challenge yourself to see how many you can see over the year. You can keep a record of your sightings any way that works for you – hand written list in a book, Excel spreadsheet, a list on the Pizzey & Knight bird app. It's about seeing birds, learning more about birds and having fun.

RULES :

1. See a different bird species for every day of the year, the aim is to achieve 365 different bird species, however if you are really keen you can try and see more than 365 bird species.
2. 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. This allows late comers to join "The Quest" without being disadvantaged due to holidays etc.
3. Each different bird species seen can only be counted once. Birds that can only be heard are not counted; they have to be seen.
4. 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.
Example: The months of January and February combined have a total of 59 days (not counting a leap year) so you must have seen and counted at least 60 different bird species (not 59) by the end of February, otherwise you are out.
5. Only bird species seen in Queensland are eligible to be counted. This includes feral species e.g: Indian Peafowl (Peacock), Spotted Dove, Common Myna etc.
6. Count updates are recorded each month at the Monthly General Meetings and in the quarterly newsletter "The Drongo"
7. The winner of "The Quest" will be the first eligible member to reach 365 different bird species in accordance with the Rules. If no one achieves that goal then the winner will be the eligible member with the greatest number of different bird species seen for the year.
8. Even after the winner has been announced, "The Quest" continues for all eligible members until the 31st of December, thus allowing those members to achieve a personal best.
9. At the finish of your "Quest" all participating members are expected to pay as soon as possible (but no later than the 31st of December) according to the number of different bird species they have seen and counted. Each different bird species counted costs 5 cents.

10. All "The Quest" monies raised are donated to conservation and environmental projects, selected by the Birdlife Townsville Committee.
11. All participating members (who have paid) will be entered into a draw to win a prize nominated by the Birdlife Townsville Committee which will be drawn at the next AGM.

Remember to win it — you have to be in it.

TAWNY FROGMOUTH

Tawny Frogmouth calls
From his old gum tree
Lost in the darkness
Away from my campfire.
Oom-Oom-Oom

I listen for a while
As the fire flares and dies.
Oom-Oom-Oom
From the big tree
That used to half shade
Cars and kids
In apricot summers.

At last I respond to his call
And find him Ooming on
Peering around
At my torch's glare
But content to sit
And Oom.

I leave him
And stir my fire.

Then Boobook starts
Further over
In the pillared gum
From which a great bough
Crashed and crushed
Years ago.

I found him too
Bobbing his scholastic brow
And boobooking his appreciation
In my direction.

Oom-Oom-Oom.
Boobook! Boobook!

My fire flickers
And smokes
And blackens into ash.

BJ Brock 7/10/77