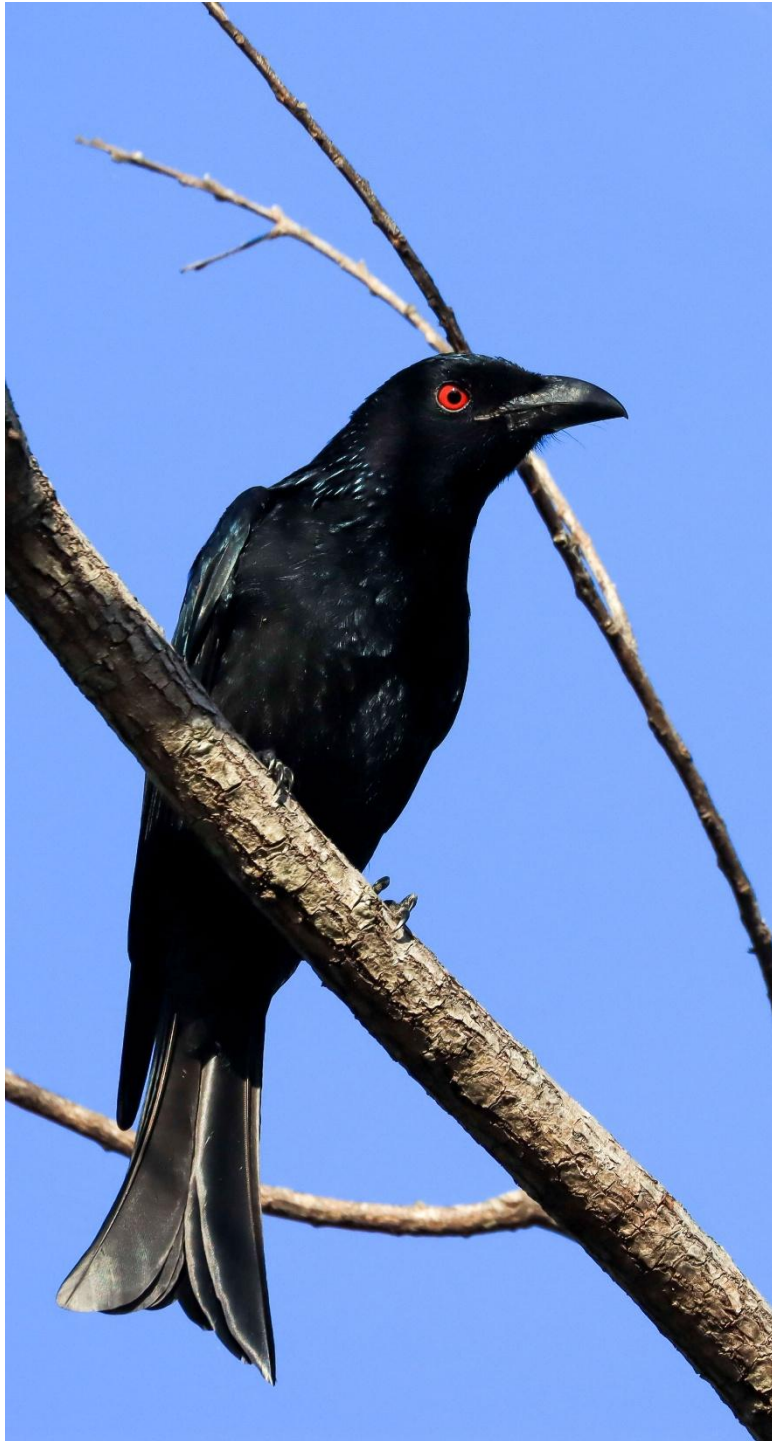


# The Drongo

Number 179 August 2025



*John Lowry*

Lara Wetlands

Mt Glorious

Mystery bird



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

It was with much sadness that the committee had to accept our much-loved president's resignation from the position and from the committee. I'm sure you will miss her, as the president, as much as I will. Anyway, once the position was declared vacant the hunt was on for an interim president, in accordance with the Birdlife Australia constitution.

The canvassing started immediately with eligible committee members trying to shore up votes, fully aware that the secretary was on the watch for any dirty deals or smear tactics. In the final wash up, I was elected interim president unopposed. Wasn't much competition for the position really. Hopefully I won't cause too much chaos until the position is formally filled at the next Annual General Meeting, in February 2026.

*Mark Horvath*

By now, you will all have heard the news of my resignation as President and from the Committee. I had to take this step to concentrate on my health issues and the health issues of a family member.

I have been honoured to be President of the branch for several years. I know that I am leaving the branch in the very capable hands of an excellent committee. I assume the new President Mark Horvath will enjoy the support from members that I had.

Once I am back on my feet I will be back out there joining in all the activities that this branch has supported for many years. I'm sure you all know that you can't keep an enthusiastic birder away from the birds for too long.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee members and our wonderful members who volunteer for so many important jobs for the branch. This has kept the branch active in promoting the awareness of birds and their habitat needs in what has been some very difficult years.

*Janet Robino*

### YOUR 2025 COMMITTEE

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

Newsletter Editor Annette Sibson [annette.sibson@bigpond.com](mailto:annette.sibson@bigpond.com)

Deadline for next Drongo is November 31 2025. Please send articles as Word documents, photos as attachments.  
*The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Birdlife Townsville.*

## ROAD TRIP TO LARA WETLANDS

### Part 1

So - as the quest called, Beth and I decided to take a quick trip west in order to gain a few newbies. Where to? Perhaps the Lara Wetlands would be suitable for a quick trip, so a plan was made. First night in Pentland to check out the dam. Success? Yes. Two Australian Shoveller as well as Grey Teal, coot, Australasian Grebe, stilt, Swamp Hen, jacana, two different egret, a Striated Pardalote and White-throated Honeyeater.

A good start, so off to the pub for dinner. Yummy - slow cooked leg of lamb and vegetables and a wine to wash it down. An interesting place with a busy pool table, locals having a beer, tourists from the caravan park and some workmen all enjoying themselves. The motel rooms at the pub were fully booked, but we had a very comfortable, well-set up room at the caravan park. The new owners are great and have rejuvenated both the caravan park and the pub.

Day 2. Next morning we enjoyed driving past some patches of golden wattle and various grevilleas in full bloom, on the way to the White Mountains, but once there, it was disappointing and little joy to be had as we only found Brown Honeyeater. So to Torrens Creek for smoko, where every passing caravan pulled up for a toilet break.



White-winged Fairywren

A. Sibson

Turning south towards Aramac, we drove for about 100 kms before glimpsing any interesting birds. Beth pulled up quickly and reversed to a small, leafless bush where a male White-winged Fairywren was besporting himself in front of his admiring harem, and just below him were two Pictorella Mannikin. Wow! It is many years since we saw either of them, so we were thrilled. Also along the electricity lines there were Red-backed Kingfisher and Black-faced Woodswallow. Two Australian Bustard tried to commit suicide, taking their time to cross our path and later on, this act was repeated by two Brolga. Brown Quail flew across in front of us at one spot and then we saw an Emu with his nine off-spring hiding behind a shrubby tree, on the road side of the fence. He was in the same place when we returned two days later, so we are worried about the outcome for those

chicks. Zebra Finch, Brown Falcon, and Grey-crowned Babbler were also seen before we reached the Bowen Downs turnoff, where there is a delightful picnic area. Lunch break at 2.30pm.



Grey-crowned Babbler

A. Sibson

South of there, we were engulfed in a heavy downpour which lasted for about 10 kilometres, so even the underside of the car got a thorough wash. We had a toilet stop in Aramac then pushed on. Up to there, we had met at least 40 caravans heading north. After that, the road deteriorated into narrow bitumen with sharp, broken sides and thick soft red mud on the sides of it. OH! Our lovely clean car soon ended up in a parlous state with mud glued under the mudguards almost blocking the wheels from turning and mud splashed over the tail lights and reversing cameras. Meeting trucks and semi-trailers as well as caravans, requires one to leave the bitumen and navigate through this mud. It was a long slow drive for the last 70 kilometres to Barcaldine and then we had to poke the mud off the mudguards, using some handy poinciana pods which were lying on the ground behind the motel. The owner told Beth to use the hose, so she managed to get it fairly clean. Dinner in the restaurant - expensive - then a well-deserved rest.



Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater

A. Sibson



### Part 2 - Day 3.

The next morning, we set off for Lara Wetlands, but after driving about 14 kms Beth looked at her petrol gauge - hmmm - a bit low. We turned back, filled up, then repeated that short drive. The next stop was at the Patrick Creek lagoon. This is one of our favourite places as we have seen some very interesting birds there. Yes, it happened again. A flock of White-winged Chough was feeding near a trough on the other side of the lagoon. We had great views as they moved along very slowly and we were able to get close. Black-fronted Dotterel, a Plumed Egret and Spiny-Cheeked Honeyeater were the only others of interest. However, on the way home on our second visit, we were enthralled by the antics of two Restless Fly-catcher which hovered about two metres from the ground, sometimes rising and sometimes dropping lower. We couldn't see what they were feeding on, but there must have been some sort of insects. We didn't want to get too close and chase them away. I have never seen that behaviour before so we watched for quite a while. A Yellow-billed Spoonbill was sifting in a smaller lagoon, but the main joy was in seeing, close up, a Striped Honeyeater about to have a drink. A flock of Grey-crowned Babbler also appeared that time.



*Striped Honeyeater*

*A.Sibson*

I digress - On to the Lara road and a slow drive looking for robins. Jackie Winter were in abundance and Yellow Thornbill, which we were studying, when I unexpectedly spotted a Hooded Robin sitting quietly facing us in the same tree. Success!



*Hooded Robin*

*A.Sibson*

We checked in at the office, drove around to a suitable area and had our smoko before wandering over to the water's edge and navigating our way around it, dodging caravans and campers. A popular winter destination for those grey nomads. Pink-eared Duck, numerous Grey Teal, a few Pacific Black Duck, and Australian Grebe were on the water but no Black-tailed Native Hen. Grey-crowned Babbler, Brown Treecreeper, Red-winged Parrot, Pale-headed Rosella, Laughing Kookaburra, Spotted Bowerbird and White-plumed Honeyeater also appeared during our few hours of searching. We were well satisfied with the day's tally especially after our second visit to Patrick Creek lagoon.



*Spotted Bowerbird*

*A.Sibson*

Back to town and Beth thought we should walk along the lagoon there, so I summoned up a little bit more of my depleted energy to wander slowly along the cement path, where we had conversations with two other birding couples.

Day 4. The road to Aramac was fortunately dry by this time, so it wasn't a great hassle pulling off the road to let large vehicles go by. (We were pleased to do this, as on the way south, we had twice caught up with the same caravan which had completely shredded one of its dual tyres. We checked with the poor couple and sympathised with them each time. A bit of a predicament for them as he had no more spares and still over 80 kilometres to go.)

We did have the pleasure of seeing three Banded Lapwing right beside the road, not too far north of Barcaldine.

In Aramac I took photos of many of the white bulls to show to friends before we continued on our merry way.



Later, a Black Falcon thrilled us and then a White-bellied Sea Eagle. Out there? Unusual, but that's what it was. Smoko was enjoyed at the Bowen Downs turnoff picnic area again, and finally we had a late lunch at Moorriya National Park creek which surprisingly had a lot of water in it. It had flooded earlier, as debris littered the ground, but few birds were heard or seen. Pentland Dam - only one Australian Shoveller, but two Cotton Pygmy Geese were added to my quest list and there were still no Magpie Geese. With that, we called it quits, unloaded our gear into the very comfortable cabin, and drove back to the pub for another feed.



Emu

A.Sibson

Day 5. A pleasant drive back to Charters Towers with coffee and scones at the Salt Lane Cafe before the drive home. One Black-shouldered Kite, several Brown Falcon and an Emu by the roadside completed our short but interesting week's birding. The countryside is in a great state with healthy trees, water in most of the little creeks and an abundance of beautiful yellow wattles. If you can and have not already done so, go out west soon.

P.S.

In part one, I forgot to mention the 22 Budgerigars sitting on a power line, which we saw south of Aramac on our outward journey, but we were disappointed at not seeing any Cockatiels. Next time!

Elna Kerswell

## MISS THEM WHEN THEY'VE GONE

My first year in Townsville has been full of discoveries, feathered and other.

There are clearly more than 4 seasons and the birds have helped me discover this new calendar.

I have found myself missing the calls of the Eastern Koel, the flash of white from a plump Torresian Imperial-Pigeon, the raspy call of the Channel-billed Cuckoo.

When will the shore birds return?

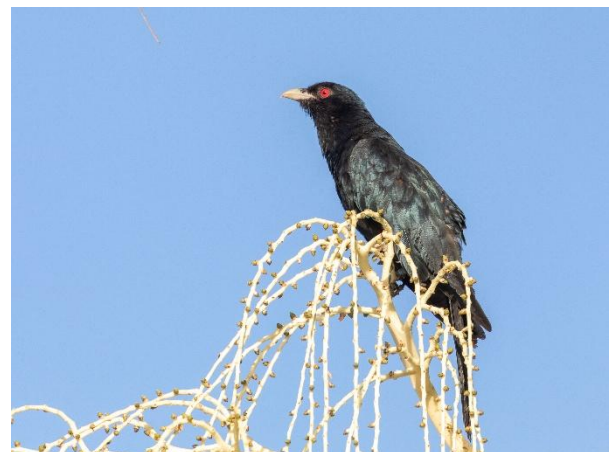
Do we have new winter visitors?

For now, I'm enjoying our residents - the stoic stayers. And keeping an eye out for who's coming and going - the ducks seem to be moving with more Grey Teal and Pacific Black at the Common - but no Hardhead.

Are they late?

For all of us discovering how better to connect to our planet through our avian friends staying tuned to their comings and goings is a good reminder that change is afoot.

Mick Theobald



Peeowit pee wee is all they ever say  
The Magpie Larks I hear and see every day  
Dainty black and white birds of town parks and countryside

Mud nest builders known and loved Australia wide  
In cup shaped mud nest high on fork of tree  
The female lay pale spotted eggs of five to three  
In Spring their nesting borders against aerial predators they defend

For protection their young on them does depend  
In the backyard often see them walking around  
In search of slugs and insects that they find on the ground

Familiar birds to many and to me  
They are also known as mudlark and pee wee  
I see and hear them singing every day  
Peeowit pee wee is all they ever say.

Francis Duggan



## WHAT IS THIS BIRD?



The first photo is of a critter that we have lots of trouble seeing around Townsville and yet we were tripping over them everywhere on the island - including the public swimming pool and in the shallows of the sea. There were signs that said "Feeding the birds is an offence, fines do apply." However these birds could not read and Pat lost most of a biscuit when one jumped up on the table and swiped the treat, then dashed off with a number of others in pursuit - all hoping to pinch it for themselves. We counted 22 of these birds around the pool alone. (Answer on last page)

*Warren and Pat Charlton*

## MT GLORIOUS

I was down in Brisbane for a course recently, and Gavin and I decided to stay for a long weekend. On our last day, we caught up with my colleague (Eamon) and his father (also Gavin) to look for birds at Lake Wivenhoe and Mount Glorious. Hine Road leading down to the lake was alive with Scarlet Honeyeaters—one of which had met an unfortunate end in the web of a golden orb-weaver spider.



*Scarlet Honeyeater*

*Gavin O'Meara*

Other highlights from that area included a sleepy Australian Owlet-nightjar, Rose Robin, a lone Red-backed Kingfisher (that seemed to be causing a bit of a stir among the Brisbane birding community), and a very bold antechinus.



*Owlet Nightjar*

*Gavin O'Meara*

We drove on up to Mount Glorious, with a quick strategic stop on the way for Bell Miner and Spotted Pardalote. This little town reminded us of Paluma, with its cool misty weather, quaint village feel, and fabulous birdlife. Species included Paradise Riflebird, Regent Bowerbird, and Australian Logrunner (a pair with a hungry fledgling, trailed by a hopeful Yellow-throated Scrubwren).

We dragged ourselves away to head for the airport, but a lucky loo stop yielded a bonus species—while Gavin was waiting for me, he followed a mysterious crunching noise to a pair of Glossy Black-cockatoos, feeding in a she-oak right next to the car park! A wonderful end to the trip.





*Glossy Black-Cockatoo*

*Gavin Colthart*

I later read that glossies are extremely choosy eaters—not only do they feed exclusively on a small number of *Allocasuarina* and *Casuarina* species, but they will also return time after time to favoured trees, sometimes eschewing nearby trees of the same species that are laden with cones.

*Claire Willard*

## MAPLE COTTAGE

In late May Pat and I spent a few days in the Atherton Tablelands, staying at a location we hadn't visited since near to Pat's 60th birthday - Possum Valley (near to Ravenshoe). We had booked the Maple Cottage because it was higher in location to the other cottage on the property - Black Bean, which meant we were up amongst the birds.

One surprise was seeing a tree kangaroo on the ground on our first venture out.



*Australian Swiftlet*

*A.Sibson*

Our quest numbers had started to drop off but this short stay enabled us to find interesting birds such as Australian Swiftlet, King Parrot, White-throated Tree-creeper, Yellow-throated Scrubwren, Eastern Whipbird, Golden Whistler, Victoria's Riflebird, Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, amongst others. The one we thought we would have to visit Etty Bay to see was a Southern Cassowary.



*Southern Cassowary*

*A.Sibson*

This was our second surprise but I'm not certain whether we were the same to it! We were on our last return to the cottage when turning a corner we came almost face to face with the bird. We had the feeling that it wanted to use the road too but it went off into the bush, perhaps reluctantly.

*Warren and Pat Charlton*

## LITTER STUDY

This one is for the photographers amongst us. Hannah Faraone has been looking for photographs of birds interacting with litter for this study.

I had some photographs of a corvid with a lolly pop stick, the stick still had some lolly left on it and the corvid was tasting and walking around with the stick, eventually it flew away with it.

Up here in Townsville there must be some photographers that have photos of Great Bowerbird interacting with litter. I know they are not the regular photos that we would show or keep but they would be of interest to Hannah.

Below is an excerpt from the recent email on preliminary findings that I've received from Hannah.

Since beginning in October 2024, we have collected 143 images through our website and by direct email. These images have included 50 different bird species interacting with litter in 6 ways: ingestion, entanglement, use of litter as nesting material, use as breeding material, capture and handling, and distraction displays. The most common species have been the Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen* and the Australasian Darter *Anhinga novaehollandiae*, and the most common types of litter across all images have been off-white/clear plastics.

We are still collecting images! Please continue to submit your photos through our website:

<https://biocollect.ala.org.au/acsa/project/index/43b52a65-7d07-42c1-9c0c-4b967cfce53c?&hub=acsaoor>, or by direct email to: [ho.faraone@federation.edu.au](mailto:ho.faraone@federation.edu.au).

We are continuing our image collection for this study through to the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, 2026. After this date, our website will still remain active however images contributed won't be able to be included in our study. Once the study is complete, we will be sure to share our findings with you!

Thank you again for your support of our study!

Kind regards,  
Hannah, Birgita and the research team  
HREC 2024/143  
AEC 2024/003  
Hannah Faraone  
PhD Candidate | CeRDI

**Federation University Australia**  
[ho.faraone@federation.edu.au](mailto:ho.faraone@federation.edu.au)

## YOU MUST BE CUCKOO

On Townsville's coldest day in living memory (maybe an over exaggeration) nine brave souls took on The Common survey. The first hurdle was getting to The Common. The Townsville running club closed the Pallarenda Rd for one of their big calendar events but luckily for us the police knew us birders were coming and gave us a blue light escort to the gate. You know it - bird surveying is important!

We had four new birders with us and an interstate visitor who, whilst not a birder loved the experience.

Two months in a row the survey team identified 65 species in two hours. Highlights can be a little personal but for me a Peregrine Falcon is always special. Genus of the month were the cuckoo with *Chrysococcyx*, Little-Bronze and Shining Bronze Cuckoo, *Cacomantis* with Pallid and Fan-tailed Cuckoo, and many peoples favourite *Centropus*, the Pheasant Coucal. Missed the Brush Cuckoo (also a *Cacomantis*) this time and the Channel-billed Cuckoo (*Scythrops*) will likely reappear soon.

The raptors were out with eagle (Wedge-tailed/White-bellied Sea), kite (Black, Brahminy, Whistling), an osprey, falcon (Peregrine), and a harrier (Swamp) all making an appearance.

The RAAF security team met us at the airport fence (they do most months) and reminded us to not take photos of the airbase. No problem, happy to be responsible birders!

Special thanks to Pat and Warren Charlton – great knowledge and happy to share.

Reminder that September's Common survey moves to the summer start time of 06:30am.

Mick Theobald



Little Bronze-Cuckoo

A.Sibson



## PALUMA WOODLANDS RETREAT



Welcome .....we'd love to share our rainforest retreat with you!

Location: 20 Smith Crescent, Paluma (Through town to the Village Community Centre on the right, then right into Smith Crescent, and we are the last house ...the driveway for the 2 bay carport is at the turn around space at the end of Smith Crs. then 2 steps up to path leading to house. There is no number on the house.

For week nights we request a donation of \$60 per couple per night, plus \$10 for any extra adults is requested whilst the Bank shares ownership! On weekends we prefer a two night stay.



*Satin Bowerbird*

*Mark Horvath*

If you wish to feed the birds, please bring fruit .....they love pawpaw, banana, mango and grapes cut up very small. Most common visitors to the verandah are the Lewin's, McLeay's, and White-cheeked Honeyeater; Victoria Riflebird; Satin Bowerbird in winter, and an occasional Black-eared Catbird.

Please don't leave food out on verandah overnight as white tailed rats will visit. The rats will also come into the house so please keep screen doors (up and downstairs) closed at all times - unless you are sitting and keeping watch.

Green wheelie bin needs to be put out on the roadside after your stay- if you use it. Recycling bins can be found at Gumbaroo.

Remember your binoculars.



*Black-eared Catbird*

*Mark Horvath*

Best walks are to Cloudy Creek Falls, de Witts lookout, and the H track off the Loop Road. Most birds are seen around the village as they feed on the fringes of gardens and forest. Behind the Environmental Ed Centre and down the road to Gumburu are also good spots for birding. The Grandis Forest on the Hidden Valley Road is a great spot for Eastern Yellow Robin, tree creeper, whistler etc

Enjoy your stay.

Contacts: Beth Snewin Ph 47 796094 0404759718  
Wendy Kaus Ph 47 752098 a/h

Editor note – remember that the main road to Paluma is still unpassable for the majority of us. It's a three hour trip via the back roads to Paluma now.



*Victoria's Riflebird*

*Mark Horvath*

## ANSWER TO WHAT BIRD IS THAT



*Buff-banded Rail* Warren Chalrton

## LATHAM'S SNIPE COUNT UPDATE

The new dates for the upcoming snipe counts are listed below.

The next season's survey dates are September 20, November 15, 2025 and January 17, 2026.

Latham's Snipe has been added to the Vulnerable list under the EPBC Act.

The information below has been received from Dr. Birgita Hansen, she is one of the researchers on this project.

The results of last season were as follows:

- September 2024 total = 677 (over 71 reporting areas)
- November 2024 total = 1080 (over 87 reporting areas)
- January 2025 total = 603 (over 88 reporting areas)

There has been a major revamp of the website. Here is a link to the new site. <https://lathamssnipeproject.au/>

You can report your sightings to Birgitta directly now using the form link below.  
<https://lathamssnipeproject.au/report-a-sighting/>

## SWIFT PARROT SIGHTING

In early July this year a Victorian bird watcher saw what could have been, the entire population of Swift Parrot, in a small area near Bendigo. The estimated flock size was 600 to 700 birds, possibly all the Swift Parrots that are left in the wild.

The Swift Parrot has been on the critically endangered list since 2016. Modelling by scientists has suggested that by the 2030's there will be no Swift Parrots left. Habitat loss and the sugar glider are the bird's biggest threats.

The Swift Parrot migrates to Tasmania for summer to breed. The sugar glider has been found preying on the eggs, young and adult Swift Parrots. Scientists, through historical records and DNA sequencing, have found that the sugar glider has only been found in Tasmania for approximately 150 years.

Swift Parrots are typically found in dry sclerophyll forests and woodlands but can also be found in suburban parks and gardens where suitable feed trees occur. In Tasmania, they are closely associated with flowering Tasmanian Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) when actively breeding.



Information from the ABC Central Victoria, BirdLife Australia. Both photos by A. Sibson



## CHRISTMAS IN JULY FUN



All photos on this page taken by Karen Doyle.

## Quest numbers as at August 9 2025

Marlene Acton	155	4/06/2025
Warren Charlton	229	17/08/2025
Wal Threlfall	182	1/07/2025
Annette Sibson	229	17/08/2025
Jill Staunton	186	5/07/2025
Norm Rains	115	25/04/2025
Colton Tinkey	62	3/03/2025
Janet Robino	298	25/10/2025
Wendy Kaus	236	24/08/2025
Elna Kerswell	226	14/08/2025
Beth Snewin	227	15/08/2025
Pat Charlton	227	15/08/2025
Julie Goldsbury	75	16/03/2025
Anne Lawrance	274	1/10/2025
Mick Theobald	225	13/08/2025
Brigid Glass	137	17/05/2025
Chris Corbett	209	28/07/2025
Kathleen Vowles	60	1/03/2025
Claire Willard	261	18/09/2025
Melissa Baker	156	5/06/2025
Geoffrey Morice	126	6/05/2025