One of the more significant sightings in our region for a while was made by Ken Stockton, an American visitor, who on a fishing trip, saw 3 Collared Imperial Pigeon Ducula muelleri (Black-collared Fruit-Pigeon in Simpson and Day), on Fantome Island on 28th Jan. (Fantome Is. is in the Palm Island group immediately south of Orpheus Island about 22 km off the coast east of Ingham). Ken is also a birdwatcher and had binoculars and a copy of Simpson & Day with him. He originally saw one perched in a dead branch above a fresh water stream entering a bay at the northern tip of the island before two others joined this single bird. When disturbed they flew off heading north.

This fruit-pigeon is usually found in the lowlands of New Guinea. The only previous record of the species in Australian territory was at Boigu I. in Torres Strait in 1980, when a single bird was seen to fly to the island at dawn and leave at dusk, apparently on a foray from mainland New Guinea 7 km to the north. The most recent sighting was reported to Birds Australia and the word spread. Mike Carter from Melbourne, always keen to add yet another bird to his Australian list, organised a boat to the Palm Is. from Taylors Beach (NE Ingham).

On February 2nd six local birders joined three who had flown up from the south on a twitching mission to the islands. With permission from the Palm Island Community Council, we searched the area where the pigeons had been reported from, and a forested area on a nearby island, that locals said was a good place to find pigeons. Late in the afternoon an unfamiliar pigeon call was heard but the storms and rain, which had been threatening for days, made further searching impossible. The presence of Collared Imperial Pigeons was not confirmed. The original record has been sent to the Birds Australia Rarities Committee for appraisal.

The islands visited were not particularly rich in bird life. Single Eastern Reef Egrets were on most beaches, a few crested and Lesser Crested Terns and a Great Frigatebird were seen at sea. Dusky Honeyeaters and Helmeted Friarbirds were the only honeyeaters.

The presence of Collared Imperial Pigeons was not confirmed. The original record has been sent to the Birds Australia Rarities Committee for appraisal.

The trip was an opportunity to atlas an area not normally visited by birderos, but finding the Collared Imperial Pigeon was always going to be a long shot. Never the less we should all be aware of their presence in our region and keep a look out for them.

**INSIDE NEWS**

- BA-NQG & Atlas Contacts
- Membership Information
- Bowerbird
- Future Trip Details
- Trip Reports
- Townsville News
- Sightings
- Identification, Observations & News
- Generic Variation of Little Egret
- Black-billed Magpie
- Beach Stone-curlew Sightings Database
- Nest Site Selection Birds v Green Tree Ants
- Birds Eye Chillies on the Menu
- Land for Wildlife
- Atlas
- Cairns Esplanade
- Interesting Places
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- Accommodation, Noticeboard, For Sale
- Position Vacant

**EVENTS CALENDAR**

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<tr>
<td>March 17th</td>
<td>Bluewater State Forest (north of Townsville), permit required. (see P 3)</td>
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<td>March 25th</td>
<td>Sun. Mystery Atlassing trip, Atherton Tableland. (see P3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 13th</td>
<td>Easter campout – St.George/Kimba area west of Laura contact John Clarkson.</td>
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<td>April 28th</td>
<td>Cairns Crocodile Farm – Meet 2.30pm (see P3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 25th</td>
<td>Daintree River Trip with Chris Dahlberg. (see P3)</td>
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<td>June 9th-11th</td>
<td>Queen's Birthday weekend. AGM Cardwell (see P3), more details</td>
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<td>July 1st</td>
<td>Birds Australia 100th Birthday – Big Birthday Birdwatch (see P3)</td>
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<td>July 15th</td>
<td>Sun. Kaban/Ravenshoe area atlassing contact Ian Sinclair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 4th-14th</td>
<td>Cape York atlassing campout expedition, will be based at the Heathlands Ranger Station. BA-NQG atlas sites will be targeted. Further details June CC, contact John Clarkson.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Field Trips may change after publication - contact local reps. for the latest info. This allows flexibility, especially weather conditions. Extra events may also be arranged.
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Convenor: Jon Nott  (07) 4096 823  
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Cairns: Keith Fisher  (07) 4039 0972  
email  lkfisher@austarnet.com.au  
Atherton Tableland: Ian Sinclair  (07) 4091 4544  
email  Ian.Sinclair@dnr.qld.gov.au  
Mossman/Daintree: Del Richards  (07) 4094 1199

**Project Contacts:**
Beach Stone Curlew Study  
Amanda Freeman (contact number as above).
Northern Gulf Regional Strategy Group  
Ian Fox Ph  (07) 4091 4193  email  foxi@fastinternet.net.au  
Gouldian Finch and Birds at Waterholes Survey  
Klaus Uhlenhut (Details for Ingham/Tully Rep.)
Redden Island Survey (Cairns)  
Keith Fisher (Details for Cairns Rep.)
Sarus/Brolga Tableland Crane counts  
Elinor Scambler Ph  (07) 4095 3296  email  dacelo@austarnet.com.au

**Birds Australia Atlast Contacts**
Send atlas sheets to:  
PO Box 776, Malanda  
QLD 4885 or hand them to the following RO's/SRO's

**Northern Region**
Cardwell north & north of Gulf Development Road, inc. Cape York  
Regional Organiser: - (North of 18°)  
Graham Harrington ph: 07 4096 5051  
email: treetop@austarnet.com.au  
SRO'S:-  
Stephen Garnett (Cairns) ph: 07 4052 3088  
email: stephen.garnett@env.qld.gov.au  
Glenn Holmes (Atherton Tableland) ph: 07 4091 4364  
email: dasyornis@ledanet.com.au  
Lloyd Nielsen  (Northern Atherton Tableland)  ph: 07 4094 1549  
email: nielsenl@tpgi.com.au  
Elinor Scambler (Atherton Tableland) ph: 07 4095 3296  
email: dacelo@austarnet.com.au

**Southern Region**
Cardwell south & south of the Gulf Development Road inc. Mt Isa.)  
Regional Organiser:- (South of 18°)  
Jo Wieneke ph: 07 4771 4707  email: bowerbird@msm.com.au  
SRO'S:-  
Ian Clayton(Townsville) ph: 07 4725 6489  
email: birds&bush@ultra.net.au  
Jon Wren (Bowen/Ayr)  ph: 07 4786 2614  
email: maluras5@tpg.com.au  
Marion Crouther  (Mackay-west inc. Mt.Isa)  ph: 07 4958 4613

**Birds Australia Membership**
Subscriptions $62  Concession $46  Family $99
This includes membership of the national organisation + membership of the regional group, Birds Australia - North Queensland Group (BA-NQG). Four issues of the full-colour bird magazine Wingspan + four issues of Contact Call, the BA-NQG newsletter.

Membership forms are available from the Secretary or send subscriptions directly to
Birds Australia  
415 Riversdale Road  
Hawthorn East, Vic 3123
Weekend adventure to Bluewater State Forest Saturday and Sunday 17th and 18th March 2001

Many people may not have visited Bluewater State Forest. It contains the most southern extent of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and probably the most southern extent of a number of north Queensland's species. As access has been restricted over the past years (cyclonic damage to the road), very little research and/or observations have been done in this area. The Department of Natural Resources are therefore interested in gathering information on the area and are opening the State Forest to members of Birds Australia for a weekend campout and bird watch.

Meet 10am Saturday at the locked gate, 13km from highway at Bluewater (Townsville) along Forestry Road 4WD &/or high clearance campout and bird watch.

25th March Sunday Mystery Atlas tour near Atherton.

A very interesting area will be selected covering various habitats. Final route will be decided according to weather conditions. Should be a great day out. Bring lunch; meet at Platypus Park (Herberton Rd out of Atherton) at 7.30am and we can car pool if necessary. Contact Ian Sinclair.

26th April Cairns Crocodile Farm

25th. 26th May Daintree River.

The annual field trip to Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge at Julatten (16 35 435 145 20 27E) was held over the Australia Day weekend. The group split up into smaller parties and headed off in all directions. Mt. Lewis, which is just up the road, provided it's usual good birding with up to 40 Blue-faced Parrot-Finches including a nest 120ft. up a tree (thanks to John Young for pointing that out). Golden Bowerbirds were seen by some, Tooth-billed Bowerbirds were actively calling and a Cassowary was heard grunting as it took off through the rainforest. Some of the other birds seen here were Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Atherton Scrubwren, Chowchilla, Victoria's Riflebird & Bassian
Thrush. The woodland country out towards Abattoir Swamp (nr. Julatten) and beyond to Lake Mitchell (along the Mareeba Road), provided plenty of birds including Squatter Pigeon, Lovely Fairy-wren, White-browed Robin, Yellow-breasted Boobbill and Northern Fantail. Kingfisher Park had its usual good birding; a pair of Red-necked Crakes had 3 chicks getting under our feet! Buff-Breasted Paradise Kingfishers were feeding young as was a Noisy Pitta and Ron provided his legendary hospitality throughout the weekend -- thanks Ron.

Lloyd Nielsen provided evening entertainment on the Friday night with tales of his early days birding in the 50's and 60's - days when birds were strange people (has that changed?) and the nearest birds was 200 miles away. Lloyd also showed some excellent slides. Saturday night's entertainment was provided by Elinor Scambler who forced us all to drink large amounts of champagne, from a endless supply out of her back of her car. It was all to do with a special birthday Elinor was celebrating. All up a great weekend with a bird tally of at least 153 species.

Red Island 11/2/2001 - Keith & Lindsay Fisher

The persistent rains of the previous week gave way to brilliant sunshine and blue skies for this Sunday morning atlas stroll around Redden Island. Four of us walked around the island, avoiding the flooded areas and managed to see 44 species in just over 1 ½ hours. The birds were in short supply and many species were only seen once. There was a family of Spangled Drongo with at least one juvenile, a Channel-billed Cuckoo was heading north and one Rose-crowned Pigeon was seen flying out of the mangroves. One notable absentee was the Pied Imperial-Pigeon; maybe some have already headed northward on migration. A pleasant morning was had before the rains returned again.

Pied Imperial Pigeon Counts

One of the longest ongoing bird studies in Australia must surely be the seasonal count of Pied Imperial Pigeons on North Brook Island (off the coast from Cardwell). In 1966 Margaret and Arthur Thorsbourne thought there seemed to be a lot of pigeons in the area and counted 4,600 birds. The following year numbers were down to 3,000 and it was discovered that one shooting party had killed at least 1,100 birds. Apparently up till fairly recent times this was regarded as a ‘sport’ and big shooting parties often took place all along the north Queensland coast. Possibly as a result of the shoot, the highest count in the 1968-69 season was only 1,451 birds. When the counters arrived that year they found a shooting party preparing for another massive shoot. As honorary rangers they were able to stop the shooting and confiscate the guns.

Since then, with shooting outlawed, numbers have gradually risen, with some fluctuations, to a peak of 45,134 in Dec. 94. This was an exceptional year with high numbers from October through till February. In the past 00-01 season, numbers peaked in November with 34,196 birds. The 3 northern islands in the group are fully protected all year round with no landing permitted. South Brook I. is Commonwealth property and no landing is allowed there during the pigeon and tern breeding season - Oct-Feb. Special permission to land on the island is given for the counts and surveys of seeds dropped below nests. Rubbish is collected from the beach and tern colonies are monitored. Counts are carried out from mid-afternoon till sunset 4 or 5 times each breeding season by members of QPWS and local residents (and a few ring-ins) from the same sandspit on North Brook I. Watching thousands of pigeons returning to the islands and hearing the build-up of calls from the rainforest is an unforgettable experience. For a more on the pigeons read the chapter 'The Nutmeg Pigeon' in Hinchinbrook Island - the Land Time Forgot by Arthur and Margaret Thorsbourne.

Notes from other journals

In Corella (Dec 2000) there is a paper on 'The Suburban Bird Community of Townsville Revisited' by Darryl Jones and Jo Wienke. Townsville members of BA-NQG carried out fieldwork for this paper. The latest edition of Sunbird, the journal of the Queensland Ornithological Society (now Birds Queensland), has an interesting article by Peter and Hazel Britton on 'The Birds of Charters Towers, North Queensland' which summarises the observations they made during the 17 years they lived there.

TOWNSVILLE NEWS – Jo Wienke

One of the longest ongoing bird studies in Australia must surely be the seasonal count of Pied Imperial Pigeons on North Brook Island (off the coast from Cardwell). In 1966 Margaret and Arthur Thorsbourne thought there seemed to be a lot of pigeons in the area and counted 4,600 birds. The following year numbers were down to 3,000 and it was discovered that one shooting party had killed at least 1,100 birds. Apparently up till fairly recent times this was regarded as a ‘sport’ and big shooting parties often took place all along the north Queensland coast. Possibly as a result of the shoot, the highest count in the 1968-69 season was only 1,451 birds. When the counters arrived that year they found a shooting party preparing for another massive shoot. As honorary rangers they were able to stop the shooting and confiscate the guns.

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14th 13 Spotted Whistling Duck on the swamp behind Chilli Beach, Portland Roads CYP - DH & DJ

14th 1 Torresian Crow, calling, Kewarra Beach, Cairns (unusual) - SG

17th 4 Spotted Whistling Duck overflow pond behind the Sewage farm near the Naparunam turn off and another 7 at the Awonga Point Sewage Farm. Both sites easily viewable from the fences - DH & DJ

17th 1 Torresian Crow, flying over Sheridan Street, Cairns (unusual in Cairns) - SG.

20th Sacred Kingfisher(M) Hurricane Rd., west of Mt. Carbine - DR

21st Spotted Catbird, creek nr. Atherton Van Park, Gillies Hwy. (1st in 20 years) - Tl

22nd 1 Radjah Shelduck, Hasties Swamp, Atherton (uncommon here) - PL

27th White-browed Crane - 4 fluffy black chicks, Giru S of Townsville - JW

27th 4 young Black Bittern either in or perched above a nest in a large melaleuca at Giru - JW

28th Buff-banded Rail in the salt pan at Rowes Bay, with at least 2 black chicks - JW

29th 5 Channel-billed Cuckoo (1 ate 6 gum leaves), Mt. Molloy cemetery - DR

January 2001

Red-necked Crane breeding at Paluma (North of Townsville) - JW

1st Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo, Monbray SF nr. Julatten - KF & LF

1st Melanic Willie Wagtail, breeding at Tinaroo (mate & young normal) - JL

9th Torresian Crow, Kamerunga, Cairns (unusual here) - KF & LF.

9th 11 Little Lorikeets, Julatten - DR.

14th Red-backed Button-Quail, paddock nr. Lake Barrine - ESc

26th Crested Shrike-tit, Prior’s Creek Atherton - GH, JW & ESc

27th Cotton Pygmy-goose + 10 very small downy young, Pelican Point (L. Tinaroo) - ESc

27th 6 Immature Sarus Crane, paddock nr. Kairi (Atherton), (7 seen by JL at same location 2 weeks earlier) - ESc

23rd Rufous Owl, Wongabel State Forest (nr. Atherton) - ESc

24th 2 Oriental Cuckoo, Mount Molloy town - KF

24th 40+ Blue-faced Parrot-Finch on Mt. Lewis - KF

25th 4 Little Bittern, Cairns Crocodile Farm, Edmonton - DJ & KC

28th 3 Collared Imperial Pigeon on Fantome Island off the Ingham coast. (see story on front page).

29th 1 Broad-billed Sandpiper, Cairns Esplanade - KF

30th Oriental Cuckoo, Hasties Swamp - PL

31st Papuan Frogmouth, (Female brooding 1 chick Male nearby) Pajinka, tip of Cape York Peninsula - Pajinka staff per ESc

February

1st Red-bellied Pitta, incubating 3 eggs, Pajinka CYP - ESc

2nd Rufous Owl, Lockerbie Scrub (tip CYP) - ESc

3rd 15 Channel-billed Cuckoo, Kingfisher Park, Julatten - DR

6th 4 Mountain Thornbill, in partly vegetated creekline, Nr. Malanda - ESc

7th 1 Common Sandpiper & 8 Beach Stone-curlew, Cairns Airport – KF

12th 1 Common Myna, Beaconsfield, North Mackay. I understand this is the second record for Mackay and first for North Mackay - DW.

22nd Black-billed Magpie (Pica pica ssp sericea) at the carpark of the Port of Hay Point, South of Mackay (see P6) – LT & DW.

26th 1 Snipe sp. Cairns Airport - KF

Note: None of these sightings have been confirmed by the observer before quoting them.

Please send sightings to Keith Fisher - post or email OK.

Thanks to these contributors to the sightings column;

IDENTIFICATION, OBSERVATIONS & NEWS

GENETIC VARIATION OF LITTLE EGRETS

On the third of December 2000, Maureen Cooper and Les Thyer observed an unusual Egret in wetlands south of Sarina. Notes of the bird's description and behaviour were made in the absence of photographic equipment. The area was visited again and several photographs were taken of the bird on the 7-1-2001 and 20 minutes of video on the following day.

Several subsequent visits to the site were unsuccessful in locating the bird, and up to the time of writing (2-2-2001) have not been seen again.

A similar bird was seen in the same area by M Andrews et.al. 3-12-1995 and a sketch by G Davidson bears this out.

Description:

Size: Slightly smaller than a Little Egret or about the top end of the size range of a Pied Heron (43cm – 50cm)

Colour: White overall but with slaty-grey back and side of neck, going all the way down to the back to tip of tail. Various slaty-grey speculates and markings mostly on the leading edge of the topside of wings. Underside of wings white. White nuchal plumes similar to Little Egret with 2 main feathers but also having smaller finer ones. Bill yellow, legs dark with yellow wash. Feathers of mantle and breast form long lanceolate but lacy plumes.

Behaviour: Similar to Little Egret. Flies with neck folded. Slow wingbeat. Assumes the stooped posture of a Heron. Seemed to prefer fishing in shallow flowing stream of water crossing the road causeway. Casually chased from feeding by other egrets (Intermediate & little)

Conclusions:

- Possible hybrid between Pied Heron (Ardea picata) and Little Egret (Egretta Garzetta). This is considered rare amongst non-captive populations.

- Or hybrid between the dark phase (Egretta Garzetta shistacea) or even the Western Reef Egret (Egretta Garzetta gularis) neither of which occurs in Australia and the Little Egret (Egretta Garzetta immaculata) *

- Most likely conclusion is that the bird is a genetic variation of a dark morph of the Little Egret (Egretta Garzetta dimorpha) (although all these morphs are said to have a black bill)** Or a mixed morph of the Indian race (Egretta Garzetta schistacea)**

Max Maddock of the Shortlands Wetlands Centre was shown photographs of the bird and was convinced that the bird was a genetic variation of the dark morph of the Little Egret. Although dark morphs of the Little Egret are not known in Australia, they are quite common overseas and the production of a “throw back” dark-coloured genetic variation in the local population is not beyond the bounds of possibility. Apart from being a rare genetic variation in the local population, it is also possible that the bird is a migrant from Asia, possibly via New Guinea. Little Egrets are known to be capable of long migrations.

-The Hancock and Kushlan (1984) Herons Handbook states that “dark forms are blue grey with variable amounts of white, especially under the chin. Individuals with intermediate plumage are common”.

Dark forms of the subspecies E. garzetta gularis are common in the coastal wetlands of West Africa ( pictured in Kushlan and Hafner 2000 Heron Conservation) and dark forms of the sub species E garaetta dimorpha outnumber the white forms by 2:1 along the East African coast (Kushlan and Hafner 2000).

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE
Desley Williams & Les Thyer

Observers: Desley Williams and Les Thyer (thyer@mackay.net.au)

Following reports of an unusual looking black and white bird with long tail in the carpark of the Port of Hay Point Les Thyer and Desley Williams went down at 0630 hours on 22 February to investigate. It only took a couple of minutes before the bird was located in a casuarina beside the change rooms and yes, it was a Magpie (pica pica sericea) the sub-species from China and Asia, identifiable by much more of the purple/blue sheen on the back than the nominate race in Europe. Les took several photos of the bird some 30 ft up in the tree, before it was chased away by some irate Willie Wagtails. Les feels it can be safely assumed that since Hay Point is a busy international seaport, that the magpie has either flown ashore of its own free will, or was released by its owner before being spotted by Quarantine Officers. Chinese believe Magpies bring good luck (maybe because their call sounds like a bag of coins being shaken)! As we observed the bird it uttered this call. Reports from the Port's employees indicate that it has been there for about a week and comes into the floodlit workshop at night to gather moths, beetles and insects attracted to the lights. It has also been observed feeding on earthworms in the gardens of the carpark.

An Unusual Sighting Form has been forwarded to BA Head Office (DW); I understand this may be the 2nd record for Australia.

NEST SITE SELECTION - BIRDS v GREEN TREE ANTS - Del Richards

On a human level we birders all know the discomfort caused by physically meeting up with Green Tree Ants. Because of our capacity to deal with them as a nuisance we probably don't give them much thought.

One of the fascinating aspects of the effects of Cyclone Rhona in 1998 was the sheer number of Green Tree Ants that were blown to the ground. This was well illustrated in watching landholders pick up leaves and branches and in doing so, then having to extricate themselves from the Green Tree Ants after each armful. My thinking is that they are the most common small predators in the rainforest and suitable trees in general.

To follow this realisation, I noted the effort that many birds go to in hoping that their nests will be away from Green Tree Ants.

One species that has reacted to this on a large scale is the Spangled Drongo. In the Mossman/Port Douglas area this breeding season they have slung over 40 nests in the stay wire of power poles, some in adjacent poles.

Another favoured site is amongst the fruit of the Carpentaria Palms, which hold no interest for the Green Tree Ants. This seems to be a common denominator.

In 1999 an engineering company built a large shed in Mossman what was the first species to build a nest in it. Surprisingly a pair of Helmeted Friarbird high among the roof trusses well within the shed. They used the nest again in 2000.

Other species are also using poles - the Magpie Lark - usually under the cross arms but in some cases on the large square insulators out on the staywires! White-breasted Woodswallows are a familiar site nesting between the transformer structures on the angle iron that is the correct dimensions for their nests.

This past spring at Newell Beach, woodswallows took up residence in both friarbird and Magpie Lark nests on poles.

Here in the wet tropics we are familiar with the sunbirds building nests being parasitised! On the other hand it mig

BEACH STONE-CURLEW SIGHTINGS DATABASE - Amanda Freeman

I must admit to having been rather slow at keeping BA-NQG Beach Stone-curlew database moving forward. However, the recent publication of the Action Plan for Australian Birds (2000) has spurred me on to redouble efforts at getting some coordinated recording of Beach Stone-curlew sightings happening. The Action Plan recommends maintaining a register of beaches on which Beach Stone-curlews are recorded as a means of monitoring trends, particularly in parts of the range with high human usage. Our database can assist with this.

The original concept for the BA-NQG Beach Stone-curlew database was to record sightings from the entire BA-NQG membership area. However, on asking around, I found that in the southern parts of our area, our database was duplicating databases already established by Queensland Parks and Wildlife staff. In fact, in many instances, records were being sent to both BA-NQG and QPWS. We've now worked out a system that will ensure sightings get recorded closer to where they will be most useful, information can still be combined for a wider perspective and duplication will be minimised.

A new sighting form is enclosed with this issue of Contact Call. You'll see that there are now options where to send your completed forms depending on where your sightings were made. Derek Ball from QPWS, Mackay has taken on records covering the Ayr to Mackay coast and Paul O'Nell from QPWS, Rockhampton is covering the Mackay to Keppel Bay area. Derek and Paul have already been accumulating Beach Stone-curlew sighting data from their stretches of coast for some time. BA-NQG data from these areas has been sent to Derek and Paul for amalgamation into their databases. I will continue collating records for the north from Cape York to Ayr (at least until someone steps forward to relieve me of the Townsville area, which would be most welcome) and will forward these records to QPWS for inclusion in their state-wide WildNet database.

I will also be sending the new record forms out to other organisations, QPWS offices, environmental/interpretation centers etc in an effort to encourage more people to contribute their Beach Stone-curlew records. Thank you to everyone who has sent in records so far. I hope that with these new arrangements our combined records will form a more valuable tool for monitoring trends in Beach Stone-curlew numbers and breeding success.

Over the years I have witnessed a number of species eating the small red chilies - something that for us to do would make our eyes water.

Recently a female Figbird visited our garden and devoured 10 chilies poste haste! The runner's up in this delight has to be a pair of Varied Thriller, which have only taken a couple at a time.

On another occasion I watched a Yellow Oriole and a Common Myna feed on them. The oriole took three and the myna had only one, then it seemed to be uncomfortable after ingesting the Chile - doesn't seem right for a bird native to India does it?

On the other hand it might have helped them all if they had an internal parasitic problem!

Interestingly a guest who lives in Malaysia told me recently that his household cat would kill doves and common myna's but would never eat the mynas. A distasteful bird in more ways than one!

Request for Information
Leo Joseph, who carried out his fieldwork for his Ph.D. in Nth Qld and currently working as an Ornithologist at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, has asked if anyone has encountered sunbird nests being parasitised by bronze cuckoos. If so please contact him at joseph@acnatsci.org.
Land for Wildlife is a nature conservation program, which provides support, information and encouragement to private landholders that manage some or all of their property as wildlife habitat. The program is voluntary and is not legally binding. Landholders are eligible to join Land for Wildlife if their property meets the following criteria:

- Some or all of the land should be managed as wildlife habitat,
- The landholder should be making some attempt to integrate nature conservation with other land uses on the property.

The scheme began in Victoria over 20 years ago, and there are now more than 5000 landholders registered in that State. Land for Wildlife started in north Queensland in February 2000, and is managed by North Queensland Afforestation Association with funding from Bushcare.

Delivery of the program is through a cooperative arrangement between the three levels of government, and community and non-government organisations such as Greening Australia. Eleven local authorities are providing support to Land for Wildlife in north Queensland — the Shires of Atherton, Cardwell, Cook, Douglas, EACHAM, Herberton, Hinchinbrook, Johnstone, Mareeba, Thuringowa City and Townsville City.

Landholders who are registered with Land for Wildlife become part of a wider network of the conservation-conscious. Other benefits include free access to information on managing wildlife and its habitat, and recognition in the form of a metal sign for the property and a certificate of registration. Where a property doesn’t meet the eligibility requirements, it can be admitted under the category of “Working towards registration” and details will be provided to the landholder outlining what needs to be done to achieve full registration.

As of the 31st of January 2001, there were 65 properties registered with the scheme in north Queensland. More are on the waiting list for assessment. Registrations, which might interest the birdos, include Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers’ Lodge at Julatten, Cassowary House at Kuranda, and Fur ‘n’ Feathers at Tarzali. These and other properties are providing habitat for a diverse range of native species, such as southern cassowaries, green possums, Mueller’s stag-beetles, musky rat-kangaroos, Papuan Frogmouths, taipans, whistling spiders, Bush Stone-curlews and green-eyed treefrogs — as well as thousands of plants and millions of microbes. Planning is underway for the first field day, which will be held in the Kuranda area after the wet season.

The overall response to the program from north Queensland landholders has been very positive. The common purpose uniting those who are applying to join seems to be a strong desire to demonstrate their commitment to nature conservation by displaying the Land for Wildlife sign. So look out for those green diamonds. To find out how to get one for yourself, contact the Land for Wildlife regional coordinator, Kay Dorricott at North Qld Afforestation on 07 4041 2593.

Cairns Esplanade — Keith Fisher

Wader numbers on the Cairns Esplanade have been fluctuating over the last few months. Up to 12 Broad-billed Sandpipers were present before Christmas and I’ve only seen one since on 29th Jan. Good numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits, Great Knot and Terek Sandpipers have been present throughout but Sharp-tailed Sandpiper numbers have dropped since the beginning of January with less than 10 at any one time. On 29th Jan. 2 Magpie Geese flew over and 30+ Little Tern were present.

Trucks are almost finished depositing sand at the southern end of the Esplanade filling in space between the developments of the Esplanade and Cityport, along the wharf. The previously filled area is grassed and waiting to settle before work starts on the swimming lagoon. Our mayor, Kevin Byrne, has gone on record as saying “The normal tidal action, and existing bird habitats along the mudflats, will not be affected in anyway by these works.” We will keep watching.

Congratulations to the Cairns City Council for revamping their display for the new Esplanade Bird posters, we had complained of the poor condition of the previous one, and they acted quickly to rectify the problem.

St. Lawrence Wetlands — Keith & Lindsay Fisher

A good place to break your journey along the long section of road north of Rockhampton between Marlborough and Sarina is the St. Lawrence wetlands. Approaching from the south, turn right to St. Lawrence, which is approximately 6km off the Bruce Highway. Just before the railway and township there is a camping reserve and a road, both on the left. This road takes you past mangroves on the right, look for Mangrove Honeyeaters here and the wetlands on your left (22°21′48″S 149°30′57″E). This road is approximately 7km and leads back onto the Bruce Highway further north. The wetlands extend for at least 1km alongside the road and good views of many waterbirds can be had. The camping reserve, situated at the southern end of the wetlands, is a good place to stop overnight as there is a new shower block with hot showers available. We visited last October and saw 30 species in just under an hour. Thanks to Ian Cowan for alerting us to the area.
WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS IN OUR REGION


We look forward to seeing you all on some of our many activities.

ACCOMMODATION

Rose Gums Wilderness Retreat
Private self-contained timber chalets with spa, fireplace and spectacular mountain views - Great birdwatching (150+ Species) - Look for specialties such as Blue-faced Parrot-finch, Red-backed Button-quail, Lesser Sooty Owl, Victoria's Riflebird and King Parrot.
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Web Site www.rosegums.co.au

Lotus Bird Lodge
Cape York Peninsula - 250 species of birds, Lakefield National Park - Golden-shouldered Parrot area.
Ensuite cottages - verandahs, licensed restaurant, lagoons, walking and 4WD tours by resident naturalists.
Phone: 4059 0773 Fax: 4059 0703
web site www.cairns.aust.com/lotusbird

NOTICE BOARD

CAR STICKERS
BA-NQG car stickers, featuring a Pied Imperial Pigeon on a tropical green background are now available, help promote BA-NQG. A donation of $2.50 each or two for $4.50 plus postage will secure them for you. They will be available on field trips and from the secretary.

Nature Tour
Due to missing the Wingspan deadline we have been asked to insert the following information on up coming nature tours. Destination Management in Brisbane runs these tours.
Samoa – departs 15th August and Japan – departs 9th October. Both tours are lead by local experts with Australian tour escorts and are limited to 8-12 persons.
For a brochure and more information Ph. Toll free 1300 307 317 or log onto the web site at:

FOR SALE

BIRD CALL CD's
Bird Calls of North Eastern Queensland (Bushbirds)
CD 1 Scrubfowl, Pigeons, Parrots, Kingfishers, Robins, Flycatchers, Riflebird, Fairy-wrens & Scrubwrens. (emphasis on Iron Range species).
CD2 Gerygones, Thornbills, Honeyeaters, Whistlers & Cuckoo-shrikes.
CD3 Nightbirds, Kingfishers, Parrots, Cuckoos & Raptors.

Bird Calls of The Northern Territory (Bushbirds)
CD 1 Nightbirds, Cuckoos, Kingfishers, Robins, Wedgebills, Whistlers, Shrike-thrushes & Butcherbirds.
CD 2 Flycatchers, Babblers, Fairy-wrens, Gerygones, Thornbills, Pardalotes & Bowerbirds.
Available from: Fred Van Gessel,
64 Dorothy Ave. Woy Woy, NSW 2256
Ph 02 4343 1283 email: fredv@trentvale.com.au
CD's are $15.00 each plus GST $1.50 + P&P $3.00 for two.

Position Vacant

Newsletter Editor
After 3½ years of editing Contact Call this will be my last issue. I would like to thank all the people who have given me support and those that have contributed to make my job easier. There is still a vacancy for anyone willing to take over the newsletter, in its entirety, as editor. In the meantime you can keep sending contributions to me and I’ll onforward them to who ever takes over, thank you all – Keith Fisher.

Please send items for Contact Call to
P O Box 2209, Cairns Qld 4870 or email: lkfisher@austarnet.com.au
Contact Call is available by email in Word6 and Word97 formats.
Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Birds Australia but are those of the author.

THANKS

Birds Australia North Queensland Group is very grateful for the continuing support given by the office of the Member for Leichhardt Warren Entsch, who is himself a keen birdwatcher.