

Contact Call

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From the Convenor

Hi everyone. So much has been happening - it is challenging to know where to start!

Last month, members from the BirdLife Northern Queensland (BNQ) committee attended the online BirdLife Australia Volunteer and Network Forum, over two days. The Friday (12th Nov) session for participants from the various Network committees explored the future of the BirdLife Network and discussed some exciting new opportunities where we can get involved (a new national conservation strategy to put birds back on the road to recovery, a new participation strategy to enhance and support our participation in BirdLife Australia, more progress on the national website and other electronic tools).

The Saturday session (13th Nov) offered a range of workshops which everyone could attend. These included:

- Welcome session with BirdLife Australia CEO, Paul Sullivan
- Working with Traditional Custodians to protect and survey Australian birds
- Caring for coastal birds
- How to engage farmers and get out into the bush to protect woodland birds
- How the state of our Key Biodiversity Areas link to our bushfires and how to get involved in these key sites
- Celebrate Advocacy Power and influence the right decision makers

If you are interested in any of these topics you are most welcome to view the recordings at <https://www.networkbirdlife.org/forum>.

Also in the news: BirdLife Australia is taking a stand against rat poison (bird-killing rodenticides). Owls, eagles, and other birds of prey are dying after eating poisoned rats and mice. You can find more information about this and how you can help make a difference [here](#). The website includes a link to a spreadsheet that identifies the second generation products that are killing our bird life.

This month the Action Plan for Australian Birds 2020 was released. Last published in 2011, the wholly updated and revised Action Plan — a collaboration between Charles Darwin University and BirdLife Australia — provides an overview of the risk of extinction of birds occurring in Australia and our territories. Written by more than 300 experts, the book was edited by Professor Stephen Garnett and Dr Barry Baker and published by CSIRO Publishing.

The Action Plan shows a worrying number of Australia's birds are closer to extinction than they were a decade ago. Climate change and fire are the biggest threats to Australian birds.

In our Wet Tropics rainforests, birds such as Fernwren and Golden Bowerbird are being forced to move towards mountain tops as rising temperatures impact on cool upland rainforest habitat.

The report also illustrates how conservation action can help save our threatened birds when well-resourced and implemented.

For more information about the 2020 Action Plan, including a webinar by Professor Stephen Garnett (one of the Report's editors), and Professor Martine Maron (President of BirdLife Australia), go to <https://www.actforbirds.org/stopextinctions>.

The BNQ committee will be considering the findings of the Action Plan for Australian Birds 2020 at a strategic planning meeting we are hoping to have in February (always wet season permitting at that time of year). Stay tuned, you may see our projects transform in 2022.

Speaking of 2022, it promises to be another big year for BirdLife Northern Queensland. If you have any ideas or new initiatives you would like to see progressed, or you would like to get more involved in any way, we are very keen to hear from you and always in need of volunteers. It is fun and rewarding to be part of the BNQ family.

Plans have already commenced for our next Annual General Meeting which will be 26 March 2022, at Lake Barrine. We had so much fun there two years ago that we are keen to return again. And yes, there will be a boat cruise, and this time, morning tea on board. Please do join us there (details are in the activities calendar at the end of this newsletter).

Are you struggling for ideas for Christmas presents to give your friends and family – why not consider a membership to BirdLife Australia? Not only will they be joining our friendly extended BirdLife family, the membership will also contribute to saving threatened birds from extinction!

Finally I just wanted to say, being the editor of Contact Call is an incredibly rewarding experience. Whenever I have had to desperately send out an SOS for articles or images, I am overwhelmed by the response. The generosity of our authors, image contributors and production assistants (like proofreaders) is what keeps this newsletter so vibrant and interesting. Thank you to all contributors, and to you, our readers, you make it all worthwhile!

Have a safe, relaxing and enjoyable holiday season. We'll see you all in the New Year, with an exciting program of activities/events and projects being planned!

Cheers, Ceri Pearce

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THE HUNT FOR THE NIGHTJAR

Being on the BirdLife Northern Queensland committee certainly has its perks. At our last committee meeting at Ray's place in Speewah, a pre meeting walk was arranged to practise rainforest survey techniques. The study lesson was hijacked when Ray let us know that he had found a nesting Large-tailed Nightjar.

We were soon all intensely searching the leaf litter to find the cryptic bird. It was well hidden in dappled shade. We all kept our distance and were thankful to Keith, whose super dooper camera was able to zoom in for a closer look which he could share on the screen.

If you would like to join the committee or volunteer to help out, don't hesitate to contact us at northernqld@birdlife.org.au

There are perks, like seeing a nesting nightjar. Thanks Ray!



BNQ committee members and guests searching for the nightjar. Image courtesy of Lindsay Fisher.



Nesting Large-tailed Nightjar. Image courtesy of Keith Fisher

Urban and Community Engagement with Schools

By Pippy Cannon, our Birds in Schools Coordinator

URBAN ENVIRONMENT

After a last minute venue change due to light rain, I met Michael McClafferty and other teachers from Trinity Branch State School at Munro Martin Parklands. I would introduce approximately 200 year two children to birding and to greening the school environment.

Half the children would attend the Cairns Aquarium while I caught the attention of the other half then a swap was made.

Each child had been well prepared for the excursion. Some weeks before I had delivered copies of "The Wing Thing" as well as other literature pertaining to birding in the tropics. A list of likely birds to be seen, a Field Guide and a book on Greening your School Grounds was included. I delivered a nest box that had been donated by Birds in Schools and this had been erected in a large *Melaleuca* in the playground.

To gain the immediate attention of this age group I began with the scientific connection of the Theropod Dinosaurs to modern day birds. Silence and wonder as the children digested this amazing fact. They love dinosaur information.

They learnt about the importance of rigorous data collection, the monitoring of birds and then entering the facts into Birdata for future analysis. That there is no place for exaggerated species numbers or lying about what you have seen was finally accepted by the children (dirty looks by some towards others and a certain smugness appeared from some).

After displaying poster sized images of many of the common birds seen about Cairns, including raptors and waders, we set off on a bird walk about the parklands. There was much chatter and laughter and decided happiness whenever someone was the first to sight a bird.

The major impetus now that most Birds in Schools content has gone on-line comes from those teachers who are interested in greening the school environment; encouraging bird monitoring, frog ponds, shrub and tree planting and by fostering an interest in the ecology of their surroundings.

Mr McClafferty tells me that the children are now monitoring the nest box in their school grounds and regularly monitoring bird species as well as other fauna.

COMMUNITY BIRDING ENCOURAGEMENT

On a recent field trip to Kowanyama I met with the headmaster of the State School. This was a lunchtime appointment and an interesting experience for me. The town Elders and an enormous number of dogs were visiting the school providing lunch, friendly gossip and information with the children. The atmosphere was friendly, inclusive, educational and respectful.

High School students are sent to boarding school further south and many different schools are chosen for their secondary education.

Most of the Rangers/children were already aware of "The Red Bird" (White-bellied Crimson Finch) and that scientists were very interested in following Red Bird progress. They knew that the Red Bird enjoyed the seed from grader grass and if they found grader grass in seed to look for the bird. It seems that nests were readily found in local *Pandanus*. They were also aware of the Black-bellied Crimson Finch and that intergrading may occur.

I left the headmaster with some Birds in School packs that I had made up, including some Gouldian Finch information, contact details and some Wing Thing copies.

We are grateful for the enormous contribution of indigenous people to the knowledge and conservation of our Australian Birds. By recognising that the indigenous children will receive this vast repository of culture and knowledge we are hoping for the conservation of fauna and flora well into the future.



Pippy Cannon presenting to students from Trinity Branch State School at Munro Martin Parklands, Cairns.

New Research links Australia's Forest Fires to Climate Change

27 November 2021 [CSIRO Media release](#)

New research by CSIRO, Australia's national science agency, shows climate change has driven a significant increase in Australia's forest fire activity over the last three decades.

A lengthening of the fire season towards autumn and winter were also identified, along with an increase in fire activity in cooler and warmer regions including alpine forests in Tasmania **and tropical rainforests in Queensland.**

The research published in [Nature Communications](#) is the first of its kind and combines analysis of previous forest fire sites with eight drivers of fire activity including climate, fuel accumulation, ignition and management (prescribed burning).

Thirty-two years of satellite data and 90 years of ground-based datasets from climate and weather observations, and simulated fuel loads for Australian forests, formed the basis of the research, which allowed researchers to identify climate change driven increases versus natural variability.

CSIRO scientist, Dr Pep Canadell, said the research was one of the most extensive studies of its kind performed to date, and was important for understanding how continued changes to the climate might impact future fire activity.

"While all eight drivers of fire-activity played varying roles in influencing forest fires, climate was the overwhelming factor driving fire-activity," Dr Canadell said.



"The results also suggest the frequency of forest megafires are likely to continue under future projected climate change."

Over the last 90 years, three of the four mega fire years occurred after the year 2000. A mega fire year is defined as the cumulative burned area of forest over one year of more than 1 million hectares.

Australia's mean temperature has increased by 1.4 degrees Celsius since 1910, with a rapid increase in extreme heat events, while rainfall has declined in the southern and eastern regions of the continent. Globally fire activity is decreasing, but the extent of forest fires in Australia is increasing.

When comparing the first half (1988–2001) with the second half (2002–2018) of the record studied, the research showed that the average annual forest burned area in Australia increased 350%, and 800% when including 2019.

Comparing the same time period, the research showed a five-fold increase in annual average burned area in winter and a three-fold increase in autumn, with spring and summer seeing a ten-fold increase.



Namadgi National Park taken from Urambi Hills Reserve, Kambah
(C)Glenn Pure 2020 birdlifephotography.org.au

"In Australia, fire frequency has increased rapidly in some areas and there are now regions in the southeast and south with fire intervals shorter than 20 years. This is significant because it means some types of vegetation won't reach maturity and this could put ecosystems at risk," Dr Canadell said.

"Understanding these trends will help to inform emergency management, health, infrastructure, natural resource management and conservation."

Conservation Matters

by Peter Valentine

Where to begin in these dystopian times? We are suffering from a government at the national level that has abandoned any pretext of caring about the rapid onset of damaging climate change impacts and seems unwilling to act in the national or human interests of our country. This is compounded by the ongoing attack on biodiversity, the latest of which is the Minister for the Environment's plan to remove hundreds of threatened species from our national lists and to replace legally strong recovery plans with soft and flawed "conservation advice" notices – things to be brushed aside without a moment's hesitation in favour of further destructive developments. The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC), once the proud environmental centrepiece of a former Liberal Party Government, is now in tatters and proposed reforms will only further weaken it. As members of BirdLife we can be glad that, nationally, our organisation is very much a part of the scientific effort to force our Federal Government to do better, and to bring to the wider community knowledge about the likely outcomes of government actions and inactions. Members are urged to support these national office actions by signing up to petitions and submissions that BirdLife Australia is making.

Here in northern Queensland our Branch has supported many ongoing conservation actions and scarcely a month goes by without an opportunity for members to participate, especially in various surveys and monitoring activities. A critical bird species of significant concern is the Golden-shouldered Parrot. This is one of only three species of termite mound-nesting parrots in Australia and scientific evidence suggests that it is already critically endangered. Its sister species the Paradise Parrot is long extinct, a victim of our land-clearing and environmental transformation processes across its former range. Your Branch Committee was so concerned that this is the outcome awaiting the Golden-shouldered Parrot that it has made funds available to support current conservation work on Artemis Station. It is likely that our Branch will continue to support ongoing recovery work and in the meantime hope that this is successful in saving the species. The third species in the trio, the Hooded Parrot of the NT, seems to be surviving at the moment. Perhaps its remoteness from high populations of people have helped?

I was delighted to see (and participate in) the recent School Strike for Climate Action arranged and held by the Malanda State High School students. How proud I was of these young people taking the leadership in communicating their concerns, and that of every thinking adult, about the impacts of climate change on their future.



Malanda School Strike for Climate Action. Image thanks to Alan Isherwood.

I was impressed when young people, including some from primary school, were able to articulate the nature of their concerns and the solutions needed. It was sad to contrast their passion and knowledge with the uncaring exercise of politics by our national Government, both at home and then at the Glasgow Conference of the Parties (COP) Meeting where we cemented our status as an environmental pariah state. I am ashamed of our Government. When people at the highest level of society have been bought lock, stock and barrel by the fossil fuel industries and the billionaires who profit from it, it seems only a radical change in government will save the day. There is still time to act but it has to be soon to be meaningful. We do need to keep trying to get the Government to act but if they are not willing to change, then the only option is to change the Government. It is not too early to do a careful policy analysis of candidates who could make a difference. Sadly, it is not just birds that will suffer from climate change, but hundreds of other species including the species responsible for the climate problem, *Homo sapiens*.

A recent science paper (in the journal *Science Progress*) that considers the various ways we must change to survive the oncoming climate catastrophes notes that action will be crucial at all levels of society, from international, national, provincial (state), and local. While high-flying policy actions at global and national level (such as carbon taxes) are critical, each of us must address our own lifestyles and that of our local community, if we are to keep global warming to the absolute minimum and therefore reduce the scale of changes needed for survival. The Queensland Government Climate Resilient Council's program has signed up all the coastal councils along the east coast and that's a good start (and the Tablelands and Mareeba also, but not Cook and nothing in the gulf and Mt Isa areas). Members might like to contact their own councils and find out what they are doing and how their community can get involved. The program itself seems weak, at best a lazy effort without serious commitment – marketing maybe? But there is a chance to push local councils into action to better prepare for the changes. In some communities, private businesses are leading the change process and should

be supported and encouraged. Much will change because insurance businesses force the actions. In our region the Natural Resource Management (NRM) bodies (such as Terrain) are also very active in the new opportunities being brought to us by climate change considerations.

As a thought experiment I wonder what members would come up with in trying to imagine how to plan for a completely different life in 2040? Here are some of the things I would like my council to start work on immediately to better equip us for the future.

1. All intact natural vegetation should be protected;
2. Councils should require carbon analysis for every development proposal;
3. Invest in local transport and communication networks to help reduce vehicle use;
4. Protection of all agricultural lands, our future food bowl;
5. Localise energy and communication resources;
6. Support water conservation and protection (including rooftop capture systems);
7. Plant more shade and other trees and protect every mature tree in the region;
8. Advocate a lifestyle change to less consumption and more community opportunity;
9. Support taxes on carbon at every level;
10. Support and place taxes on packaging and waste (investigate the best systems);
11. Slow down population growth, strictly limit residential subdivision;
12. Support smaller accommodation facilities – encourage innovation;
13. Develop community and private initiatives and ideas ... e.g. local tourism options.

One way to test our commitment to change is to consider how we personally must modify our own lifestyles. In that light, what might our bird-watching (bird photography) activities look like in 2040? Potentially we might have to forgo any extended travel for personal pleasure and may need to focus on the pleasures we take from local opportunities. But those local options are in danger of being lost and we may need to plan to increase and protect them – protected area reservations, habitat protection, feral pest management and so on. Perhaps one or two of our more innovative thinkers might care to speculate what bird-watching in 2040 might look like as an article for the next Contact Call. And the steps we need to take now to guarantee even those options.

I look forward to hearing from you, Peter.

BIRDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

BirdLife Photography is a Special Interest Group of BirdLife Australia and provides both a forum and resources for photographers, bird observers and the general public to enhance their knowledge and appreciation of birds through the medium of photography.

<https://birdlifephotography.org.au>



Dramatic storm clouds form the background of a bird battle between Laughing Kookaburra and Magpie-lark
© Linda Leman 2020 birdlifephotography.org.au

Recent Literature about North Queensland Birds

Compiled by Don Franklin

THREATENED SPECIES RESEARCH

Stoetzel *et al.* (2020) modelled habitat of the Carpentarian Grasswren, incorporating the dynamic nature of fire into the models. Their results “may partly solve the mystery of why the species occurs as widely separated populations despite the presence of seemingly suitable intervening habitat. In areas where the species is no longer found, habitat availability was less consistent due to frequent fire, and fire refugia were more limited and isolated, when compared to sites with recent records.”

“Palm cockatoos (*Probosciger aterrimus*) have one of the slowest known reproductive rates of any parrot, and they face steep decline in at least one of three populations comprising the meta-population for the species in Australia. Our [population viability analysis] models suggest that, while dispersal between palm cockatoo populations can reduce local population decline, this is not enough to buffer steep decline in one population with very low breeding success. The small population size and likely decrease in the meta-population of greater than 50% over three generations (49 years) supports a change of conservation status for Australian palm cockatoos from 'Vulnerable' to 'Endangered' under IUCN criteria” (Keighley *et al.* 2021).



Palm Cockatoo. Image: GW Wilson.

Southern race Black-throated Finches called less when exposed to the calls of the introduced Common Mynas but not when exposed to those of the introduced Nutmeg Mannikin (Hopkins *et al.* 2021). Calls of the Black-throated Finch overlap more in frequency with those of the mynas than the mannikin, so the authors suggest that the reduction is a response to masking of the audibility of the finch calls.

The Eungella Honeyeater was recorded feeding on or at flowers or fruit of 30 species of native trees and seven cultivated or non-native species, “a far broader range of plant species than previously recorded for this species” (Bean *et al.* 2021). Among these records, flocks were recorded feeding at the flowers of the exotic shrub Lantana.

SEABIRDS

“Using four decades of monitoring data, we estimated site-specific trends for nine seabird species from 32 islands and cays across the Reef. Trends varied markedly among species and sites, but probable declines occurred at 45% of the 86 species-by-site combinations analysed compared to increases at 14%. For five species we combined site-specific trends into a multi-site trend in scaled abundance, which revealed probable declines of common noddy (*Anous stolidus*), sooty tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*), and masked booby (*Sula dactylatra*), but no long-term changes in the two most widely distributed species, greater crested tern (*Thalasseus bergii*) and brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*)” (Woodworth *et al.* 2021).



Common Noddy and Black Noddy, Lizard Island 2016. Image: C. Pearce

FAIRY-WRENS

Young male Red-backed Fairy-wrens may moult into breeding plumage late in the dry season in anticipation of onset of breeding, though this depends on body condition and testosterone levels. This time of year is also when wildfires are most likely. “Using two populations with fairywren captures before and after separate wildfires we illustrate that wildfire suppressed moult into ornamented plumage. Neither baseline plasma corticosterone or furcular fat stores were affected by fire. However, fire seemed to interfere with the temporal increase in plasma testosterone during the pre-breeding season, leading to a lower proportion of males moulting into ornamented plumage” (Boersma *et al.* 2021). The study was conducted at Wondecla near Herberton.

The effect of plumage brightness on reproductive measures has often been evaluated for males, but less often for both sexes. Both male and female Lovely Fairy-wrens are colourful. In a study conducted around Cairns, Leitao *et al.* (2021) found that brighter individuals of both sexes fed young more often, and



Lovely Fairy-wrens © Brian O'Leary 2014
birdlifephotography.org.au Male left, female right.

"females with more colorful cheek patches paired with males who also had bluer cheeks". As has been found with other fairy-wren species, the pair male was often not the father of offspring – 53% of nestlings, and 32% of a small sample of juveniles, were the result of extra-pair paternity, whilst 58% of broods contained at least one young that was the product of extra-pair paternity. In the small number of pairs that were incestuous, extra-pair paternity was particularly high at 71% of offspring and 100% of broods. "Less colorful males were more successful at gaining [extra-pair paternity] when paired with a more colorful female". However, plumage brightness was not related to breeding success. The paper also contains a deal of other interesting information about the reproductive success of the species.

GENERAL ECOLOGY

"Following major forest disturbance by Cyclone Larry in 2006, Tooth-billed Bowerbirds *Scenopoeetes dentirostris* commonly used leaves of the introduced Wild Tobacco *Solanum mauritianum* as court ornaments, whereas these leaves were very rarely used beforehand. Their use continued for up to 12 years, declining in parallel with their availability. Leaf traits considered likely to influence ornament choice (e.g. size, brightness, retention of colour) were investigated for tobacco and other commonly used plant species, but none of these traits clearly accounted for the patterns of leaf choice. Nor did observations support a cultural basis for leaf choice, with birds in widely separated groups using tobacco leaves. Observed longer-term shifts in leaf choice and the availability/use data lead to the suggestion that the increased abundance of tobacco plants after the cyclone may have triggered the use of its leaves as a 'novel' resource" (Grant *et al.* 2021). The study was conducted in the Lake Eacham area.

Using bird count data from Yourka Reserve south of Innot Hot Springs to which many BirdLife Northern Queensland (BNQ) members contributed, Kutt *et al.*

(2021) explored relationships between birds of different body size. They found a negative relationship between the abundance of small-bodied birds and abundance of Noisy Miners. Of particular interest, the abundance of Noisy Miners varied across land types – they were scarce on granite – and fire histories – they were most abundant at sites not burnt for more than five years.

Birds subject to parasitism by cuckoos might be expected to evolve "frontline" defences, i.e. defences before the cuckoo egg is laid, because these would protect the entire brood. In a study conducted along creeks around Cairns, Noh *et al.* (2021) "investigated whether parasitism by the little bronze-cuckoo, *Chalcites minutillus*, has selected for frontline defences in large-billed gerygones, *Gerygone magnirostris*, a host that rejects cuckoo chicks. We considered three possible defences: (1) mobbing of adult cuckoos near the nest, (2) 'decoy nest clustering' of active nests alongside old nests and flood debris, and (3) cryptic nest architecture. Gerygones were more likely to mob a mount of a cuckoo near the nest than that of a hawk or harmless sympatric passerine. The role of nest traits in repelling parasitism was equivocal; gerygones built their nests alongside previously used nests more often than expected by chance. The experimental addition of decoy nests did not reduce parasitism rates but did lead to a significant delay in latency to predation. Although large-billed gerygones build large nests compared to other gerygones species, we found that larger nests were more likely to be parasitized than smaller nests. We conclude that parasitism has selected for a portfolio of defences in large-billed gerygones, comprising both low-cost, but mostly ineffective, frontline defences (mobbing, some nest traits), and a high-cost, but highly effective, chick stage defence (chick rejection). Thus, the relatively low effectiveness of frontline and egg stage defences may explain why some hosts evolve the rare defence of chick rejection."



Little Bronze-Cuckoo (C) Paul Jensen 2014
birdlifephotography.org.au

OTHER SPECIES-SPECIFIC STUDIES

The discovery of a Spotted Quail-thrush population in far north Queensland is intriguing but has come with controversy about how to determine its status. Leo Joseph (2021) – the expert on quail-thrush taxonomy and biogeography – has made the case for further investigation of which collection of “at least one specimen” would be only part.

Reports of the Yellow-legged Flycatcher in the Wet Tropics region “from 1931 to 1987” have been reviewed in detail by Scambler *et al.* (2021). No report is supported as being correct, and it is suggested that all are likely to have been Pale-yellow Robins, for which the bill and plumage colour of immatures remains to be fully described.

Patrick Webster and Henry Stoetzel (2021) report the first record of the Chestnut-backed Button-quail in Queensland. The species was detected on Westmoreland Station close to the Northern Territory border and the report is supported by a photograph of each bird, its habitat, and of a platelet and roost.



Chestnut-backed Button-quail (C) Chris Young 2020
birdlifephotography.org.au

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Bush Heritage Reserves in the Wild Arid North of the Simpson Desert

By Kath Shurcliff, Dave Houghton and Pippy Cannon

BirdLife Northern Queensland (BNQ) has entered a partnership with Bush Heritage Australia (BHA) to assist them with their vertebrate fauna monitoring, by undertaking bird surveys at several of their Queensland reserves. This partnership arose from the work that Graham Harrington did to initiate bird surveys at Yourka Reserve numerous years ago. So in September and October this year, a willing group of three of us (Pippy, Dave and Kath) took off to meet up in Boulia to make the trek to Craven's Peak (now known as Pilungah in recognition of the traditional owners, the Wangkamadla, who have just received title to their ancestral lands). We met up with several other volunteers who ranged from helping out with general maintenance, feral animal control, reptile and mammal surveys, as well as plant surveys. We also met the new resident reserve managers and relatively new resident ecologist and highly experienced field officer. After thorough safety and work place inductions and a welcome bbq dinner, we set off over the sand dunes to our first camp site.



Camp site 1

Pilungah and the nearby Ethabuka Reserves are on the northern edge of the Simpson Desert. They both have an interesting mix of habitats which are fairly unique within Queensland. They have coolibah country along the main creeks and rivers, with spinifex-clad red sand dunes, some of which in the southern part of Ethabuka also have cane grass ridges. Eyrean Grasswren has been recorded there. In between the sand dunes and beyond to the north are extensive gidgee (*Acacia georginae*) woodlands. There is a smattering of low rocky ridges with acacia shrubs in the northern area. The wetlands are small and ephemeral surrounded by mallee-form eucalypts (*E. pacyphylla*).



Locations of Ethabuka and Cravens Peak (Pilungah)

The Mulligan River runs through the eastern part of Ethabuka, with chenopod shrublands on the floodplains.

We spent two weeks on Pilungah, undertaking surveys at 20 sites, spread out across four different habitats - rocky ridges, gidgee woodland, sandy spinifex and ephemeral wetland/woodland (which were completely dry while we were there). So our task seemed simple enough: drive around to the 20 sites, making sure we visited each one six times and count every single bird we could see and hear in an area 200m by 100m, over a period of 10 minutes.

The days were long and increasingly became hotter, but after spectacular sunsets, the nights were often quite cold. We had assumed those cold nights of the deserts would be gone by the end of August. But we were so wrong and had to get a reinforcement of blankets sent in from the Reserve's HQ! Because we only had one team, we seemed to spend more time driving between sites than we spent counting birds.

But we did manage to get all our surveys completed. There were not many species of birds, a total of 56. There were some honeyeaters - mostly Singing, with Yellow-throated Miner and Black-chinned wherever the few trees were flowering, as well as a smattering of Grey-headed among the mallees. Black-faced Woodswallows were widespread but in small numbers, as well as a few occurrences of Masked Woodswallow flocks. There were few raptors, only some Brown Falcons, Kestrels, and a pair of nesting Hobby. Zebras were the only finches and there were only small numbers of Budgerigars. There was no surface water present while we were there as all the previous bores have been closed down. However we were surprised at the high numbers of Banded Whitefaces, and Chiming Wedgebills throughout the area. In fact, we all started to tire of hearing the constant "did you get drunk, did you get drunk?", especially as we repeatedly replied "no, we did not", "no, we did not"! This population is the most easterly for the species, and is not too distant from the northerly extent of its close relative Chirruping Wedgebill. Tracks and remains of camels were widespread and Bush Heritage Australia still maintains an active program to control their numbers.



Camel bones

After two weeks we moved further south to Ethabuka Reserve, taking the internal "shot track" which was essentially a straight line from Ocean Bore at Pilungah to the homestead at

Ethabuka, missing out most of the sand dunes. However, we did have a few to cross from the bore (see video of our travel over one of these [here](#)).

At Ethabuka we surveyed not only the familiar gidgee woodlands, and spinifex on sand dunes, but also gibber, riparian habitat along the Mulligan River, and the chenopod shrublands.

The Mulligan contained numerous waterholes so we had a variety of water-based birds, that had been missing from Pilungah. The plan was to spend a full two weeks on Ethabuka, but a looming rain front cut this time short, and we had to beat a retreat into Bedourie while we still could. We only managed to complete 14 of the 25 sites, which included mostly the chenopod, riverine and a few dune and gidgee sites. But we still managed 85 species, illustrating the importance of surface water to species diversity - waterfowl, pigeons and swallow/martins in particular.

We picked up several additional honeyeaters, including Black who were feeding in flowering eremophilas, which was a lifer for Pippy - yea!! Horsfield's Bushlarks, and Purple-backed (mostly in small Acacia shrubs) and White-winged Fairy-wrens (in the spinifex) were abundant. Cinnamon Quailthrushes and Inland Dotterels (both with dependent young) roamed the gidgee and gibber sites. The raptors increased in numbers and diversity, due to a super-abundant food source - long-haired rats (*Rattus villisissimus*). Large numbers were caught in the mammal surveyors' pitfalls and Elliott traps. The rats were being feasted upon by the raptors - Brown Falcon, Spotted Harrier, Whistling Kite, Black Kite, as well as Little Crow and Australian Raven, which even figured out how to get the rats out of the Elliots by pulling the side pin out!! But alas there was no sign of Letter-winged Kites!

Our data are now being used by the ecologist to assess how comprehensive are their current site lay-outs and methods - that is, how well can these determine and monitor the complete picture of species diversity, and measure the impacts of management actions across the two Reserves. We in BirdLife NQ are proud to be able to assist them in their enduring efforts to identify and protect our unique wildlife, and particularly our birdlife. We look forward to going back there in future years and to complete and expand their work in two unique Queensland reserves.



Bush Heritage Australia (BHA)

BHA is an independent not-for-profit organisation that buys and manages land, and works in partnerships with others, to conserve our magnificent landscapes and irreplaceable native species forever.

To find out more about Bush Heritage Australia go to <https://www.bushheritage.org.au/>



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<https://www.birdlifennq.org/>

Gouldian Finches in Northern Queensland – A Brief Update on the Citizen Science Study

Ray Pierce

The 2021 season proved very rewarding for the team particularly in finding a useful number of nests which has revealed some interesting deviations from the Gouldian “norm”. Notable amongst these was a more generalist selection of nesting trees, not solely the smooth-barked Eucalyptus and/or Corymbia species identified in studies in the Top End and elsewhere. We can think of several potential hypotheses to explain this emerging pattern locally, ranging from the cluster nesting that we are seeing, to now scarce reptilian predators and perhaps divergent genetic relationships. We plan to test some of these hypotheses further next year.

Many new citizen scientists have joined the project over the past year or so and are undertaking nesting and feeding observations, as well as wider surveys for Gouldians and other finches. Drive through surveys and walking transects were completed on three properties in the Mitchell River and Gilbert River catchments where Gouldians occurred historically, but few occur on these properties now. Other supporters have helped with analysing trail camera footage. The project depends on the good will of all these people and the most recent Gouldian newsletter focused on three talented individuals - Pippy Cannon, Ed Bell and Sanne Boland – you can find their interesting stories in the September 2021 Gouldian update on the NQ Natural History Group website www.nqnhg.org and Finches Queensland website finchesqueensland.org.au

We’ve also received increased support from agencies, including Gulf Savanna Natural Resource Management which is assisting with the development and revamping of some of our awareness material. This will complement the material that Pippy Cannon has been preparing with BirdLife for school education kits.



Courtship displays. Image by E Bell.



If you are interested in helping with upcoming surveys, the next ones planned are:

- Feeding in mid and late December – 3-4 days trips each focusing on what the Gouldians and other finches are eating in the late Dry/early Wet and where they are in relation to fire scars – we especially need people with zoom and video capacity on their cameras so we can better identify the grass, sedge, insects, etc foods that the birds are taking at that time. Also, participants need to be flexible with dates (to enable us to work around flooding events), have 4WD, camping gear, etc., and be physically fit.
- Nesting in March-June 2022 – 3-4 days trips every 2-3 weeks aimed at finding another 15+ nest sites. This involves passive listening and homing in on chick begging calls along transect lines and staking out some potential nest sites where birds have previously been seen prospecting or displaying. 4WD, camping, moderate fitness OK.
- Contact: Ray Pierce, mobile 0409 806560; email raypierce@bigpond.com for more details.

In the meantime, if you spend time out in the Einasleigh Uplands Bioregion or beyond, do keep an eye and ear out for Black-faced or Little Woodswallows. It’s worth spending a few minutes checking them out for Gouldians and other finches – usually one knows in a few seconds if there are Gouldians present as they are vocal in response to the woodswallow alarm calls. These presence and absence data will be most helpful, and I can provide data sheets if needed. It’s also worth checking with landowners about logging data on Birddata, eBird etc.



Nest hole inspection. Image by R Pierce

A History of Abattoir Swamp

By Keith and Lindsay Fisher.

Abattoir Swamp is situated between Julatten and Mt Molloy on the Atherton Tableland and takes its name from a nearby slaughterhouse, which operated from 1952 until the 1960's. The area was grazed until 1989 when it was sold to the Mossman Central Mill who cleared the remaining trees around the swamp for planting sugar cane. There was also a plan to fill in and level the swamp. Local opposition to this plan, and the start of a World Heritage tree planting scheme led to the Mill donating 9ha of land to the Mareeba Shire to manage as a Conservation Reserve in 1991.

A subsequent survey by the council resulted in a management plan in 1993. Wet Tropics Management Authority funds allowed the council to establish a tree-planting scheme which included the establishment of a boardwalk, bird hide, car park and access track. However, when the funding stopped after a few years the management committee ceased and the normal council maintenance and works program took over. Since that time the open bodies of water have been overtaken by introduced *Hymenachne*, which has interbred with a native variety, and resulted in a rapid decline of the waterbird diversity.

A move was made in 2015 to try, or rather, resolve the Reserves problems, and a community event was held at the swamp. From that time the rotten parts of the boardwalk were replaced by volunteer members of the Julatten and Mt Molloy Association of Ratepayers and Residents, but more structural damage was found during these works. Funding was obtained to rebuild the boardwalk and the work was undertaken by a Job Find team. A new management plan was produced in 2018 along with funding to re-profile some of the swamp to create more suitable habitat for waterbirds. However, the aggressive *Hymenachne* has overgrown these works.

Forward to July 2021 when the Mitchell River Watershed Management Group (MRWWMG) took over the management of the Reserve from Mareeba Shire Council, initially for a five year period. The Abattoir Swamp Management Group was then formed, as a sub-group of the MRWWMG and is reliant on volunteers to continue the maintenance of this valuable wetland.

Why is Abattoir Swamp important? It is in a region that is recognised internationally as a biodiversity hotspot, renowned for high flora and fauna endemism. The swamp's location makes it a valuable refuge in the wildlife corridors running between the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area with the drier savanna country of the Rifle Creek drainage.



Northern Fantail

Currently the open woodland area around the car park and adjoining paperbarks provide the most diversity of birds for visiting birdwatchers. Northern Fantail and Eastern Yellow Robin are probably the most obvious, with both species also nesting in the car park.

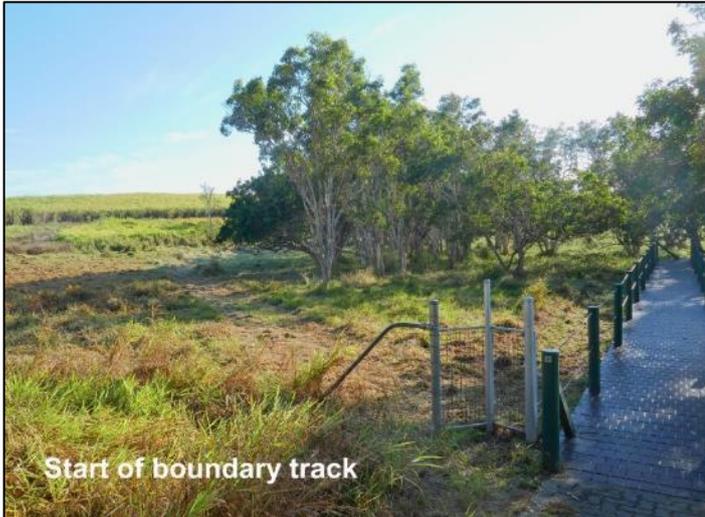
Historically, when open water was available, many waterbirds such as Green Pygmy-goose, plus many other duck, heron and egret species were regularly seen. Crakes such as Ballion's, Spotless and White-browed were easier to observe then, along the edges of the water. White-browed Crake are occasionally still seen around the hide.



Eastern Yellow Robin

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

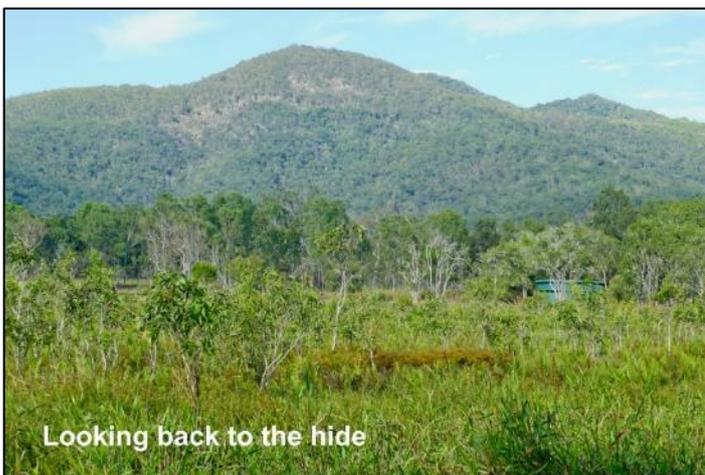
The management committee will prioritise what is achievable in line with the 2018 Management Plan. Already there have been two working bees and a new walking track has been made along the northern boundary which ends up in a stand of paperbarks opposite the bird hide.



Start of boundary track



Boundary track

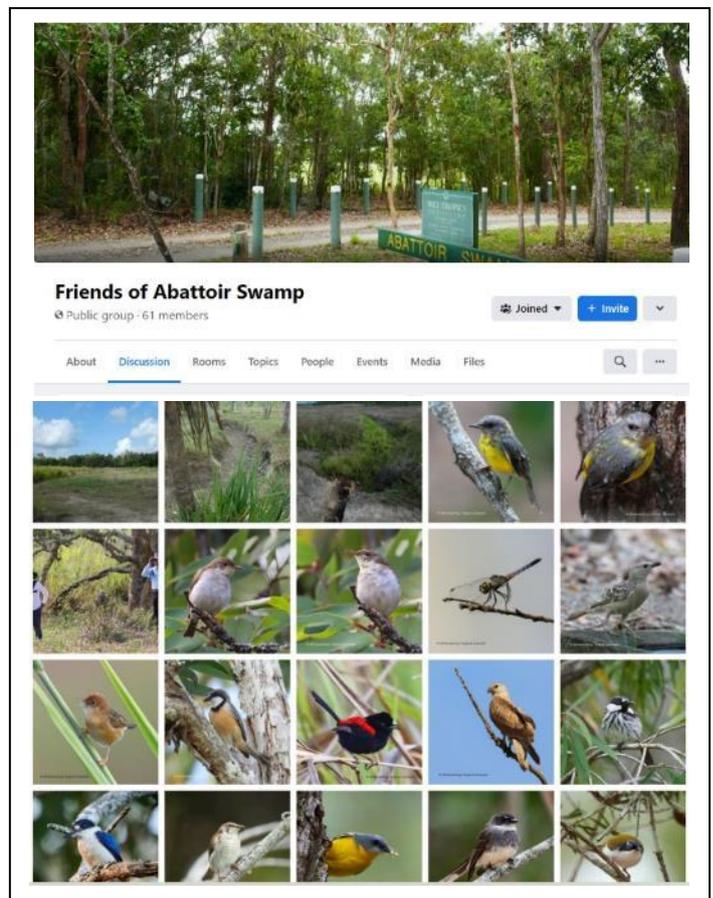


Looking back to the hide

Obviously the biggest problem is the Hymanachne which is almost impossible to eradicate, but it is hoped that some kind of control can be implemented to at least create some open water once again. Repairs to the hide and replanting to enhance the tree and other plant species to attract birds, are top priorities.

The 2018 Management Plan gives a lot more detail and can be downloaded from a link on the [Friends of Abattoir Swamp Facebook](#) page, where you can also join us and keep up to date with progress and wildlife observations.

If you would like to go on the mailing list please send an email to as-convenor@mitchell-river.com.au.



[Friends of Abattoir Swamp Facebook](#) page

News from Mount Isa

By Rex Whitehead

While still going out once to twice a week to reconnoitre our favourite birding locations around Mount Isa, Karen and I did our planned birding trip in August. Due to the varying COVID restrictions we finally settled on 'about Plan D'.

Originally, we wanted to go down the Birdsville Track again to try for more images of the Grey Grasswrens, and birds we missed last year. However, whilst we would have been able to go into South Australia, we could not return to Queensland without going into quarantine, even though we probably wouldn't have seen anyone else. So, our route went as follows: Mount Isa to Birdsville, across to Cunnamulla, back to Lake Bindigolly, then up through Quilpie, Windorah, Diamantina National Park, Boulia, then home to Mount Isa.



Blue Bonnet. Image Rex Whitehead

This was a great trip allowing us to get better images of many birds we already had. They included Letter-winged Kites, Bourke's Parrots, along with other parrots and cockatoos of the Mulga lands, plus Pied Honeyeaters and Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush. I got one lifer, while Karen, got ten.



Letter winged Kite. Image Rex Whitehead



Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush Image Rex Whitehead

Thirty-three species were photographed, with many others seen, including Inland Dotterels. One disturbing feature was the amount of cat tracks we saw in the sand dunes west of Birdsville, with one cat seen about halfway between Birdsville and Big Red. I hate to imagine the destruction they are doing to our native fauna, especially the grasswrens in that part of the country. Everywhere, for that matter.

Back on the local scene. Migratory waders started to arrive in August. I have recorded 12 species to date, with the majority of them being Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, which is normally the case.



Red-necked Phalarope. Image Rex Whitehead

The highlight so far has been the arrival of a Red-necked Phalarope. We had one here in 2018 but they are a vagrant bird for our part of Australia, as was the one in 2018. It was only here for a couple of days, however it enabled us to get many images of it. I got over 700, while Karen got over 1,000 images. It was very obliging and came quite close to us.

We have received good numbers of Little Curlews and Oriental Plovers, both of which are still here (28 October 2021).

Whilst not migratory in the sense of the birds from the northern hemisphere, some Red-necked Avocets have arrived at Lake Moondarra after an absence of about two years.

The Caspian Terns were breeding again. They were on their second round but I'm sad to say that after a couple of weeks something has preyed on the chicks and eggs, as there is nothing there now.

There are many dotterel and Masked Lapwing chicks along with stilt chicks around at present with many of the ground nesting birds still sitting on eggs as well.

The Mount Isa City Council has completed erection of signs on the Mount Isa Birding Trail. They are at five locations at the moment, and have attracted favourable comment from visitors to date. I'm not sure if others are planned, but I guess it's up to what money is available.



New signage on the Mount Isa Birding Trail

At two locations around Lake Moondarra the signs have included, images of large Freshwater Crocodiles which are fairly prevalent in Lake Moondarra. This has become a bit of a talking point among visitors too.

Anyhow, may you all have a very Merry Christmas and enjoyable and safe 2022.

Rex Whitehead.
Mount Isa.

WILLIAM T COOPER
BOTANICAL ART OF THE TROPICAL RAINFOREST

3 September 2021 - 13 February 2022

The Cairns Art Gallery is proud to present the first major exhibition to focus on the botanical art of William T Cooper in relation to the tropical rainforests of northern Queensland. The Gallery is co-courating the exhibition with Wendy Cooper, the wife of the late artist who is publishing a book in 2021 on his botanical works.

William T Cooper (1904-2015) was notable as a painter of birds. However he was also a successful botanical artist, producing botanical illustrations of regional flora and hundreds of drawings of plants that were produced opportunistically for potential use in his bird paintings. The exhibition will bring together over 100 botanical and bird paintings, many of which have not been on public exhibition before, from private collections around Australia and the collections of the State Library of New South Wales and the National Library of Australia.

This exhibition has been developed in partnership with the State Library of New South Wales and the National Library of Australia.

Please check our website for updates on exhibition events and programs.

Cairns Art Gallery
110 Abbott & Shields St, Cairns
📞 07 4051 2222
🌐 www.cairnsartgallery.com.au

CAIRNS ART GALLERY

One Last Crack At It

Scott Ritchie

Scott Ritchie is a yank (sepo to some) who has lived in Cairns since 1994, and enjoys birding and natural history.

Florida Keys, Nov. 1983.

I was heading east on A1A out of Key West FL. I was seedy after the Halloween weekend, relying on a triple café cubano and the Talking Heads to power me home. I headed on the seven mile bridge at Marathon Key when on my left, on the old bridge, I spotted two Great White Herons panhandling for bait from a fisherman. I powered down the road on autopilot. But a nagging feeling came over me. This is a rare, spectacular bird. And I really should have a "crack at it". Turn around now! Half a mile later I succumbed to the urge and headed back towards the birds. I slowly wandered out onto the old bridge. These are relatively tame birds, waiting for a handout, so they weren't fussed by humans. I pulled out my Canon FTb loaded with Kodak Tri-X 400 and snapped a few pics of the birds on the railing. Just when I was about to leave one of the birds had a go at the adjacent bird and I got this photo. It required a bit of dodge and burning in the dark room, but the key to the shot was having one last crack at the birds before I headed home.



Scott Ritchie

Green Island Sept. 2021

The COVID outbreak has really rekindled my interest in bird photography. What a great place north Qld is for lock down! I had recently seen some lovely bird photos from Green Island, of all places. Usually we think of Green Island as the poor man's reef trip. But there are some pretty cool birds there. One bird I was keen to see was the Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove. I walked around an island seemingly overrun by Buff-banded Rails. The trees were alive with Torresian Imperial-Pigeons. Every now and then I could hear the beautiful four-note melody of the Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove high in the trees. But high in the foliage they were and look as I might I only got glimpses of the birds. How can a bird in a Hawaiian shirt be invisible? It was frustrating. So I took a break and had lunch on the beach. I could

still hear a nearby fruit-dove doing the four note, taunting me. It had been calling most of the morning. After lunch I thought "Well, one last crack at it". I wandered over, looked up: lush leaves and a horrible bright sky. No bird in sight, but still he sang. Just when I was about to leave, a bird passed to my left. The fruit-dove sat on an exposed low branch less than 10 m away! He glared at me as if to say "OK, you've paid your dues. So take your photos mate." He was lovely.



Cairns Oct. 2021.

I had heard about fig trees in the local Cairns area that are often visited by Double-eyed Fig-Parrots. Such a cute bird! Off I went to have a go. I slowly wandered around the fig and saw a few parrots. But they were pretty high and soon they took off. I wandered around looking for other birds in the meantime and had fun doing that, but I really wanted the parrots. Bugger, almost 9:00 AM and ZOOM meetings at 9:30! Backing the car around, I decided to have one last crack at it. I rolled down the window and there were two Fig-Parrots, right on the outside lower branches just asking me to take their photos. One last crack paid off again, with the Fig-Parrot doing his best Chad Morgan impression.



Wondecla Oct. 2021

The Atherton Tablelands is a wonderful place for birding especially in the spring when romance is in the air. One of the iconic birds that I have sought out is the Golden Bowerbird. I went to a local bower that I knew of and waited. After half an hour, the male Golden Bowerbird showed, but all I got was a noisy bird-on-a-stick shot. I came in the next day. Sat down and waited, and waited. The bird did show on the other side of the bower where a couple got some action. After they left, I changed sides. I saw the male Golden Bowerbird flitting through the trees, but nothing I could get a picture of. After a while I thought "Well I tried, and I did get a confirmation shot". It was nearly 1 PM, a bad time for birding, so I packed up and walked to the road. Just before I stepped out of the woods, you guessed it, the voice in my head said "one last crack at it". I paused, and thought "Why not?" So back I went, sat on a log and waited. Within 10 minutes I saw a flash of yellow. I looked up and there he was, in a little tree less than 10 metres from me! He was facing away though, giving me his best bum shot. Then he looked over his shoulder as if to say "You've paid your dues boy" and niftily turned around. He then proceeded to do all the stretches and scratches that make for an interesting bird portrait. My last crack at him paid off, and I got the male Golden Bowerbird doing a wing stretch, my favourite bird pose.



Rungulla National Park

SEPT 2021

By Keith and Lindsay Fisher.

We had volunteered to participate in the annual Brolga and Sarus Crane count on the 4th September on the Atherton Tableland. Counting as they flew into their nighttime roost sites would not finish until it was dark, so we had decided to overnight in Malanda. This was the incentive to explore further afield as we had a spare week. The second night we spent at Pinnarendi Station Stay and Cafe adjacent to the Forty Mile Scrub, south of Mt Garnet. We had visited there several times before when we were conducting bird surveys with members of North Queensland Natural History Group and Birdlife Northern Queensland on the property. We spent the late afternoon and early morning replicating some of the survey sites. Several dams had a few waterbirds, including a Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants. In the evening the resident Tawny Frogmouth and Australian Owlet Nightjar were heard. The following day we did an early morning walk which produced 37 Peaceful Dove in one flock, three Common Bronzewing and a flock of over 50 Double-bar Finch.



Double-bar Finch

From Pinnarendi we drove to Georgetown for lunch and then turned south towards Forsayth for 30 minutes, turning right just before the town onto the Cobbald Gorge Road, towards Gilberton Station. The road passes through the Agate Creek Fossicking area before arriving at the turn off to Rungulla National Park, 2½ hours from Georgetown. The Park has many sandstone outcrops and interesting rock formations in the Gilbert River bed. Vegetation is mainly open woodland with riparian remnants along the river systems. It is usually closed from November 1st to March 31st, depending on the wet season floods. National Parks recommend 4WD vehicles.



Squatter Pigeon

From the turnoff, the track continues through the woodland to the Percy River Crossing. This crossing was dry and climbed steeply out of the river bed. We had booked Camp 1 out of the three sites available. This is the only one with toilet facilities and is quite small with enough room for two cosy camps. It's not very level, but we eventually found an area, which was nearly level! A group of 76 Red-tailed Black Cockatoo were decorating the trees by the camp to welcome us! The campsite is situated a few hundred metres away from the Gilbert River, which was just a sandy bed with a few small patches of water in sheltered areas. Rocks in the riverbed made a great hide for taking photos of the birds coming into drink. The visitors were mainly Squatter Pigeon, Common Bronzewing, Great Bowerbird plus Noisy and Little Friarbird.

As we got back to camp a few spots of rain began to fall and it got heavier, but as this was happening the sun was also setting and the most fabulous double rainbow appeared.



The following day we checked out the other two camps, imaginatively called Camp 2 and Camp 3. Took the track to Camp 2, which had a couple of steep dips: these would prove to be a challenge with a camper trailer in tow.



Dry Percy River

The Camp was not very spectacular situated alongside the Gilbert River, but big enough for a couple of camps if you were friends! Drove back out and down to Camp 3, this track was more straight forward with no major obstacles and a largish, mainly flat site alongside the Percy River. This was probably the most scenic and shady site, but with no visible water in the river to attract the birds. However, there were a couple of Mistletoebird active in one of the large Melaleucas (paperbark trees) and some of their mistletoe was flowering, attracting Brown Honeyeater.

Back at our camp there were very few insects apart from mosquitoes and flies! The only spiders we found were a Mascord's St Andrews Cross Spider and several Huntsman Spider.



Mascord's St. Andrews Cross Spider

The next day we left the Park and continued along the Gilberton Station Road turning north to Einasleigh. From Einasleigh we continued north toward Mt Surprise. After 20 minutes we reached Jardine Lagoon, situated alongside the road, and pulled into the campground for lunch. We had stayed here earlier in the year, but not this time, just a lunch stop and to check out the birds on the lagoon. The wind was quite strong: it even blew our chairs over!

The lagoon had plenty of bird life on it, the most common out of the ducks were a group of 89 Pacific Black Duck, also 4 Rajah Shelduck, 4 Hardhead, 13 Grey Teal, a White-headed Stilt and a couple of Brolga.



Brolga and Pied Stilt

Three Forest Kingfisher were defying the winds and diving into the water to catch their lunch along with a couple of Jacana on the water lilies.

Continued on for a welcome overnight stop at Mt Surprise. The following day we travelled back to the Forty Mile Scrub National Park rest area for morning coffee. Then back through Mt Garnet and Ravenshoe as the weather started to deteriorate with thick clouds, rain showers, and a cool 14°C. We had intended to stop at Mt Hypipamee National Park for lunch, but the cloud was down and it was raining so we kept going. By the time we reached Wongabel State Forest the weather had cleared sufficiently for us to stop there for lunch. An ever curious Pale-yellow Robin came to see what was going on, and decided we were not a threat before continuing to pounce on the ground for it's own lunch.



Pale-yellow Robin

Then home in the rain.

Rungulla NP is an interesting area, which deserves another visit after the wet season, when there might be water flowing in the Gilbert River.

For a more comprehensive report of this trip check out: <https://tropicaltails.blogspot.com/>

Birdlife Northern Queensland Crane Count Report 2021

By Graham Harrington, Ceinwen Edwards and Edward Bell

This years annual Crane Count took place on Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th September 2021.

The count this year was a bit of an undertaking with a transition of survey leaders. Graham Harrington stepped in to take over from David Merrall who has led the count for the last four years and decided his time had come to pass it on. We'd like to thank David for his dedication and effort these last few years. Edward will be taking over the coordinator position alone next year.

The response to a call out for volunteers was slow at first and had us worried, but we ended up being overwhelmed with over 66 volunteers taking part over the two days.

DAY TRANSECTS

Transects were carried out across both days with the majority being covered on the Saturday and the Innot Hot Springs cluster being done on the Sunday. Across both days we managed to sight 2174 cranes which is 6% down on last year.

The sightings (Table 1) break down to Sarus Cranes 22%, Brolgas 47% and unidentified birds making up 31%. The number of unidentifiable birds is still high this year and a problem we will need to solve to improve the usefulness of the counts.

As per previous years the land use of the paddocks where cranes were sighted was identified. The large spike in Brolgas on grain crops (Figure 1) can be attributed to a very large flock sighted by the Innot Hot Springs team on Sunday. These data are

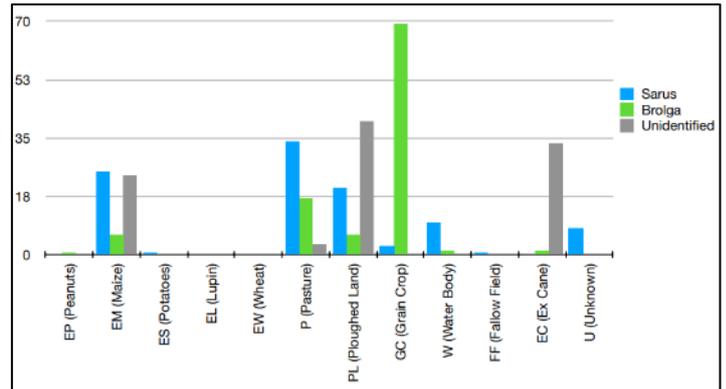


Figure 1. Land use by species as a percentage

something we will continue to gather as crop changes could impact on the number of over wintering cranes in the years to come.

ROOST COUNTS

Again this years count was carried out in less than ideal conditions with intermittent drizzle affecting visibility across many sites.

Overall across both days we counted 3,805 birds, an increase of 16% on last year! This was surprising as Hasties Swamp returned to having no birds again and Bromfield Swamp was low compared to previous years with only 119 birds reported.

Tinaroo proved to be problematic with lots of birds reported to be flying north over surveyors, but not enough landing to correspond with those seen overhead, so more searching to locate roosts will be needed next year - we'll be looking for volunteers in the run-up to the count to check suspected roosts, so let us know if you'd like to be involved.

Willetts Swamp continued to dominate the Central Tablelands in terms of numbers with 637 birds being counted on Saturday night. However, the surprise of the night was the West Barron Storage Pond with 677 birds (see Tables 2 - 4).

Due to logistics the Innot Hot Springs counts were carried out on the following day, Sunday 5th September. Brolgas made up the majority of birds seen with a flock estimated at 750~ being seen during the day transects.

The evening count was carried out across a number of pools in the area but the majority of Cranes roosted at General Plains Swamp as in previous years (see Table 5).

Table 1: Day Transect Totals

Date	Route	Sarus	Brolga	No ID	Site Totals
04/09/2021	Kairi	246	0	0	246
04/09/2021	Reisens	77	45	18	140
04/09/2021	Mt Quincan	22	9	2	33
04/09/2021	Mareeba	85	62	160	307
04/09/2021	East Barron	28	92	226	346
04/09/2021	Kaban	5	51	270	326
05/09/2021	Innot Hot Springs	14	762	0	776

Table 2. Central Tablelands Roost Count Totals 04/09/2021

	Sarus	Brolga	No ID	Site Totals
Willets Swamp	280	302	55	637
Reisens Farm (Combined)	124	0	1	125
Godfrey Farm	0	0	20	20
Bromfield Swamp	51	20	48	119
Hasties Swamp	0	0	0	0
Koci Farm	73	0	0	73
Pelican Point	20	0	0	20
Battles Swamp	87	29	69	185
Central Tablelands Totals	635	351	193	1179

Table 3. Southern Tablelands Roost Count Totals 04/09/2021

	Sarus	Brolga	No ID	Site Totals
Bullock Swamp	4	98	0	102
Elicks Dam	0	13	4	17
Sinapius/Edwards Dam	10	3	3	16
Hardwicks Dam	0	147	80	227
Southern Tablelands Totals	14	261	87	362

Table 4. Northern Tablelands Roost Count Totals 04/09/2021

	Sarus	Brolga	No ID	Site Totals
West Barron Storage	121	78	478	677
Mareeba Wetlands	0	118	4	122
North Tablelands Totals	121	196	482	799

Table 5. Innot Hot Springs Roost Count Totals 05/09/2021

	Sarus	Brolga	No ID	Site Totals
General Plains	39	625	799	1463
Avocet Dam	0	0	0	0
Clear Water Dam	0	0	0	0
Mid Point Dredge Ponds	0	0	2	2
Dam Wall Dredge Ponds	0	0	0	0
Innot Hot Springs Totals	39	625	801	1465

Acknowledgements and Thanks

Firstly we would like to thank all the landholders that granted access to their properties: Alan & Muriel Booth, Dustie Cockayne & Jack Fox, Mitch Cole, Robbie Dalgety, J & D Godfrey, Graham & Felicity Johnsson, Owen, Kathy & Mitch Jonsson, Matthew Klein, Peter Koci, Grant Newman, Geoff Riesen, Kate & Peter Waddell and the Board of the Forever Wild Shared Earth Reserve (Formerly Mareeba Wetlands)

Secondly to all the volunteers that took part and made the count a success - we look forward to seeing you all again next year!

Eda Addicot & John Allen	John Frois	Ray Pierce
Rebecca Aitchison-Gill	Lois Haywood	Shirley Prout
Leonard Arnolda	Terry Heidenreich	Alec Rolfe
Peter & Mulga Barker	Sigrid Heise-Pavlov	Giovanni Ruggeri
Liz Bashford	Britta Jackle	Dale & Nicola Salisbury-
Ken Bisset	Andres & Pam Kabel	Faulkner
Sanne Boland	E & F Kearney	Ron Schweitzer
Sabine Both	Samuel Kroon	Jules Seabright
Bill & Diane Brookes	Malcolm Macdonald	Candida Secomb
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Jo Doecke	Jonathan Munro	Graham Wardle
Kay Dorricott	Gwyneth & Tim Nevard	Barbara Warren
Keith & Lindsay Fisher	John Ogden	Jill Windle
Jürgen & Stella Freund	Tim Paine	Tong Yun Yan

Thoughts for next year...

The number of birds unidentified was higher this year than last with 41% of birds being unidentified. This is a recurring problem that we will look into solving. Some suggestions have included using night vision binoculars/cameras and doing some checks at dawn which we may trial in 2022. If anyone has any night vision equipment we'd love to hear from you, so please get in touch - edbelljsy@icloud.com

When we email out next year we'll also ask if you are able to help out identifying roosts in the run-up to the Crane Count. Normally in the two weeks before the count, the organiser and a few others scope out known historical roost sites to check whether or not cranes are present. If you live on the Tablelands and fancy helping out in advance of the big day, again please let us know next year when we send out reminders.

Don't forget - keep logging your crane sightings either on Birddata or eBird as its good to know where and when they are turning up

Date for your Diaries: Saturday 10th September 2022 for next years Crane Count. Please note we have postponed the count by one week in order to miss the road closures associated with the Targa Rally.

Our Beautiful Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher (*Tanysiptera sylvia*)

By Jennifer H Muir

This year (2021), according to local birders, Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfishers (Buffys) started arriving earlier than usual in Tropical North Queensland (TNQ). Thus, it seemed good timing for an article on this species to follow my more general article on kingfishers in the September 2021 Contact Call.

Buffys are in the tree kingfisher subfamily, Halcyoninae (see Contact Call 2021, Vol 10, No 3). They were first described in 1850 by English ornithologist and bird artist, John Gould, as *Tanysiptera sylvia*, from specimens collected on Cape York by naturalist John MacGillivray.

The genus name was derived from the Greek 'tanuo', which means long, and 'pteron' meaning wing (Lederer and Burr 2014); and feather (Wiktionary, Internet) which can reasonably be considered to refer to the long tail feathers (streamers) of the adult Buffys. Buffy's species name 'sylvia' is Latin meaning forest. In 1869, Gould referred to Buffys as White-tailed Tanysiptera.

The name Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher was first used in Australia by ornithologist Graham Pizzey in 1980. Other common names for Buffys include Australian Paradise-Kingfisher; and Long-tailed, Racquet-tailed, Silver-tailed, and White-tailed Kingfisher.



Image by Jennifer H Muir, 20 Dec. 2020, Cairns.

Uncommon and shy, Buffys are often difficult to see. They easily spot an approaching person long before that person sees them, and they usually quietly move away. Frequently the first sign of their presence is their calls in the early morning after they've arrived.



Image courtesy of Keith and Lindsay Fisher, 19 Nov. 2011 at Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge, Julatten Qld. I believe this is an adult male as the mantle is white.

Their frequent territorial calling makes them easier to find, but later when they have eggs or young in the nest, the birds are more secretive.

They prefer mid and lower strata of dense foliage in darkish, mostly lowland rainforest, monsoon forest, well-vegetated gardens or vine thickets, all with open ground. They usually perch on a vantage point, remaining almost motionless and silent, watching for prey on the ground (eg insects, snails, frogs and lizards) upon which to pounce in typical kingfisher fashion. Often they are only noticed when they flick their tails upwards, call, or drop to the ground.

Mostly occurring below 500 metres altitude, Buffys are occasionally recorded up to 1,000 metres. Breeding range is probably determined by the distribution of the termite mounds in which they nest.

Adult Buffys are strikingly beautiful birds, especially when flying through rainforest with their long, white tail plumes as long as their bodies streaming behind (when pristine), and contrasting with their orange-buff underparts. In the darkish rainforest, they're spectacular when they fly through a patch of sunlight.

Adult males are unmistakable: largely royal blue above; large red bill; broad black mask from forehead through eye and around nape; white 'triangular' mantle (the plumage at upper back and base of wings); apricot below; and blue outer tail elegantly accentuated by two elongated, central, white tail

streamers. Back and rump are white: the white rump often concealed by wings when the birds are perched, but obvious in flight. Bill, legs and feet are orange-red.

Adult females are smaller; a little less colourful; have a buff tinge to the mantle; and shorter tail streamers that are more inclined to break in the nest.

The tail streamers of both sexes regrow each year before the breeding season, but are rarely seen in TNQ in pristine condition, as they soon become damaged and dirty during nest digging and incubation.



Image courtesy of Mary Brook: 7 Dec. 2020, at Mt Lewis, Julatten Qld. Note the extended white back and rump plumage. I believe this is a female as the mantle seems to have a buff tinge.

Buffys are native to Australia and New Guinea. New Guinea comprises eastern New Guinea (ENG) and West Papua (part of Indonesia) ie. western New Guinea (WNG). Most Buffys spend the drier winter months in New Guinea and migrate to their breeding grounds in Australia's TNQ rainforests in time for the summer wet season (see Figure 1 below).

Their 'trigger to leave' New Guinea is probably seasonal variability there. The birds are known to arrive in TNQ regardless of the weather conditions here. The fact that they are known to arrive in Australia during severe drought rather confirms this. During drought, some of the birds don't breed, or may delay breeding, when conditions are especially dry. Some females tend to not lay eggs in such conditions.

Buffys breed in TNQ mainly from November to January: breeding being taken as from beginning of nest construction to fledging of young. However, in response to unseasonal conditions in New Guinea, the birds may arrive in TNQ earlier than usual in October, or later, in November. If conditions in TNQ are unsuitable, the birds may delay breeding until rains finally arrive, causing them to prolong their stay in TNQ till February, March, or April.

Lindsay Fisher (Facebook post) commented that during her 20 years observation at Julatten, Buffy arrivals were usually mid-October at the earliest: mid-November at the latest.

It's understood Buffys migrate in flocks at night, arriving en masse at their destinations in the early morning, severely exhausted. This is supported by frequent reports that the birds were not present in the known breeding areas on a particular afternoon, then suddenly next morning they're there, the forest echoing with their calls as they fly around establishing their territories. This raises the question: why do they fly at night? I suggest it can't be specifically on bright moonlit nights, as even if it's bright moonlight when they leave their departure point, it may be heavily overcast for some or all of the rest of the route. Does flying at night reduce predation and/or heat stress?

On arrival and flying around establishing territories, they're said to look like large blue and buff butterflies fluttering around the rainforests. This is the ideal time to see the birds in their 'Sunday best' with their brightest plumage and perfect tails neither stained nor damaged from nesting.

After breeding some birds overwinter in TNQ, but most return to New Guinea (where they're known as White-tailed Kingfishers), usually leaving TNQ late March/early April. The young leave up to three weeks after the adults: by the end of April.

Ornithologists believe there are two subspecies in New Guinea: *Tanysiptera sylvia sylvia* - the nominate species (Gould, 1850) that breeds in TNQ and winters in New Guinea from May to October; and New Guinea resident, the endemic *T. s. salvadoriana* (Ramsay, 1878 to honour Italian ornithologist Tommaso Salvadori) in south ENG that does not migrate, and breeds in ENG during the Wet Season there, also nesting in termitaria as does our Buffy.

EARLIEST ARRIVALS IN 2021

Possibly the first arrival record for 2021 was on 17 October at Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge, Julatten, where a calling Buffy was photographed by a guest (Carol Iles, Facebook post).

On 19 October 2021, Lindsay Fisher (Facebook post) recorded the arrival, in another part of Julatten, of two Buffys early that morning. Lindsay commented that during 20 years observation at Julatten, Buffy arrivals were usually mid-October at the earliest: mid-November at the latest.

Then near Airlie Beach on 24 October 2021, Debbie and Kevin Smith (Facebook post) heard one calling and later photo-graphed one (photo to left), while walking along the Conway

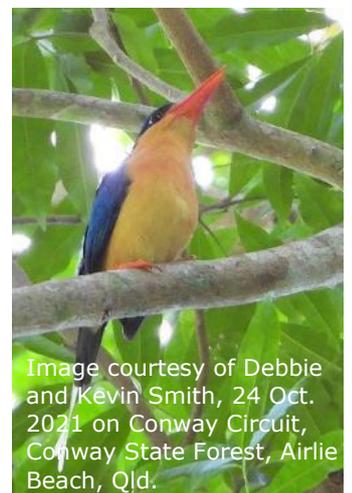


Image courtesy of Debbie and Kevin Smith, 24 Oct. 2021 on Conway Circuit, Conway State Forest, Airlie Beach, Qld.

Circuit (aka Whitsunday Great Walk) in Conway State Forest, south of Airlie Beach, Qld.

MIGRATION

A population genetics study by Legge and Murphy (2003) suggests that three populations of *Tanysiptera sylvia* migrate between Australia and New Guinea each year (Figure 1 below).

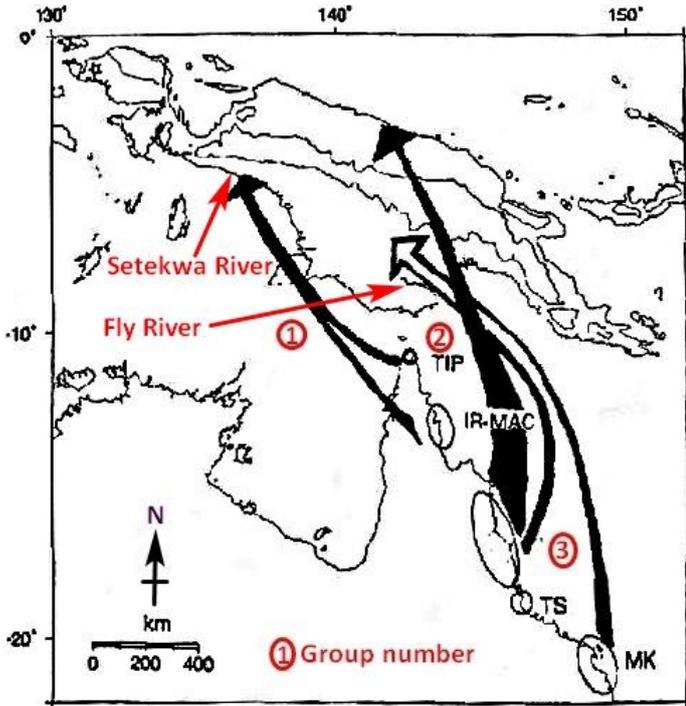


Figure 1 (extracted and modified (Figure 5) from Legge S and Murphy S, 2003. *Kingfishers in Paradise*): Migratory routes of three populations of Buffys between Australia and New Guinea/Indonesia

As can be seen in Figure 1, TNQ's western-most population (Group 1) flies in separate flocks from TNQ's Iron Range and Cape York tip, via Torres Strait to New Guinea's southern coast, to an area about 600 km long between the Setekwa River in West New Guinea (WNG, Indonesia), and the Fly River in East New Guinea (ENG). Some are passage migrants recorded as stopping on Boigu Island in northern Torres Strait. Passage migrants stop somewhere en route, probably to rest and refuel, for a short time during a seasonal migration.

It's understood that many birds die during these long migratory flights. For example, while crossing Torres Strait, some Group 1 birds have been recorded flying close to the water and drowning in sea spray. Others have been recorded colliding with the Booby Island Lighthouse near Cape York's tip at the western entrance of the Torres Strait navigation channel. Those that survive the trip in any of the Groups arrive at their destinations in a state of severe exhaustion.

The other two populations comprise one returning to New Guinea's north central coast (Group 2) and the other (Group 3) to central New Guinea. It would appear that Group 2 may pass through lower altitude

areas of the region's central mountain spine. Group 3 may winter in those same lower altitude areas, or in the southern watershed of the mountains, therefore not crossing them.

On their migration from TNQ to northern and central New Guinea, Groups 2 and 3 cross the Coral Sea. Again, some are passage migrants stopping on eastern Torres Strait islands, as well as some Great Barrier Reef islands. Group 2 appears to migrate from about the Cooktown to Innisfail region. Some Group 3 birds migrate from Cairns and Townsville regions: others of Group 3 from the Mackay region.

From Figure 1, I suggest that the potential mixing of Groups 2 and 3 individuals in the Cooktown-Innisfail region would result in mixing of genes, thereby broadening the gene pool. This gene mixing would be an advantage in the survival of the species.

The distance the three populations migrate varies between about 1,000 km and 2,200 km, depending on the birds' preferred breeding and non-breeding locations. Group 1 that travels from Cape York's tip to ENG's Fly River region covers about 1,000 km, and about 1,300 km from the Iron Range region. Group 2 flies at least 2,000 km from the Cooktown-Cairns-Innisfail regions. Those Group 2 birds in the Cairns region fly about 1,600 kms. Those Group 3 birds in the Cairns region fly about 1,600 km; and those in Mackay's region, about 2,200 km.

Legge and Murphy (ibid.) stated that over the five breeding seasons of 1998/99 to 2002/03, Buffys caught at Iron Range were banded. Numbers of banded Buffys returning to TNQ from 1998 to 2003 were quite variable, and numbers of returning females less than the numbers of males in each of those years. See Figure 2 below.

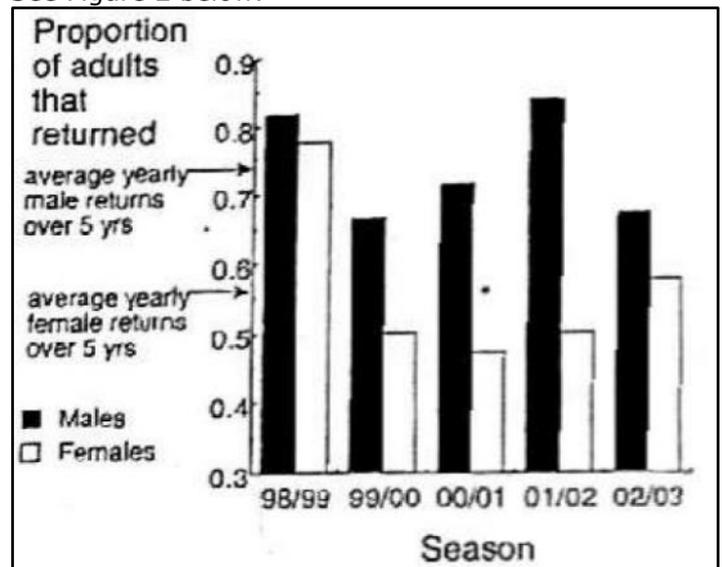


Figure 2 (extracted from Legge S and Murphy S, 2003: *Kingfishers in Paradise*). Proportions of adult males and females that returned to Iron Range 1998/99 to 2002/03.

This lower number of females at Iron Range could have affected breeding success and population numbers for those years, particularly in the years

when a lot less females were recorded. Possibly individuals moved around more and 'filled gaps' outside the study area; or perhaps some of the banded females weren't caught again, either because they were more wary or weren't present. Perhaps they had either died or stayed on in their New Guinea wintering grounds.

In Figure 2, you can see that in the 1998/99 season, almost as many females as males arrived, but in the following season, 1999-2000, only just over half the recorded arrivals were females. In the 2000/2001 and 2001/02 seasons less than half were females, and number of females in 2002/03 season was nearer to those of the males.

Legge and Murphy (*ibid.*) suggest that a fairly high proportion of territories are defended by 'partnerless' males, so without the benefit of internet dating, maybe the females just weren't coming here, or didn't survive the trip. These authors also state that from monitoring of breeding, equal numbers of male and female fledglings were recorded at first, so it would appear that more fledgling females than males may have died.

One possibility, I suggest, is that as the nestlings are very aggressive (see Breeding below) perhaps they're out-competing their sisters for food; and maybe as fledglings they're still aggressive continuing to out-compete their sisters, further reducing the number of females.

BREEDING

Immediately on arrival, high in the rainforest canopies, males begin to select and defend breeding territories even though severely exhausted after their long migration flights. While some observers note that some birds may take a few weeks to select their territories, other observers say the birds immediately start pre-breeding behaviour on arrival. Such immediate action suggests an urgency to breed, at least for some individuals, possibly due to the presence of numerous rivals that arrived en masse at the same time; and/or due to reliability and variations in length of TNQ's wet seasons.

This apparent breeding urgency was noted long ago. For example, the following remarks in 1884 by Kendall Broadbent are quoted from Strahan (1994): Mr FL Jardine commented that Buffys had arrived "...in hundreds, so tired and enfeebled by their migration as to refuse to fly out of harm's way, and that on the day previous to this visitation they were nowhere to be seen". Further, in 1914 Frank Hislop wrote to the Australian Museum, stating that "In the Bloomfield River District, Northeastern Queensland, Tanysiptera sylvia arrives early in November and commences to breed almost at once..." These two statements suggest that even though the birds were severely exhausted after their migration, they commenced breeding preparation almost immediately.

This is further supported by Carol Iles' comment (Facebook post) that on 24 October, at Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge, Julatten, seven days after the first recorded arrivals there for 2021, some of the birds had started working on a new nest tunnel.

After males establish their breeding territories and pair up with a female, these pairs strongly defend their 'patch', and it's understood that the female chooses the nest site. Nest digging usually starts within a few days of the territory being established (see Carol Iles' Facebook comment above), but in dry conditions, this may be delayed for days or even weeks.

The birds peck an entrance (about 4 cm wide) near the ground in the side of an active termite mound (termitarium) that is typically 40-70 cm high by 40-50 cm wide.

Then over 3-4 weeks, the pair digs out a 15-20 cm tunnel and inner nest chamber, which is left unlined. Their front toes are joined for more than a third of their length (a condition known as 'syndactyly'), forming a scoop used for scaping out debris during nest-digging. This is a valuable adaptation for birds that dig their nests.

It's believed Buffys may use active termitaria because the termites keep the mound warm and therefore, also, the Buffy's nest. Further, termite maintenance may inadvertently prevent collapse of the Buffy's nest tunnel and chamber.

Some termitaria are built on rich, red basaltic soils; others on grey granitic soils. Other mounds are on rotting logs or against the base of trees. If the termitaria are on sloping ground, Buffy's nests usually face downslope, and into an open area where the birds can more easily see danger and escape quickly (Ray Pierce, pers. comm.).



Photo courtesy of Keith & Lindsay Fisher: taken 2 February 2008. Buffy with insect at nest; also flicking its tail. Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge, Julatten, Qld.

The same mound may be used each year, but the birds usually have to remake their nests as the termites fill in previous years' tunnels. Some nests are left inactive, and may be used if the pair's current nest is predated upon.

Drought may cause an increase in nest predation by snakes, when the parent birds are incubating their eggs or while the young are still in the nest. Smaller snakes can enter the nests, take the small eggs or nestlings, and get out again, but larger pythons (eg Amethystine) can't as they're too big.

At Iron Range, large pythons were observed outside the nest entrances waiting to ambush, presumably, a parent bird. The adult birds noticed the snake very quickly, and either stopped visiting the nest or stayed inside the nest until the danger was gone. In some cases, the snake delayed moving on, resulting in the loss of the eggs or nestlings alone or with a parent as well. Lace Monitors heavily predate on the nests by digging them out to take the eggs or young.

About a week after the nest is finished, and sometimes a short well-earned 'holiday' possibly 'making eggs', the female lays 3-4 white, rounded eggs on the bare termite-earth floor. Both parents incubate, and the eggs hatch after 4-5 weeks. It's a demanding 'job': an exhaustingly long flight to get to their breeding grounds; effort and 'argument' in establishing territories; 3-4 weeks nest construction; a week's 'break'; eggs laid; then 4-5 weeks to hatching....and beyond. A job worth doing is worth doing well!

The chicks grow quickly, almost constantly fighting each other and very aggressive towards anything that comes near them. When awake, they continuously squeak, getting louder and more urgent if an adult kingfisher approaches the nest entrance.

A considerable amount of food is required for the chicks' rapid development. Both parents bring small snails, lizards, frogs and insects. Sometimes the prey the parents bring is unrecognizable: its legs thoroughly beaten off. Occasionally the bashing is so ferocious that the prey is reduced to bits flying off and nothing left to give the young.

Because of the chicks' squabbling, much of the food is dropped to the nest chamber floor. It's rarely removed and soon becomes a 'carpet' of half-decayed prey which attracts flies. 'Housework' does not come into the picture, however, and the chicks' droppings are not removed either: the nest chamber becomes a writhing maggot-ridden compost heap that seriously 'pongs'.

These conditions would certainly help to build up the chicks' immune systems; but the smell is perfect for the strong sense of smell of predators such as goannas. The parents defend their nest vigorously trying to drive off goannas almost every day.



Photo courtesy of Keith and Lindsay Fisher: Juvenile taken 6 April 2008, Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge, Julatten Qld.

According to Harry Frith and Andrew Griffin (as per Shields, 1994 IN Strahan, 1994) the male is more active in feeding the chicks during early chick development than is the female, but this is reversed as the nestlings get older.

When the chicks are about 22-25 days old, they fledge and unceremoniously plop onto the ground, quickly fluttering to a bush. As they get stronger, they progressively work their way higher into the forest strata, and within about a month they can fly.

Pairs usually raise one family per season, which is hardly surprising considering the effort and time required to reach the breeding grounds, set up breeding territories, create the nest, then feed such aggressive, demanding chicks; then get back to New Guinea before the cold season in Australia. However, if the first clutch fails early in the breeding season, the female may lay a second clutch.

THE FUTURE

Sadly, as is common for so much of Planet Earth's wildlife, usually as a result of land clearing, habitat loss, and climate change, Buffy populations are declining (Wikipedia).

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BirdLife Australia's ethical birdwatching guidelines



Yellow-billed Spoonbill
by Nathan Watson

The welfare of birds always comes first

- Do not stress birds or expose them to danger (e.g. through flushing)
- Minimize the use and impact of spotlighting and call playback especially during nesting season and for threatened birds. We discourage the use of call playback but if used do not exceed three 30 sec bouts in 5 min total at any one site
- In bird photography, avoid lingering around nests or core territories, favourite feeding or drinking sites and limit the use of flashes
- Avoid handling birds (except in cases of extreme cause e.g. injured bird in danger)
- Help bird conservation by recording observations and standardised surveys. Make sure you keep sensitive data safe by using birddata.birdlife.org.au or in ebird.org - choose 'Hide Checklist' for threatened birds etc
- When providing food or water for native birds ensure this is done safely and appropriately for the birds. Artificial feeding cannot replace habitat protection.

Care for the birds' habitat

- Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist, especially in National Parks, reserves and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) birdlife.org.au/KBA
- Do not litter; rather pick up litter in bird habitat to inspire others to care
- Keep habitat disturbance and modification to a minimum
- Apply the same care to other fauna and flora as you do to birds.

Respect the law and the rights of others

- Do not enter private property or Indigenous lands without explicit permission
- Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas

Be an advocate for bird conservation and birding

- Lead by example and know your audience - encourage others in ethical birding
- Share your knowledge and love for birds to inspire their conservation
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- Support BirdLife Australia <http://birdlife.org.au/support-us/join-us/>

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Beach Stone-curlew
by Wilson Leonard


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FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you to all our contributors to this edition of Contact Call. If you would like to submit an article, report, news or images to the newsletter, don't hesitate to contact the editor via email:

birdlifengnewsletter@gmail.com

Newsletter deadlines for 2022

- January 30th for the February-March Edition
- April 10th for the May/June Edition
- July 10th for the September Edition
- October 10th for the December Edition

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BirdLife Northern Queensland activities are managed in line with Queensland Government COVID-19 requirements. Activities may be cancelled at short notice if circumstances change.

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- ❖ Contact the activity organiser to confirm your attendance
- ❖ Stay at home if you are unwell
- ❖ Practice physical distancing as much as possible and:
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 - cover coughs and sneezes
 - use hand sanitiser or wash your hands regularly with soap and water
 - wherever possible keep at least 1.5 metres away, two big steps, from people you don't live with.
- ❖ Don't share personal equipment (e.g. binoculars).
- ❖ Wear a mask if that makes you comfortable or if mandated by Queensland Government COVID-19 requirements.
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Activities in the area include birdwatching at nearby Mt Lewis and other birdwatching locations, as well as Daintree River nature tours and other attractions.

Discounts available for Birdlife Australia members.

Check our website for comprehensive details, rates and bookings:

www.feathersnfriends.com.au

Hosts: Carol and Les Borrett
244 Clacherty Road
Julatten QLD 4871
Tel: 07 4094 1665; Mob: 0412991175
Email: carolandles@feathersnfriends.com.au



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Judy 0409 262 462
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BirdLife Northern Queensland 2022 Activities

Date	Time	Locality	Meeting place and other information	Contact the leader
Jan-March 2022	Anytime during the day	Anywhere along the coastline between the Daintree and Tully Rivers	<p>BEACH STONE-CURLEW SURVEYS 2022</p> <p>This project is wrapping up early in 2022 and information about breeding success is still very much needed. If a walk along the beach and the thrill of seeing a rare and striking bird sounds exciting to you, we are seeking volunteers to survey beaches looking particularly for immature birds up until the end of March.</p> <p>It's as easy as walking along a beach birdwatching and filling out a form. Contact Amanda Freeman to identify the best beach near you and to receive an information kit.</p>	<p>Contact Amanda Freeman at amandafreeman@naturenorth.com.au to identify the best beach near you that you can survey, and to receive an information kit.</p> <p>Of course, Beach Stone-curlew records are still very valuable after March and can be submitted direct to Birddata.</p>
Friday 7 January 2022	7:00–9:00am	Hastie's Swamp, Atherton Meet at Hastie's Swamp Hide car park	<p>HASTIE SWAMP SURVEY</p> <p>You're invited to join us for a great morning of birding and collecting data on the birdlife in and around the swamp. Based mainly at and around the bird hide, members will survey the birds present at the wetlands and count the numbers of each species. Both waterbirds and bush birds in the adjacent fringing vegetation are included. We hope to follow the seasonal changes through the year. We'll meet at Hasties Swamp Hide car park on Koci Road. Start time is 7:00am and we plan to finish with a cuppa at around 9:00am. Bring binoculars/scope, field guide, notebook and pen, and morning 'smoko'.</p>	<p>For more information please contact Ron Schweitzer rgschweitzer@gmail.com</p> <p>We look forward to seeing you there!</p> <p>In the event of a severe weather or other unforeseen circumstances, events may be cancelled at short notice. Contact the event organiser to confirm events.</p>
Sunday 9 January 2022	7:00–9:30am	Warrina Lakes, Innisfail Meet in the car park in Park St, off the corner of Emily and Charles St, Innisfail	<p>BIRDING AROUND WARRINA LAKES</p> <p>You're invited to join us for a couple of hours of social birding around Warrina Lakes.</p> <p>After birding we'll have morning tea at the lakes (BYO morning tea).</p> <p>It's the very wet tropics so bring an umbrella and waterproof shoes, just in case. Also, binoculars, sunscreen, hat, and insect repellent. In the event of a severe weather or other unforeseen circumstances, events may be cancelled at short notice. Contact the event organiser to confirm events.</p>	<p>Sandra Christensen, Cassowary Coast Area Coordinator</p> <p>For more information, please contact 0448 845 842.</p> <p>We hope you can make it!</p>
Early in February 2022			<p>IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CAFNEC, A WORLD WETLANDS DAY EVENT</p> <p>Details to be announced Check our website:- https://www.birdlifennq.org/events</p>	<p>Contact : Mikey Kudo, Cairns Area Coordinator</p> <p>For more information, please contact me on kudo555@hotmail.co.jp or 0402 343 610</p>
Friday 4 February 2022	7:00–9:00am	Hastie's Swamp, Atherton Meet at Hasties Swamp Hide car park	<p>HASTIES SWAMP MONTHLY BIRD SURVEY</p> <p>You're invited to join us for a great morning of birding and collecting data on the birdlife in and around the swamp. Based mainly at and around the bird hide, members will survey the birds present at the wetlands and count the numbers of each species. Both waterbirds and bush birds in the adjacent fringing vegetation are included. We hope to follow the seasonal changes through the year. Bring binoculars/scope, field guide, notebook and pen, and morning 'smoko'.</p>	<p>For more information please contact Ron Schweitzer rgschweitzer@gmail.com</p> <p>We look forward to seeing you there!</p> <p>In the event of a severe weather or other unforeseen circumstances, events may be cancelled at short notice. Contact the event organiser to confirm events.</p>

BirdLife Northern Queensland 2022 Activities

Date	Time	Locality	Meeting place and other information	Contact the leader
Sunday 13 February 2022	7:00– 9:30am	Warrina Lakes, Innisfail Meet in the carpark in Park St, off the corner of Emily and Charles St, Innisfail	<p>BIRDING AROUND WARRINA LAKES</p> <p>You're invited to join us for a couple of hours of social birding around Warrina Lakes.</p> <p>After birding we'll have morning tea at the lakes (BYO morning tea).</p> <p>It's the very wet tropics so bring an umbrella and waterproof shoes, just in case. Also, binoculars, sunscreen, hat, and insect repellent.</p> <p>In the event of a severe weather or other unforeseen circumstances, events may be cancelled at short notice. Contact the event organiser to confirm events.</p>	<p>Sandra Christensen, Cassowary Coast Area Coordinator</p> <p>For more information, please contact 0448 845 842.</p> <p>We hope you can make it!</p>
Friday 4 March 2022	7:00– 9:00am	Hastie's Swamp, Atherton Meet at Hasties Swamp Hide car park	<p>HASTIES SWAMP MONTHLY BIRD SURVEY</p> <p>You're invited to join us for a great morning of birding and collecting data on the birdlife in and around the swamp. Based mainly at and around the bird hide, members will survey the birds present at the wetlands and count the numbers of each species. Both waterbirds and bush birds in the adjacent fringing vegetation are included. We hope to follow the seasonal changes through the year. Bring binoculars/scope, field guide, notebook and pen, and morning 'smoko'.</p>	<p>For more information please contact Ron Schweitzer</p> <p>rgschweitzer@gmail.com</p>
Date to be announced March 2022			<p>WAVE THE WADERS GOODBYE</p> <p>Join us at our annual Wave the Waders Goodbye event. The migratory birds that have spent the past spring and summer on our shores are just about to return to their northern breeding grounds. This event is a great opportunity to farewell the birds and to learn about these visitors and other local shorebirds which rely heavily on the quality feeding grounds provided by our beautiful Cairns Esplanade.</p>	<p>Contact : Mikey Kudo, Cairns Area Coordinator</p> <p>For more information, please contact me on kudo555@hotmail.co.jp or 0402 343 610</p>
Sunday 13 March 2022	7:00– 9:30am	Warrina Lakes, Innisfail Meet in the carpark in Park St, off the corner of Emily and Charles St, Innisfail	<p>BIRDING AROUND WARRINA LAKES</p> <p>You're invited to join us for a couple of hours of social birding around Warrina Lakes.</p> <p>After birding we'll have morning tea at the lakes (BYO morning tea).</p> <p>It's the very wet tropics so bring an umbrella and waterproof shoes, just in case. Also, binoculars, sunscreen, hat, and insect repellent.</p> <p>In the event of a severe weather or other unforeseen circumstances, events may be cancelled at short notice. Contact the event organiser to confirm events.</p>	<p>Sandra Christensen, Cassowary Coast Area Coordinator</p> <p>For more information, please contact 0448 845 842.</p> <p>We hope you can make it!</p>

BirdLife Northern Queensland 2022 Activities

Date	Time	Locality	Meeting place and other information	Contact the leader
Saturday 26 March 2022	From 7:00 am	Lake Barrine Teahouse	<p>SOCIAL EVENT AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING</p> <p>Joins us for a social day (and a bit of business) at Lake Barrine.</p> <p>7:00 -a Bird Walk in the Lake Barrine area looking for rainforest specialities. Meet in the upper car park at Lake Barrine. Just in case it is wet, bring a raincoat/umbrella.</p> <p>9:30 - Private Boat Cruise on Lake Barrine, lazy bird watching and chatting. Cost \$20. Morning tea included.</p> <p>10:30 – Annual General Meeting at the Lake Barrine Teahouse (downstairs).</p> <p>12:30 – Join us for lunch downstairs at the tea house and overlooking the lake. Order and pay as individuals, joint private table to enjoy company and discussions.</p>	Please RSVP to Lindsay Fisher lindsayjq@gmail.com
Friday 1 April 2022	7:00– 9:00am	Hastie's Swamp, Atherton Meet at Hasties Swamp Hide car park	<p>HASTIES SWAMP MONTHLY BIRD SURVEY</p> <p>You're invited to join us for a great morning of birding and collecting data on the birdlife in and around the swamp. Based mainly at and around the bird hide, members will survey the birds present at the wetlands and count the numbers of each species. Both waterbirds and bush birds in the adjacent fringing vegetation are included. We hope to follow the seasonal changes through the year. Bring binoculars/scope, field guide, notebook and pen, and morning 'smoko'.</p>	For more information please contact Ron Schweitzer rgschweitzer@gmail.com
Sunday 10 April 2022	7:00– 9:30am	Warrina Lakes, Innisfail Meet in the carpark in Park St, off the corner of Emily and Charles St, Innisfail	<p>BIRDING AROUND WARRINA LAKES</p> <p>You're invited to join us for a couple of hours of social birding around Warrina Lakes.</p> <p>After birding we'll have morning tea at the lakes (BYO morning tea).</p> <p>It's the very wet tropics so bring an umbrella and waterproof shoes, just in case. Also, binoculars, sunscreen, hat, and insect repellent.</p> <p>In the event of a severe weather or other unforeseen circumstances, events may be cancelled at short notice. Contact the event organiser to confirm events.</p>	Sandra Christensen, Cassowary Coast Area Coordinator For more information, please contact 0448 845 842. We hope you can make it!

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BirdLife Australia is dedicated to achieving outstanding conservation results for our native birds and their habitats.

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