



birdlife
Northern
Queensland

Top
3
spots

Atherton Tablelands

Farmland | Rainforest | Savannah | Woodlands

Welcome to the highlands. The Atherton Tablelands is a diverse region between 500 and 1,500m above sea level (ASL). Crystal clear streams and waterfalls lace the rainforest covered mountains that dominate the landscape. In places tall wet sclerophyll forests border rainforest. In between, lush rolling farm and grazing lands are interspersed with wetlands, remnant vegetation, and small towns.

North and west, the landscape is drier, often with eucalypt woodlands covering gentler hills and valleys. A dramatic escarpment arises at Ngarrabullgan (or Mount Mulligan, the birthplace of the Rainbow Serpent) while the Chillagoe region features complex limestone outcrops and caves.

Over 300 species of birds have been recorded in the region including New Guinea migrants. The abundance of species, diversity of habitats and ease of access makes this area a 'must visit' locale for bird enthusiasts. At Hastie's Swamp National Park near Atherton, it is possible to see 220 species, rainforest walks may reveal Golden Bowerbirds and Cassowaries, and the eucalypt woodlands, Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, and Crested Shrike-tit.

The Tablelands region is the centre of possum and glider species diversity and is the home of Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo. Another attraction is the temperature, it is often the coolest place to be in tropical North Queensland.

When to go

The Tablelands has great birding at any time of the year. Winter days are often clear and crisp with morning fog and possibly frost. Summer, the wet season, is usually cooler and less humid than on the coast.

Getting there

Interstate and overseas visitors usually fly into Cairns International or Domestic Airport and drive to the Tablelands via one of four main access roads, known locally as the Kuranda, Gillie's, Palmerston, or Rex Ranges. The Tableland's quiet roads are excellent for leisurely touring by car. A number of track and road networks have been mapped for cyclists.



Mount Hypipamee National Park

Upland forest at 1,000m ASL with high bird and mammal species diversity and a deep crater lake



Hastie's Swamp National Park

A refuge for resident and migratory wetland species with a viewing hide



Mount Lewis National Park

A 1,210m ASL winding mountain road provides opportunities to see most of the 13 endemic Wet Tropics bird species