

Contact Call

Birders of North Queensland

1 March 1995 • Issue: Emu

OFFICE BEARERS

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Ingham:

Vacant

BNQ CALENDAR

14 - 17 April - BNQ Easter
Campout.

23 April - Wader Watching on
Cairns Esplanade.

Come and learn about those "little
brown jobs" that feed on the mudflats.
Meet on the Esplanade opposite Trade
Winds Hotel at 2.30pm. A high tide of
2.25m at 5.35pm, should give us 2
hours to watch the birds on the
incoming tide.

7 May - Birdwatching at Crocodile
Farm.

Meet at Edward River Crocodile Farm
at 2.30pm. Entrance fee \$8 - have a
coffee in the snack bar before
exploring the excellent wetland/
mangrove habitat.

CONTACT NUMBERS FOR OTHER EVENTS

BOCA Cairns

(070) 562 007 or (070) 556 139

BOCA Mackay/Whitsunday

(079) 592 184

BOCA Townsville (077) 891 306

Lake Eacham Birdwalks

(070) 531 183

Nth Qld Field Naturalists' Club

(070) 531 183

WPSQ Townsville (077) 788 474

EASTER CAMPOUT

We have been invited by the Dept. of
Environment and Heritage to
undertake a bird census of a newly
acquired National Park. This seems an
ideal activity for Easter and all
members are invited to participate.
However, the Park will not be open to
the public until 1997 so it is essential
that you let one of the Executive
Committee know beforehand that
you will be attending and we will
send you a map and precise
instructions of how to get there. We
have been asked to say that no dogs or
rifles will be allowed but fishing and
open fires will be OK. the camping
will be in a pleasant spot, swimming
will be on the agenda and of course
children are welcome.

The Park is in the vicinity of Princess
Hills homestead, which is just south
of the Herbert River where it turns
eastward and forms the Herbert River
Falls. It will take between 3-4 hours to
reach the area from Cairns and
Townsville. We will be more precise
about that when we have done a recce,
checked out the best routes and
selected a campsite. DEH will be
providing a vegetation map and the
objective is to prepare a bird list for
all the major vegetation types. Any
other animal sightings will also be
valuable so if members or non-
members with other zoological

interests wish to attend and get stuck
into the non-feathered fauna we will
be only too pleased to have them
along.

The relevant 1:100,000 map is
Cashmere sheet 7961.

COASTAL FOREST REMNANT PROJECT

One of the possible activities that has
been discussed at previous meetings is
to better establish the importance of
surviving forest remnants amongst the
sugarcane on the coastal plain in north
Queensland. It is virtually certain that
these are vital seasonal habitat for
birds that are moving north-south on
migration or moving between the
highlands and lowlands. Thus as these
forest fragments disappear it will
affect bird populations in places far
distant from the coastal plain. The
rediscovery of the Mahogany Glider
in this area has been influential in
stopping the Qld Forestry Service
from clearing more native forest for
pine plantations but this has not given
any protection to forest on freehold
land. To establish voluntary
management agreements with
landholders DBH need as convincing
a case for the importance of these
fragments as possible. The need for
data is urgent! A sugar boom is
coming and incentive for further
clearing will be high. DEH would be
very keen to assist us with vegetation
maps etc. Best of all though is that we
would have them as a vitally
interested customer for our data. We
know the results of our bird recording
will go directly into the better
conservation of north Qld birds and
their habitat. This is exactly what
many members said should be a prime
focus for BNQ.

See over for more details.

How you can participate: Contact Graham Harrington if you would like to coordinate this project, or participate in the planning of it, or you know of forest patches that you think should be included and/or you would like to be involved in the bird recording trips. In order to be useful the areas monitored will have to be monitored at least four times per year and preferably six times. Standard procedures will have to be used but it will still be a fun activity with the added bonus of being undeniably useful.

CATTLE EGRETS IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

In the last few months up to a thousand Cattle Egrets have been counted at the colony at the south bank of Ross River in Townsville. This is a huge leap from the 12 pairs reported by Gordon Claridge in the 80s. Nothing is known of their spread into north Queensland - a project to which all BNQ members can contribute. Please record your sightings (date, site, no. of birds and any roost sites) and send them to me. Jo Wieneke, 22 Bishop St, Belgian Gardens, 4810.

AROUND THE NORTH

A few cripplers for Townsville. King Quail at the Common on 29.12 94 and Flock Bronzewing, Red-chested Button-quail and Stubble Quail near Toonpan. Townsville's first reported Franklin's Gull was seen flying up and down Ross Creek by Milton Lewis who, during his research into Golden-headed Cisticolas, has mist-netted some mystery reed warblers.

From Cairns, Lindsay reports a Little Curlew on the Cairns Esplanade Mudflats, a Little Bittern at Centenary Lakes in early February and an unusually large flock of 35 Great-crested Grebe at Lake Barrine, where recently a very tame Bush-hen has been feeding near the jetty. On Daintree River, Chris Dahlberg and Lloyd Neilson are keeping a close eye on the nest of a Great-billed Heron - the first to be well documented in Australia.

A TRIP TO THE TOP END - RAOU CONGRESS DARWIN 1994 - Lindsay Fisher

It was 10.15pm when we arrived in Darwin and the temperature was 31°C. This was to set the scene for the two weeks we were in the Top End for the RAOU 1994 Congress and Campout - hot, hot, hot! Someone with a warped sense of humour decided that the best time to show those southerners the Top End at it's best was in December. Six of us from BNQ made the trip to Darwin - Sue Clegg, Jo Wieneke, Andrée Griffin, Elinor Scambler and Keith and myself.

Friday evening was registration time followed by a slide show of local bird life. Saturday morning the show started with a programme ranging from the sex life of Dusky Moorhens to the ecology of the Rainbow Pitta. After teething problems with the temperature control (adjusting it from freezing to chilly), and mastering the audiovisual computer controls (said to be the most advanced in Australia!), everything seemed to run smoothly.

As always with congresses, it was a great social event with everyone catching up with old friends and making new ones. "Ticking" birdwatchers is always fun after reading about someone for years then actually meeting them in the flesh. The Congress dinner was held at a Chinese restaurant on the Saturday evening with about 40 people present - we all over indulged in food, wine and talking and a great time was had by all.

By the time the last speaker had finished on Sunday, we had all had an information overload and were ready to re-group on Monday and get back to the practical side of birdwatching. About 30 went on the campout to Kapalga (CSIRO's research station in Kakadu). Don Franklin did an exceptional job of coordinating 20 assorted birds and managing to drive the bus amid all the heckling.

First stop was Fogg Dam where we had two hours. Most people raced around both the dam and the

rainforest, with stunning looks of White-browed Crakes by the causeway and Rainbow Pittas calling from trees. Kapalga proved to be an ideal campout venue, providing air-conditioned accommodation (for most) and excellent kitchen facilities. Amid all the birds were a smattering of herpos (not sure why they came to the "chook" conference, as they called it) but they willingly led spotlighting trips each evening and showed us the delights of Death Adders on the flood plains with the bonus of Barn Owls and Red-backed Button-quail. After the first day of frugivore counting around Kapalga - (our tree just happened to be next to the roadhouse and icecream!), we were let into Kakadu and became tourists.

Nourlangie Rock proved fruitful with good looks of White-lined Honeyeaters, Sandstone Shrike-thrushes and Chestnut-quilled Rock Pigeons among the splendid rock formations and paintings. After almost losing two of our company we headed to Cooinda and had a hurried lunch (and icecream!) before loading up for the Yellow Water trip. Our guide did an excellent job of showing us all the best birds including a Little Kingfisher.

The next day we divided into two groups. Both survived long hot walks with one group seeing Banded Fruit Doves and Rufous Owls and the other dipping out on grasswrens and just getting hot! Letter-winged Kites were seen by some but Red Goshawks proved illusive.

The last morning was wet and we cleaned up ready for the slow trip back to Darwin. After an hour's bird census at Mary River, we stopped at Beatrice floodplains to see an Oriental Pratincole followed by a Black Falcon near Fogg Dam. At McMinn's Lagoon, in the rain, we saw Swinhoe's Snipe and more Oriental Pratincoles as a finale to the trip. It was then a fond farewell to everyone as we got back to Darwin. Our trip had been a huge success and memories of a lush, green Darwin, will remain for a long time.