

Birds Australia - North Queensland Group

# Contact Call

**Birds Australia**

Conservation Through Knowledge

Birds Australia Centenary 1901 - 2001

Celebrating Bird Conservation

June 2001 • Issue: Southern Giant-Petrel

**Cardwell** →

## AGM & GET-TOGETHER- QUEENS BIRTHDAY WEEKEND 9<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2001

This years AGM will be held in Cardwell at the lecture room of the Environment Protection Agencies **Rainforest and Reef Centre**, which is on the highway adjacent to the jetty in the town centre. Meet there at 2pm for a cuppa before the AGM starts at 2.30pm. Don't be put off by the meeting - we'll make it as brief as possible and will have a speaker as well. It is an election year and we will be very happy to hear from anyone who would like to become involved in helping to run our Group. All the positions will become vacant apart from the Convenor, as Jon Not was re-elected last year for a two-year term. I will not be re-nominating as secretary as I have completed my term, having been on the committee since 1994 at the formation of our group. The Tableland Rep. Ian Sinclair is also standing down. All positions are vacant and only financial members can be nominated for a position. Positions will be as follows, **Executive Committee: Secretary & Treasurer** and the non-executive committee position of **Conservation Officer** and the **Regional Reps**. Remember this is your group and to continue the good work that has gone before we need a strong committee. Our group membership has passed the 200 mark now and is steadily growing.

At 6.30pm we will be having a meal at the same venue which is being catered for and will be about \$12 per head. There will be a choice of fish and salad or a roast dinner. We do need to know numbers for this **ASAP** and whether you want fish or roast so I would appreciate it if you could let me know if you are coming so I can organise the caterers.

On the Sunday and Monday morning we will have field trips to various locations around Cardwell. We have some local members who have suggested a number of interesting places to visit including a lagoon and rainforest.

As it is the Queens Birthday weekend and the middle of the tourist season, accommodation at Cardwell needs to be booked well ahead. I went through Cardwell a couple of weeks ago and checked out caravan parks and was recommended the Cardwell Caravan Park which is located by turning at the Swimming pool and across the other side of the railway. It is nice and shady and has new cabins and a pleasant camping area. We thought it would be good if everyone stayed at the same caravan park so we can all keep in contact better. The cabins range from \$35-\$55 and camping sites \$12 un-powered \$15 powered with a camp kitchen available. It is run by Colin & Denise Oke and the phone number is 4066 8689 - mention Birds Australia when you book as I told Denise about our AGM. Otherwise, I can recommend Cardwell Beachfront Motel which has self-contained rooms and is very reasonable - Ph 4066 8776. Looking forward to a great weekend! **Lindsay Fisher Ph: 40390972 or e-mail [lkfisher@austarnet.com.au](mailto:lkfisher@austarnet.com.au)**

## CAPE YORK ATLASSING – CAMPOUT 4<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> AUGUST

This will be a 4WD trip based at Heathlands Ranger Station (approximately 45 km south of the Jardine River crossing), where there will be limited accommodation and plenty of room to put up tents. It will be self-catering and you can come along for all or part of the time. BA-NQG green and red atlas sites will be targeted coast to coast between 11° and 12° lat. **Please advise John Clarkson before 30<sup>th</sup> June** if coming so he can make the necessary arrangements (see P2 for Johns details).

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### EVENTS CALENDAR

**May 26-27<sup>th</sup>** Daintree River Trip with Chris Dahlberg, a few places left on the boat, special cost \$30.00. Ph Lindsay Fisher for details.

**June 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>** Queen's Birthday weekend. AGM Cardwell.

**July 1<sup>st</sup> Sun.** Birds Australia 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday – Big Birthday Birdwatch Meet 8.00 at the Herberton Post Office. Bring morning smoko and lunch. Should be an interesting trip to a few varied locations in Kaban/Wondecla area. Road suitable for a conventional car. Bring along a GPS to help out with the Atlassing.

**Aug 4<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>** Cape York atlassing 4WD campout expedition. See above for details.

**Aug 26<sup>th</sup> Sun.** Breakfast with the birds, Lake Morris (Copperlode Dam), Cairns. Lake Morris road is accessed from the Brinsmead Road and winds up the range behind Bayview Heights. Meet at the barbecue area near the kiosk at 8.30am and bring your breakfast. Afterwards we will take a leisurely stroll around part of the lake shoreline. Contact Keith or Lindsay Fisher.

**Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> Sun.** Redden Island Count (Cairns). Meet at 8am, Cinderella St, Machins Beach, - the entrance before the toilet block - contact Keith Fisher

**Oct 6<sup>th</sup> Sat.** Annual Crane Count, Atherton Tableland. Contact Elinor Scambler (See P2 for Elinors details).

**Field Trips may change after publication - contact local reps. for the latest info. This allows flexibility, especially weather conditions. Extra events may also be arranged.**

**Office Bearers:**

**Convenor:** Jon Nott (07) 4096 8230  
email [info@rosegums.com.au](mailto:info@rosegums.com.au)

**Secretary:** Lindsay Fisher (07) 4039 0972  
email [lkfisher@austarnet.com.au](mailto:lkfisher@austarnet.com.au)

**Treasurer:** John Clarkson (07) 4092 2702  
email [John.Clarkson@dnr.qld.gov.au](mailto:John.Clarkson@dnr.qld.gov.au)

**Area Representatives:**

**Mackay:** Marion Crouther (07) 4958 4613

**Bowen/Ayr:** Jon Wren (07) 4786 2614  
email [maluras5@tpg.com.au](mailto:maluras5@tpg.com.au)

**Townsville:** Jo Wieneke (07) 4771 4707  
email [bowerbird@msm.com.au](mailto:bowerbird@msm.com.au)

**Ingham:** Helen Dawson (07) 4777 2822  
email [dawsonh@dnr.qld.gov.au](mailto:dawsonh@dnr.qld.gov.au)

**Innisfail/Tully:** Klaus Uhlenhut (07) 4065 5181  
email [kirrama@znet.net.au](mailto:kirrama@znet.net.au)

**Cairns:** Keith Fisher (07) 4039 0972  
email [lkfisher@austarnet.com.au](mailto:lkfisher@austarnet.com.au)

**Atherton Tableland:** Ian Sinclair (07) 4091 4544  
email [Ian.Sinclair@dnr.qld.gov.au](mailto:Ian.Sinclair@dnr.qld.gov.au)

**Mossman/Daintree:** Del Richards (07) 4094 1199

**Cape York Peninsula:** Michael Barnett Wk (07) 4069 8916  
Hm (07) 4069 8182 email [mike.barnett@bigpond.com](mailto:mike.barnett@bigpond.com)

**Western Queensland:** Bob Forsyth (Mt. Isa)  
email [isabirdo@austarnet.com.au](mailto:isabirdo@austarnet.com.au)

**BA-NQG Conservation Representative :**

Amanda Freeman (07) 4095 2148 email [procella@ozemail.com.au](mailto:procella@ozemail.com.au)

**Project Contacts:**

**Beach Stone Curlew Study**

Amanda Freeman (contact number as above).

**Northern Gulf Regional Strategy Group**

Ian Fox Ph (07) 4091 4193 email [foxi@fastinternet.net.au](mailto:foxi@fastinternet.net.au)

**Gouldian Finch and Birds at Waterholes Survey**

Klaus Uhlenhut (Details for Ingam/Tully Rep.)

**Redden Island Survey (Cairns)**

Keith Fisher (Details for Cairns Rep.)

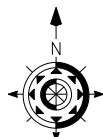
**Sarus/Brolga Tableland Crane counts**

Elinor Scambler Ph (07) 4095 3296 email [dacelo@austarnet.com.au](mailto:dacelo@austarnet.com.au)

**Egret & Ibis Counts (Townsville)**

Jo Wieneke (details for Townsville Rep.) or Glenda Jeffries Ph (07) 4773 1802 (Hm) Counts are at Ross River every Thursday afternoon in conjunction with the RIVER group. Phone Jo if you'd like to help

**BIRDS AUSTRALIA ATLAS CONTACTS**



Send atlas sheets to: PO Box 776, Malanda QLD 4885 or hand them to the following RO's/SRO's  
Keith Fisher (Cairns) ph: 07 4039 0972

**Northern Region**

Cardwell north & north of Gulf Development Road, inc. Cape York

**Regional Organiser: - (North of 18°)**

Graham Harrington ph: 07 4096 5051

email: [treetop@austarnet.com.au](mailto:treetop@austarnet.com.au)

**SRO'S: -**

Stephen Garnett (Cairns) ph: 07 4052 3088

email: [stephen.garnett@env.qld.gov.au](mailto:stephen.garnett@env.qld.gov.au)

Glenn Holmes (Atherton Tableland) ph: 07 4091 4364

email: [dasyornis@ledanet.com.au](mailto:dasyornis@ledanet.com.au)

Lloyd Nielsen (Northern Atherton Tableland) ph: 07 4094 1549

email: [nielsenl@tpgi.com.au](mailto:nielsenl@tpgi.com.au)

Elinor Scambler (Atherton Tableland) ph: 07 4095 3296

email: [dacelo@austarnet.com.au](mailto:dacelo@austarnet.com.au)

email: [lkfisher@austarnet.com.au](mailto:lkfisher@austarnet.com.au)

**Southern Region**

Cardwell south & south of the Gulf Development Road inc. Mt Isa.)

**Regional Organiser:- (South of 18°)**

Jo Wieneke ph: 07 4771 4707 email: [bowerbird@msm.com.au](mailto:bowerbird@msm.com.au)

**SRO'S:-**

Ian Clayton (Townsville) ph: 07 4725 6489

email: [birds&bush@ultra.net.au](mailto:birds&bush@ultra.net.au)

Jon Wren (Bowen/Ayr) ph: 07 4786 2614

email: [maluras5@tpg.com.au](mailto:maluras5@tpg.com.au)

Marion Crouther (Mackay-west inc. Mt. Isa) ph: 07 4958 4613

**BIRDS AUSTRALIA MEMBERSHIP**

Subscriptions \$62 Concession \$46 Family \$99

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

Membership forms are available from the Secretary or send subscriptions directly to

**Birds Australia**  
415 Riversdale Road  
Hawthorn East, Vic 3123

Birds Australia Home Page - [Http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au)

## TRIP REPORTS

### CAIRNS ESPLANADE – 10/3/2001

Keith & Lindsay Fisher

The timing was perfect with the high tide just receding as people arrived to identify the waders flying in. The numbers were not great but it made identifying them easier for those who were not used to the various brown birds. Quite a few Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Sandplovers were coming into their reddish breeding colours, as were some Great Knots with their speckly breasts. A lone pelican was patrolling the foreshore and a Grey phase Reef Egret was foraging along the tide edge. About 20 people turned up and it was great to see a few new people and members who had not been to a field trip before. It was a great opportunity to separate the species and get an appreciation of the relative sizes, which is not always possible by looking in the field guides.

### MT. BALDY– 25/3/2001 - Ian Sinclair

A small but keen group met up on the outskirts on Atherton. To the great delight of all, no vehicle permits had been arranged for traversing Mt Baldy. Instead we walked up Mt Baldy (sort of). We actually walked along the road that goes up behind Mt Baldy, leaving our cars parked on the edge of the Mt Baldy State Forest. The birding was good, with a wide variety seen and heard. These ranged from Buff-rumped Thornbills and Varied Sitellas in the drier country, to the rainforest with Bower's Shrike-thrush and Golden Whistler. No Golden Bowerbirds were seen, but they are up there. All within a relatively small area. Mt Baldy is often overlooked as a birding spot by locals and tourists alike but is close to Atherton and permits to traverse with a car are very easy to arrange from Atherton QPWS (ex DNR) Forest Resources (ph 40 911844). Worth a try.

### EASTER ATLASSING CAMPOUT

13-16/4/2001 -Keith & Lindsay Fisher

Eight members headed north from the Atherton Tablelands up to Laura and beyond on the peninsula road for a spot of atlassing. A few kilometers north of Laura we turned left and along the Kimba Station road to a campsite beside the St. George River. This was our base for the next three days for our atlassing escapades. Little atlassing has been carried out in this area and once again we targeted our Cape York Peninsula red & green spot sites. The weather was perfect, cool at night, no rain and not too hot during the day. Our sites were located along the Kimba Station road and the road south towards Palmerville. Atlassing was carried out in the morning and late afternoon with a mid daybreak which was quite civilised. Over the 3½ days we managed to record 44 surveys (41 area counts and 3 incidentals) at 38 sites with a total of 480 records and 76 species. Importantly we atlassed 5 previously unatlassed 10 minute grids. Interesting birds were Yellow-tinted Honeyeaters feeding in *Melalueca viridiflora*, red flowers, at least a dozen Tawny Frogmouths seen during the day, both light and dark form, *Grevillea pteridifolia* was in flower and attracting Silver-crowned, Noisy and Little Friarbirds along with the odd Banded Honeyeater. The Squatter Pigeons had very light orange around the eye (race *peninsulae*) and the two Australian brush Turkey's on the St. George River didn't appear to have the purple pouch at the base of the neck that the Cape York subspecies, *purpureicollis*, has. Not many raptors around, 1 Square-tailed Kite, 2 Kestrels, 1 Whistling Kite, a few Black Kites, a couple of Brown Falcons and a Brown Goshawk. The final morning was spent at the St. George outstation atlassing in comfort alongside the river gorge. There was a good mix of habitats in this area but very little in flower, however we managed to find our way to the red/green sites and keep ourselves amused for the Easter Break.

### CAIRNS CROCODILE FARM – 28/4/2001

Keith & Lindsay Fisher

As usual the Crocodile Farm provided a good range of bird species. Good views were had of Azure Kingfisher, Little Kingfisher (Forest, Sacred and Laughing Kookaburra made five kingfisher species seen) and Little Bronze-Cuckoo. Striated Herons tried their hardest to look like bitterns but alas the hoped for bitterns did not show. A few White-browed Crakes were seen skulking around the rushes and a few Crimson Finch were foraging along with the Chestnut-breasted Mannikin. In total we saw 50 species, one more than our last visit nearly two years ago and three more than our first visit in May 1995.

This location is excellent and reliably turns up some normally hard to see species and is well worth a visit. Oh yes, there are plenty of crocodiles to see as well! Mention you are birdwatching and you will be given a comprehensive bird list and location map.

### TOWNSVILLE NEWS – Jo Wieneke

There are big changes at the Townsville Common Conservation Park. In the last few years, despite sterling efforts from ranger Rob Graham, the Common has suffered from lack of funding for even basic maintenance. Three heavy wet seasons had ensured a bumper crop of weeds and played havoc with the road. Feral pig diggings and often the perpetrators were obvious along the edge of the wetland. Now changes are underway with the start of the RAAF Base redevelopment and with help from BHP.

Since August 1998 I have been attending meetings organised by the Defence Department and QPWS, for community and government groups which have an interest in the Common. The expansion of the Townsville RAAF base required additional land and the Borrow Pits area, which adjoined the base, was earmarked for major development. Although it had been managed as part of the park for years, it was officially gazetted as Pasturage Reserve and not actually included in the Conservation Park. The Defence Department however was willing to include plans for 'relocation' of the Borrow Pits which for years had provided a deep water refuge for birds in times of drought and were also important as fish habitat.

Nearly 3 years and many meetings later, sites have been assessed for suitability for developing as deeper wetland 'compensatory habitat', and an area fairly near the waterbird hide has been selected. Earlier this year the Defence Department began work on the Borrow Pits site, which is now unrecognisable. At present it is bare of vegetation and full of heavy earth-moving machinery. Work on the 'new' Borrow Pits is due to start this coming September. The new road through the Common is being relocated to run from just past the Forest Walk across to near the Tower Hide. Hopefully the 'compensatory habitat' replacement work will proceed with as much enthusiasm!

Last June Dave Hudson of the Townsville branch of Conservation Volunteers Australia (then ACTV) announced a 'rescue package' for the Common to be funded by BHP. Since then 'Common Interest' volunteer groups under the leadership of coordinator Dave Watson are making a huge impact on the Common. The Barramundi Lagoon, which had disappeared for years behind weeds has been opened up and is visible from the road. Other areas near the hides and Aboriginal Plant Trail are receiving the same treatment - removal of weeds, retention of native vegetation and revegetation with local plants.

In less than a year there is a marked improvement. Volunteers work 3 mornings a week and a Saturday group meets every second week. More help is always welcome. Phone CVA on 4721 4077 or e-mail [townsville@conservationvolunteers.com.au](mailto:townsville@conservationvolunteers.com.au)

## NORTH-WEST NEWS - Darlene Kneen & Bob Forsyth

### Camooweal area

I (Darlene) have now been in Mt Isa 13 months. Last year was pretty hectic with settling into a new, busy job and re-entering the world of disciplined study (yuk) by starting (finally) my nursing degree via distance education. There was little time for much birding. But a New Year resolution was to contact the local birding identity of the area - one Bob Forsyth - and do some regular birding with him. Bob has been in Mt Isa for 30 odd years but has only began birding in the past 5 or so - but with a vengeance. He has been atlassing regularly and also compiling birdlists of the local area - including Camooweal Caves National Park. The local National Parks office in Mt Isa welcomes his contributions.

On Sunday 18 March 2001, Bob and I set off from Mt Isa to the Camooweal area to do some birding and atlassing. We started off at 5am and returned to Mt Isa at 8pm. Bob says it was only 37°C?!?! I reckon that during the middle of the day it was around 40°C - although there was a bit of cloud cover now and then. Bob put together the following trip report and has consented (with a bit of arm wrestling) for me to include it (saves me reinventing??) in a Contact Call report:

Last Sunday with Darlene Kneen I did some atlassing in the Camooweal area (13km east of the NT border & a very humid 37°C) after a 5.00am start from the Isa.

We checked out....

Lakes Francis and Canellan (1-1/2km from town on the Georgina River)

Camooweal Caves National Park camping area (a high clearance vehicle needed!)

Camooweal Caves National Park (Old Nowranie Stn waterhole, 14.5km S. of Camooweal down the Urandangie road) - Camooweal Sewage ponds. (400 meters from town along the Rocklands Stn road)

We turned up a total of 51 species for the day, and added 6 to the list I have been compiling for the QPWS (Qld Parks & Wildlife Service) This list now totals 97.

These were....

**Grey-crowned Babbler**, **Singing Bushlark**, (There were 1000's and my 1st record in this or the Isa area) **Little Button-quail**, **Variagated Fairy-wren**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Pictorella Mannikin** (Juveniles) (Darlene had recorded adults here previously).

Other noteworthy birds in the park were...**Australian Bustard**, **Australian Ringneck** (Cloncurry Parrot) This is the western extremity of their range, **White-necked Heron** at a nest with 4 fluffy young. Female **Collared Sparrowhawk** or male **Brown Goshawk** (How I wish they would wear nametags!) - A Bowerbird was heard, and I forgot to track it down and identify it as the 1st atlas shows this to be Great Bowerbird territory and not the Spotted!

At the lakes the noteworthy birds included... **Darter** at a nest with 4 young. **Black Swan** (2), (two years ago a pair of breeding swans was recorded.)

Two lots of **Zebra Finch** were making nests in the bottom of very large raptor nests. **Green Pygmy-goose** (one only could be seen in thick lilies at a distance) - this is their southern territorial limit. **Magpie Lark** (3) walking on lilies (imitating Jacanas)

At the sewage ponds.... **Plumed Whistling-duck** (with young), **Australian Grebe** (with young).

Everywhere was.... Cockatiels, Singing Bushlarks (thank goodness Slater has the sense to put them on the same page as Pipits & Larks!). However only a few **White-plumed Honeyeater** and a single **Grey-headed Honeyeater** were recorded. Even

**Budgerigars** were noticeable by their absence...which worries me! I can recommend that birdo's travelling through to the NT visit the lakes. They are accessed by a reasonable but un-signposted I look forward to future adventures with Bob. He has amazing energy and motivation, has gained a lot of local knowledge and is very willing to share it with all. We are going to bird at West Leichhardt station, about 30km ENE of the Isa on Sunday. That should be interesting so expect a scintillating report (another dual effort??) in a future issue after my next trip to Thailand.

So don't ignore this north west area in future trips through to somewhere else. You are missing out on some fantastic country and some great birds!! And remember - you're not a true Aussie until you've visited the Isa!! **Darlene Kneen**

## MACKAY NEWS - Desley Williams

On 26 April a friend, Fay Griffin who is a Turtle Researcher and assists me with atlassing on the Mackay Northern Beaches and I were atlassing one of the remaining wilderness areas in North Mackay: namely McCready's Creek, Blacks Beach. Whilst searching for Beach Curlews we saw a **Great Billed Heron** (imm.) at the junction of Apsley and McCready's Creeks, 17km NE of Mackay. Fay Griffin, and myself observed the bird, which was on the opposite bank, for 7 minutes. It picked up something (crabs/mudskipper?) from the mud ate it and hid back in the mangroves. About an hour later when we returned, the bird was out of sight; however, a fisherman who was loading his boat apparently frightened it because it flew out of the mangroves and proceeded further up Apsley Creek. In April 2000 we (Fay and myself) identified an adult GBH 1.5km further upstream in McCready's Creek (reported in Contact Call June 2000). Perhaps the species is breeding in this remaining wilderness area of Mackay Northern Beaches. Despite several return visits we had not seen this adult bird since, but a fisherman friend told me he had seen a very large dark Heron in Apsley and McCready's Creeks on occasions. We only hope that this wilderness area is preserved (with rumours of future development); the protected sand dunes being an important valuable wader roost, the bird list contains some threatened/rare species: Beach S/Curlew (raised chicks in 1999/2000); Bush S/Curlew (may be breeding); Little Kingfisher; Little Tern; and an important nesting site for the Flatback Turtle. The latest subdivision app. 1.5km away destroyed valuable nesting trees, and mature trees are still dying. Some nesting birds have already abandoned the area. May 3rd: At the McCready's Creek estuary we saw a pair of Osprey, one of which had collected a large SNAKE presumably from the water and whilst we were following the Osprey to watch it devour its meal; a flock of terns flew in which we identified as Little Terns in non-breeding plumage totalling 170-180.

## GENETIC VARIATION OF LITTLE EGRET OBSERVED NEAR MACKAY - Les Thyer

Les Thyer reports that he has had a reply about the genetic variation of Little Egret observed near Mackay (reported in CC March 2001), from James Hancock in the UK. James is a leading expert and author of several books on egrets, and he is almost certain that the photos sent of the bird show a hybrid between a Little Egret and a Pied Heron. He goes on to say that it is interesting that it is in breeding plumage and one wonders whether the genes will be passed on. If so the color pattern will become more defused.

The reasons for his answer are:

1. Typical *picata* yellow bill.
2. Smaller size.
3. General jizz.
4. Range overlap between these two species in your area

## SIGHTINGS

Species	Date	Location	Observer	Comment
Grass Owl	22/11/00	1.5 km west of Bushy Creek, Julatten	Greg Czechura (via Carol Iles)	Catching a rat at the side of the road
Lesser Sooty Owl	11/12/00	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	Carol Iles	New mate for recently widowed female
Australian Owlet Nightjar	16/12?00	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	Carol & Andrew Iles	Juvenile being fed
Black-breasted Buzzard	12/12/00	Mount Molloy	Carol Iles	Flying over town
Bustard	1/1/01	Mt. Carbine, Maryfarms Road	Carol & Andrew Iles	Adults and Juvs.
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo	2/1/01	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	Carol Iles	4 flying over - unusual
Red-necked Crake	12/1/01	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	Carol Iles	2 adult + 5 fluffy black chicks
Noisy Pitta	21/1/01	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	Ron Stannard	Adult with 4 worms in bill dive bombed by Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher
Yellow-breasted Sunbird	4/3/01	Eimeo Creek, north of Mackay	Geoff McLaughlin	Eating a Soldier Crab
Brown Cuckoo-Dove	7/3/01	Eimeo Creek, north of Mackay	Geoff McLaughlin	1 <sup>st</sup> sighting for atleast 10 years
Little Kingfisher	7/3/01	McLeod Street, Cairns	Stella Martin	Migrating through the area
Little Kingfisher	8/3/01	Malanda on the Atherton Tableland in rainforest	Graham Harrington	Unusual in this habitat, migrating?
Asian Dowitcher	19/3/01	Cairns Esplanade	Glenn Holmes	Few recent records from here
Pale-headed Rosella	20/3/01	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	Ron Stannard	Unusual for this location
Great-billed Heron	23/3/01	Shellgrit Creek just off Petrie St. in Mackay	Les & Dawn Thyer, John & Dell Williams, Marj. Andrews	Juvenile bird observed for 40 mins.
Red-necked Crake	23/3/01	Whitfield garden	Dawn & Arnold Magarry	With 2 chicks
Great-billed Heron	26/2/01	Ck. off Moon River nr. Yorkeys Knob lagoon, Cairns	Dawn & Arnold Magarry	Shy & difficult to find around Cairns
Asian Dowitcher	19/3/01	Cairns Esplanade	Phil Gregory	Still present & last sighting for season
Gargary	30/3/01	Karumba	Glenn Holmes	
Little Curlew	30/3/01	Karumba	Glenn Holmes	
Glossy- Black Cockatoo	April?	West of Paluma	Jo Wieneke	4 birds present
Red-backed Kingfisher	4/4/01	Belgiam Gardens, Townsville	Jo Wieneke	Unusual
Rock Dove	5/4/01	Cairns Esplanade, on the grass	Keith Fisher	159 – numbers increasing
Straw-necked Ibis,	5/4/01	Cairns Esplanade	Keith Fisher	3 – 1 <sup>st</sup> of the season
Rufous Fantail	8/4/01	Cassowary House, Kuranda	Phil Gregory	1 <sup>st</sup> for season
Buff-br. Paradise KF.	11/4/01	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	Andy Anderson	2-last sighting for the season here
Lesser Sooty Owl	11/4/01	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	Carol Iles	1 <sup>st</sup> seen at nest + prey, regularly seen since
Little Bittern	11/4/01	Cairns Croc. Farm	Phil Gregory	3 in pond No 10
Black Bittern	11/4/01	Cairns Croc. Farm	Phil Gregory	Difficult to find
Latham's Snipe	11/4/01	Cairns Croc. Farm	Phil Gregory	Late
Buff-br. Paradise KF	13/4/01	Mt. Lewis	Phil Gregory	Adult, Late in season
Noisy Pitta	13/4/01	Mt. Lewis	Phil Gregory	Uncommon at altitude, 10km site
Yellow-throated Scrubwren	13/4/01	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	Carol & Andrew Iles	1 <sup>st</sup> documented record for here
Square-tailed Kite	13/4/01	Rifle Creek reserve, Mouny Molloy	Carol & Andrew Iles	Over treetops
Pallid Cuckoo	13-16/4/01	Georgetown Area	N.Qld. Nats Club	
Ground Cuckoo-Shrike	13-16/4/01	Georgetown Area	N.Qld. Nats Club	
Masked Finch	13-16/4/01	Georgetown Area	N.Qld. Nats Club	
Plum-headed Finch	13-16/4/01	Georgetown Area	N.Qld. Nats Club	
Little Corella	14/4/01	Pickford Road, Biboohra (N. of Mareeba)	Mark Jagusch	Unusual for this location
Buff-br. Paradise KF.	11/4/01	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	Carol & Andrew Iles	Immature - last sighting for the season here
Little Eagle	14/4/01	West of Abattoir Swamp Rd. Julatten	Carol & Andrew Iles	Light Phase
Little Button Quail	15/4/01	300 m north of Kingfisher Park, Julatten	C. Saunders	Out in the open
Chestnut-br. Cuckoo	18/4/01	Mt. Lewis	Carol Iles & Tony Pym	2 on lower reaches – duetting & catching caterpillars. Resident population
Blue-faced Parrot-Finch	18/4/01	Mt. Lewis	Carol Iles & Tony Pym	In Lantana & Grass at 10km site
Russet-tailed Thrush	18/4/01	Mt. Lewis	Carol Iles & Tony Pym	Both Russet-tailed & Bassian occur here
Pacific Baza	22/4/01	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	Andrew Iles	Calling, not much seen or heard 12 months
Noisy Friarbird	24/4/01	Andrew Iles	Carol & Andrew Iles	5 seen in 10 days – migrating through
Azure Kingfisher	28/4/01	Cairns Croc. Farm	BA-NQG Field Trip	Excellent Views
Little Kingfisher	28/4/01	Cairns Croc. Farm	BA-NQG Field Trip	Excellent Views
Pied Imperial Pigeon	30/4/01	Clifton Beach, Cairns	Ian Cowan	Late stayers
Little Kingfisher	30/4/01	Mundy Creek, Belgian Gardens.	Jo Wieneke	Migrating ?
Blue-faced Parrot Finch	1/5/01	Mt. Perseverance Road, Julatten	Carol & Andrew Iles	2 on private land
Chestnut-br. Cuckoo	1/5/01	Mt. Perseverance Road, Julatten	Carol & Andrew Iles	On private land
Ground Cuckoo-Shrike	4/5/01	Ulcanbah Station, 183 km NE of Barcauldine	Keith & Lindsay Fisher	6 foraging beside road, excellent views
Australasian Shoveller	5/5/01	Lolworth Ck. lagoon, 85 km NW of Charters Towers	Keith & Lindsay Fisher	7 birds, 2 males full breeding plumage
Blue-faced Parrot Finch	6/5/01	Mt. Lewis	Carol Iles & Klaus Uhlenhut	At clearing – getting late in the season
Australian Pratincole	6/5/01	Mt. Carbine, East Mary Road	Via Carol Iles	Several reported
Australian Pratincole	6/5/01	Lucky Dam on Jervoise St. Road N. Greenvale	Keith & Lindsay Fisher	1 bird flushed off road
Grey Teal	7/5/01	Cairns Esplanade	Keith & Lindsay Fisher	4 birds swimming /standing on the mudflat
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	12/5/01	Townsville Town Common	Jo Wieneke	1 <sup>st</sup> I've seen in Townsville
Russet-tailed thrush	12/5/01	Kingfisher Park, Julatten	Carol & Andrew Iles	1 <sup>st</sup> for winter – froze in open for 5mins when Black Butcherbird called. Very tame
Red-winged Parrot	15/5/01	Rowes Bay, Townsville	Jo Wieneke	Unusual

Note: - None of these sightings have been verified please check with the observer before quoting them.  
Please send sightings to Keith Fisher - post or e-mail OK. Thanks to the contributors to the sightings column.

## IDENTIFICATION, OBSERVATIONS & NEWS

### DIARY OF A GREY GOSHAWK FAMILY – Dawn & Arnold Magarry

On October 27<sup>th</sup> 2000, I (Dawn) was alerted by the sound of breaking sticks in the terminalia tree in our Whitfield (Cairns) garden to a pair of Grey Goshawks. They were subsequently seen to be building a nest in the big quandong tree below our house.

Most of the activity of stick collecting appeared to take place in the morning up until about 9.30am and again later in the afternoon. The female, the larger of the two, seemed to be the principle 'architect'. Nest building continued until Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> when the female appeared to be spending more time on the nest and calling frequently.

Nov. 3-8<sup>th</sup> twigs were still being added with copulations occurring each day amid a duet of calls from both birds, usually early in the morning.

Nov. 9<sup>th</sup> The female appeared to begin sitting but was not visible except for occasional views of her tail. The nest was too high and too deep to see in.

Nov10-29<sup>th</sup> The female continues to incubate despite heavy occasional rainfalls overnight. Lots of calling in the morning from the nest and replies from the male in a nearby tree.

Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> A great racket at 6.15am from Drongos, Yellow Oriole, Black Butcherbird and Helmeted Friarbirds, when the female appeared clutching a Common Myna in her talons.

Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup> Female usually leaves the nest early, calls, defecates and preens. She has been incubating now for approximately three weeks.

Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> I saw the male bring a kill to the female in the terminalia, where she proceeded to eat hungrily. When she finished she cleaned her bill vigorously on the branch several times, sat and called intermittently for five minutes then flew back to the nest as the male left.

Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> Female observed presumably feeding young but chicks not visible.

Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> Found an egg shell under the terminalia tree.

Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> Female continues to sit despite a terrible racket from nearby roadworks on our road corner.

Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> Two white fluffy heads visible in nest.

Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 Two large chicks visible. Bigger chick has dark grey showing on wings and appears more active.

Jan. 9<sup>th</sup> Both chicks growing rapidly with the older one often standing on the outside of the nest.

Jan. 14<sup>th</sup> Older chick now making short flights from branch to branch in the nest tree. Soft calls are heard.

Jan. 18<sup>th</sup> Young feeding themselves on kills brought by the parents.

Jan 20<sup>th</sup> Older chick flew to poinciana tree some 50 metres away.

Kills are always taken back to the nest, where the chicks come back to feed.

Jan. 24<sup>th</sup> Young move around neighbouring trees during the day but return to the nest in late evening.

Jan. 25<sup>th</sup> Plumage – head and wings grey, grey bib with dark barring, underparts white, legs yellow, bill black with bright yellow cere.

Jan. 31<sup>st</sup> Chicks are usually absent from nest during the day and heard calling from neighbouring trees but always return to the nest, where the parents bring kills.

Kills always appear to be plucked of outer plumage and so far we have identified Rainbow Lorikeet, Magpie-lark and Common Myna from feathers found in the garden.

Jan. 31<sup>st</sup> Found a portion of the tail of what we think was a Lace or Spotted Tree Monitor in the garden.

Feb. 4<sup>th</sup> Adults still bringing kills to the nest.

Feb 9<sup>th</sup> Younger chick seen on the nest with a kill. Calls seem to get further away from the garden.

One of the calls of the Spangled Drongo is very similar to the goshawks and confused us at times until we sorted them out. Every

time a goshawk moved it was hounded by a screeching group of usually four Spangled Drongo.

Despite regular sightings over the previous weeks Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> was the last record we have. One notable feature of the goshawk invasion of the garden was the absence of the daily visits by our resident pair of Black Butcherbirds during the period they were here. Was it coincidence that one of the Black Butcherbirds and the resident male Magpie-lark came in on this morning of the 25<sup>th</sup>?

### CHANNEL-BILLED CUCKOOS Bob Forsyth

This season the Channel-billed Cuckoos have avoided their previous roosting places with my only sightings of them flying overhead.

However, 2 young hatched at Mt. Isa golf course and presumably from the nest where each year the nest owners (Australian Magpies) attack golfers. I first noticed them around 10<sup>th</sup> March when the 2 almost fully grown juveniles were heard begging for food on a Figtree branch and being fed by a group of magpies.

On 21<sup>st</sup> March, after golf I returned and checked them out at close quarters. They were now in separate Figtrees and being fed by separate groups of magpies. One of the Channel-billed Cuckoos sometimes would fly down onto the fairway and wait alongside one of the magpies, still calling out for food.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, at dusk, I noted a Channel-billed Cuckoo (still crying out for food) with 3 magpies roosting on a 132,000V tower (about 400 meters from the earlier sightings.) This time the magpies were ignoring the begging calls.

### ROSE – CROWNED FRUIT - DOVE, AN EXTENSION OF RANGE - Bob

Forsyth

I stayed at the Sweets Island Fishing Resort for the weekend of 30/03/2001. Sweets Island is 30km from the mainland and 70km north of Burketown. This was as a result of winning an Irish Club/4x raffle. I decided to spend 1-1/2 day's atassing and only fished on two afternoons with my 3 companions. That was sufficient time for me to catch two 36inch Mulloway plus a good range of smaller fish. My bird count was 52 species...including many lifers.

Unfortunately, I missed meeting by one day, two of the resort owners Tex and Lyn Battle. Lyn is a member of both BA and BOCA. However the other co-owners, Ray and Salme Atherinos told me what birds to expect. One of these was the Rose-crowned Fruit-dove, which live less than 200 metres from the buildings. I only had time to check out the one bird, which was sitting quietly 2 metres from the ground, just within the edge of a medium wooded area. It was the rose-crowned race *ewingi* of WA and NT as generally illustrated in Slater and P&K, but not in S&D or Morcombe. Apparently the R-c F-d are not bothered by the Brahminy Kite that also resides in close proximity.

Lyn has subsequently advised me:

1. *The Island bird list of 1995 records the bird.*
2. *Yes, the birds can be seen all year round.*
3. *Yes, they breed on the island. A regular guest, who has his favourite camping spot here, had a nest in the tree above his camp and he saw an adult flying to and from the nest, and heard chirping from within.*
4. *The most that Tex has seen at one time was four birds.*

The nearest records in the 1st Atlas (page 216) is at the Islands near the mouth of the McArthur River (NT) and Kowanyama (Qld) Neither Slater, P&K nor Morcombe show the bird in the southern part of the Gulf. But S&D do include the McArthur River area.

This is quite a major expansion of the generally recognised territorial range, but not entirely unexpected. I suspect that enquires may locate it also on both Bentinck and Mornington Islands.

*Ps. Tex Battle advised he saw Four R-c F-d together 4/5/2001*

## **SOME COMMENTS ON THE CARPENTARIAN**

### **GRASSWREN - Bob Forsyth**

I see them 3 times out of 4 visits to the McNamara Rd site, (see note below), 60 km NW of Mount Isa but sometimes this can take up to 7 hours.

There are at least 4 pairs of CGw at that location, well spread out from each other.

This includes 3/4km east of the cairn. They have also been seen 1 km S. of the cairn.

The CGw has been seen on the Barkly Hwy at...

.. the Gunpowder turnoff (Gordon Beruldsen)

.. the Burketown turnoff (2/3 of the way to Camooweal) (Glen Holmes),

.. the Microwave tower turnoff 40km East of Camooweal. (Bob F, J&S O'Malley)

.. another area, near the above Microwave tower. (Bob F, J&S O'Malley)  
Other locations include...

.. Normanton Rd 80km north of Cloncurry, (Gordon Beruldsen)

.. Musselbrook Reserve (Lawn Hill NP), (one was collected) (Boles and Longmore)

See their report "Avifauna of the Musselbrook area" in Musselbrook Reserve Scientific Study Report, 1998

.. Westmoreland Station, (McKean and Martin)

.. Hell's Gate (Cliffdale Ck Station) (McKean and Martin)

.. Gunpowder (Ck) Gorge (Kamileroi Stn), (Professor Henry Nix)

.. 10 km from Mount Isa (on private property!) (Confidential)

My ears have gone and rarely go looking for the bird, but I believe they are everywhere where there is similar habitat.

Here are some edited & expanded notes I have posted on the Birding-Aus Internet pages...

*The Carpentarian Gw seems to like flattish country, with established 60cm high spinifex with bare ground between the clumps.*

*This bare ground is often gibber.*

*The flattish country is often cut by shallow gullies.*

*The area is free of Cattle.*

*The Snappy gums are sparsely spaced.*

*The CGw both hop and walk from the edge of one clump of spinifex to the next.*

*They rarely fly unless flushed.... and if they do, at a distance, can be misidentified for a spinifex bird.*

*I've been told, (but not seen it) they sometime fly to the top of a clump of spinifex for better views.*

*They will often follow the shallow gullies as they move from one clump of spinifex to the next looking for insects.*

*I was with John O'Malley when he recorded a CGw (with his Video Camera) grab a 100mm skink and whip it around (like a Kookaburra does) until it broke the spine.*

*They build their nests on the top of the spinifex. (Chris Lester's party 30/8/1998 observed nesting)*

*They will often throw their heads right back when they call.*

*They do not need a water supply.*

*They are active in the middle of the very hottest days.*

*The secret of getting sightings is to be very quiet, move slowly and listen for their calls.*

*(They continually use a short contact call)*

*I am sure that if birds just walk through the above-described type of inhospitable country many more CGw locations will be found.... and there is no shortage of it! It is unfortunate that tickers do not afford even a few minutes to try to find the bird at other locations. As soon as they have their tick they drive out of the area.*

*Walking through spinifex is not everyone's idea of fun either. But my dog loves licking my freshly punctured bare legs!*

## **ATLASSING**

### **ATLASSING IN THE CHARTERS TOWERS**

#### **REGION- Keith & Lindsay Fisher**

There are many 10-min atlas grids that remain unatlassed in our region and with that in mind we headed off SW of Charters Towers to the Lakes Buchanan and Galilee area. We had the latest however they showed some roads which no longer existed, the GPS came in useful here confirming we were on the marked roads. The Lakes are both saltwater and not easily accessed. A 1 km track off the Yarrowmere Station to Aramac rd (21° 38' 48" S 145° 55' 44") takes you to L. Buchanan. We could see water shimmering in the distance but no access across the salt flat. A small dam here had a few waterbirds and 3 Silver Gulls. Lake Galilee is further south towards Aramac and signposted south of Fleetwood St at the Eastmere St turnoff (22°24'54"S 145° 38' 01"E). The map shows the road going past the lake but it only goes part way to a stockyard and only distant views of the lake are had. We atlassed incidental sightings of emus, bustards and raptors as they are quite likely being overlooked in the current atlas. We returned to Cairns via the Great Basalt Wall road and up to Greenvale and onto the Atherton Tablelands. The Great Basalt Wall road NW of Charters Towers is interesting for it's lagoons along the way and we also had 6 camels camped in the road near Toomba Stud. In all we did 54 surveys in 42 10-min grids of which 28 were shown as unatlassed in April 2001 (other atlassers have sheets pending for this area) and saw 151 species of birds in 5 days. Targeting these unatlassed grids got us out into some interesting country we probably would otherwise never have gone to, so atlassers target those unatlassed areas and have fun. A full report will be produced in due course, for anymore info please contact us.

### **SUNDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> JULY BIG BIRTHDAY BIRDWATCH**

Birds Australia celebrates its 100th birthday today and to celebrate in the best way why not have a day out birdwatching? (if you can't come along to the tableland atlassing). The Atlas team at National Office has suggested a super day of Atlassing. You could survey your normal atlas sites or give yourself a treat by going somewhere new and atlassing new sites and seeing new birds. Atlassers who do the most surveys on the 1<sup>st</sup> July will be in the running for a secondhand Atlas GPS at the end of the project.

## **INTERESTING PLACES**

### **Kinchant Dam- Mackay Region- Desley Williams**

Kinchant Dam is 40km west of Mackay between the Sugar Towns of Eton and Marian. Kinchant Dam has always been an excellent area for Bush Stone-curlews; in one count about 4 years ago I recorded approx. 270 which are seen under trees on both sides of a half kilometer stretch of roadside between the School Recreational Camp and the Resort. But in visits since that time I have not recorded such large numbers, usually no more than 50. When I expressed my concern to the owner of Kinchant Waters Resort he advised me that the curlews are still there in large numbers and breeding; but have moved back into the hills to roost; apparently due to increased usage of the dam through water sports, educational camps etc. He said they could be seen in large numbers on most nights around the resort. The resort situated on a small hill has good accommodation: cabins, backpackers, restaurant and camping facilities. There are excellent views of the lake from 2 or 3 cabins, the balcony being a good sport to relax with a scope. The owner is proud of the wonderful bird life and the bird list which was commenced about 10 years ago, now comprises 193 species: large numbers of water birds on the dam (which supplies water to the area's canefields) also bush birds on the owner's property comprising semi-rainforest covered hills; eucalypts and open woodlands. The owner is happy to give permission to

birders who wish to bird on his property adjacent to the resort. A friend and I have bush-camped on the property, and during 24 hours of atlassing trips usually record 95 - 100 species. I would recommend Kinchant Dam as a good good stop-over for a night or two en-route to Eungella for Eungella Honeyeater, but don't go on a weekend because the lake is covered with power boats and jet skis, the birds disappear to the far side of the lake which is approx. 5km across and more difficult to access.

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS IN OUR REGION

Michael Ahmet - Atherton, Daniel & Wendy Blunt - Cairns, Maureen Cooper - Walkerstone, Don Crawford - Yungaburra, Dr Igor Debski - Atherton, Khalida De Ridder - Ravenshoe, Sue Foley - Cairns, Jan Granshaw - Ayr, Ern Hodgson - Mossman, Dr. Phillip Munday - Townsville, Annette Murrell - Cairns, Grant Phillips - Cairns, Mrs N. Sandiford - Malanda, Greg & Sue Walker - Proserpine. Welcome back to Judy & Peter Ebsworth - Cairns, Ron & Suzanne Stannard - Julatten

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

## ACCOMMODATION

### Rose Gums Wilderness Retreat

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

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Web Site [www.rosegums.co.au](http://www.rosegums.co.au)

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Cape York Peninsula - 250 species of birds,  
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Ensuite cottages - verandahs, licensed restaurant, lagoons, walking and 4WD tours by resident naturalists.

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## NOTICE BOARD

### CAR STICKERS

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

## FOR SALE

### BIRD CALL CD's

#### Bird Calls of North Eastern Queensland (Bushbirds)

CD 1 Scrubfowl, Pigeons, Parrots, Kingfishers, Robins, Flycatchers, Riflebird, Fairy-wrens & Scrubwrens. (Emphasis on Iron Range species).

CD2 Gerygones, Thornbills, Honeyeaters, Whistlers & Cuckoo-shrikes.

CD3 Nightbirds, Kingfishers, Parrots, Cuckoos & Raptors.

#### Bird Calls of The Northern Territory (Bushbirds)

CD 1 Nightbirds, Cuckoos, Kingfishers, Robins, Wedgebills,

Whistlers, Shrike-thrushes & Butcherbirds.

CD 2 Flycatchers, Babblers, Fairy-wrens, Gerygones, Thornbills, Pardalotes & Bowerbirds.

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Ph 02 4343 1283 email: [fredvg@trentvale.com.au](mailto:fredvg@trentvale.com.au)

CD's are \$15.00 each plus GST \$1.50 + P&P \$3.00 for two.

## Position Vacant

### Please send items for Contact Call to Newsletter Editor

After 3½ years of editing Contact Call this will be my last issue, yes I know I said this last issue but I got railroaded into this issue! However this is definitely the last. Ian Sinclair has promised to edit the next two issues whilst we find a permanent replacement, thanks again - Keith Fisher.

Please send items for Contact Call to  
Ian email: [Ian.Sinclair@dnr.qld.gov.au](mailto:Ian.Sinclair@dnr.qld.gov.au)  
Or the secretary P O Box 2209, Cairns Qld 4870

Contact Call will no longer be available by email after this issue, due to the logistics of keeping the database up to date.

Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Birds Australia but are those of the author.

## THANKS

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