

# Birds Australia

Conservation Through Knowledge

Birds Australia Centenary 1901-2001

*Celebrating Bird Conservation*

# Contact Call

**Birds Australia—North Queensland Group**

**December 2001— Issue: Red-tailed Black Cockatoo**

## Christmas Cheer—Convenor's report

As you may have seen from email communications and Wingspan we are selling limited edition prints of William T. Cooper's painting of **Red-tailed Black Cockatoos** that he recently completed. Bill & Wendy Cooper have very generously had 500 prints made of this painting and have donated the proceeds of the sales to BANQ and HANZAB. See details page 8.

**Many thanks to Bill and Wendy for this support.**

The interpretation for 'Nyleta Wetlands' bird hide is finally at the manufacturing stage after much negotiating and toing and froing. The end result will be 24 bird images from HANZAB and seven 1 metre by 700 mm signs explaining how Wetlands work, migrating bird use, Indigenous and European history and a couple of surprises with a slightly different approach to traditional signage. It was decided by the steering committee that the proposed walkway from the bird hide to Peters Street will not proceed but instead the funds will be used to construct a toilet block at the bird hide and to pay for some better signage for both sides of the National Park.

Christmas time again and as Peta and I are hosting the Christmas get-together this year we would like to extend a warm invitation to everyone to join us for this social event of the year, especially to any new members who are yet to venture out with BANQ. It is a great opportunity to meet other members and share some tall tales and true and some Christmas cheer.



**Merry Christmas everyone! Here's to making a difference for the birds in 2002.**

**Jon Nott**



## Birds North Queensland Group—Events Calendar

### December 2001

**15th** BA-NQG Christmas Party at The Nott's, Land Road, Butchers Creek, Malanda. BYO plate and alcohol. **6pm**

### January 2002

**26-28th** - Kingfisher Park. Many field trips and communal meal, plus a slide show & guest speaker Saturday night. Phone Marion Buchanan on 4092 2702.

### February 2002

**16th** - Malanda Pub dinner / guest speaker. *Still to be confirmed*

**17th** - Plaith Road - joint field trip with Cairns BOCA. Meet at the Plaith Road turn-off from the Kennedy highway south of Atherton at 7:30am.

**24th** - Redden Island. Meet at 7:30am, Cinderella Street, Machins Beach—the entrance before the toilet block. Contact Keith Fisher for details

### March 2002

**9th** - Cairns Esplanade—Wave the waders Goodbye. Meet at 9:30am opposite the Tradewinds Hotel at the information shelter . All welcome—come and improve your wader skills. Contact Keith Fisher.

**29th-1st April** - Easter weekend—Calma Waters Campout on the Mitchell River. Contact John Clarkson for details.

### May 2002

**19th** - Breakfast with the Birds at Emerald Creek. Meet at 8am off the Mareeba-Kuranda Road.

### June 2002

AGM at Tinaroo. Details in next CC.

**Field Trips map change after publication. Contact local reps. for the latest information. This will allow for more flexibility,**

### Inside this issue:

- Events Calendar
- Atlas II offer
- Torresian Pigeon counts
- Great Basalt Wall Discovery Weekend
- Trip Reports
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- Sightings
- They're nesting where?
- Bill Cooper's painting

**T**HOUGHT OF THE DAY  
 "There is nothing in which the birds differ more from man than the way in which they can build, and yet leave a landscape as it was before"  
 Robert Lynd

## Atlas 2 "officially ends at the end of 2001"



The Atlas project is now coming to an end with over 200,000 atlas sheets being recorded in over 92,000 locations. We already have over three million records of 760 different species, which compares with 2.7 million records of 738 species in the first Atlas. Over 8,000 people are contributing to the new Atlas and surveys are still coming at around 1,500 per week.

ONLY  
**\$69.95**  
plus \$7 p&p

### Exclusive Pre-publication Officer **The New Atlas of Australian Birds**

Completely revised and updated with the very latest distribution data collected by a network of dedicated volunteers showing 3.5 million records from 200,000 surveys, with every 1° grid in Australia visited. Early – bird fee is only available to those who order before it goes to publication (mid 2002). All income received as a result of the purchase of this book will be passed onto BA and held in trust until publication.

Contact us via e-mail at [sales@thebirdingshop.com](mailto:sales@thebirdingshop.com) if you have any enquiries.

Send your forms to the following coordinators:

### Atlas Coordinators

#### Northern Region (Cardwell north including Cape York) Regional Organiser—Graham Harrington (07) 40965051

- Stephen Garnett (Cairns) (07) 4052 3088  
Email: [stephen.garnet@env.qld.gov.au](mailto:stephen.garnet@env.qld.gov.au)
- Glenn Holmes (Atherton Tableland) (07) 4091 4364  
Email: [dasyornis@ledanet.com.au](mailto:dasyornis@ledanet.com.au)
- Lloyd Nielsen (Nth Atherton Tableland) (07) 4094 1549  
Email: [nielsenl@tpg.com.au](mailto:nielsenl@tpg.com.au)
- Elinor Scambler (Atherton Tableland) (07) 4095 3296  
Email: [dacelo@austarnet.com.au](mailto:dacelo@austarnet.com.au)

#### South Region (Cardwell to Bowen)

##### Regional Organiser—Jo Wieneke (07) 4771 4707

- Ian Clayton (Townsville) (07) 4725 6489  
Email: [birds&bush@ultra.net.au](mailto:birds&bush@ultra.net.au)
- Jon Wren (Bowen/Ayr) (07) 4786 2614  
Email: [maluras5@tpg.com.au](mailto:maluras5@tpg.com.au)

#### Southern Region (Bowen to Mackay, including Mt Isa)

##### Regional Organiser- Marion Crouther (07) 4958 4613

## 2001-2002 BA-NQG Management Committee

### Office Bearers

**Convenor**—Jon Nott (07) 4096 8230

Email: [nott@austarnet.com.au](mailto:nott@austarnet.com.au)

**Secretary**—Bill Bray (07) 4032 2698

Email: [b.bray@ Cairns.qld.gov.au](mailto:b.bray@ Cairns.qld.gov.au)

**Treasurer**—John Clarkson (07) 4092 2702

Email: [john.clarkson@dnr.qld.gov.au](mailto:john.clarkson@dnr.qld.gov.au)

**Conservation Officer**—Graham Harrington (07)40965051

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

### Project Contacts

#### Beach Stone Curlew Study

Amanda Freeman (07) 4095 2148 (w/ends)

[procella@ozemail.com.au](mailto:procella@ozemail.com.au)

#### Gouldian Finch and Birds at Waterholes Survey

Klaus Uhlenhut (07) 4065 5181

**Redden Island Survey** Keith Fisher (07) 4039 0972

#### Sarus / Brolga Tableland Crane counts

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

#### Townsville Egret & Ibis Counts

Jo Wieneke or Glenda Jeffries (07) 4773 1802.

### Area Representatives

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

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

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**Townsville:** Jo Wieneke (07) 4771 4707

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**Innisfail / Tully:** Klaus Uhlenhut (07) 4065 5181

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**Mount Isa:** Bob Forsyth (07) 4743 3210

Email: [isabirdo@austarnet.com.au](mailto:isabirdo@austarnet.com.au)

## Birds Australia Membership

Subscriptions \$62

Concession \$46

Family \$99

This includes membership of the national organisation plus membership of the regional group, Birds Australia—North Queensland Group.

Members also receive four issues of the full-colour bird magazine *Wingspan* and four issues of the *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, Victoria 3123



Birds Australia

BA-NQG car stickers, featuring a Pied Imperial Pigeon on a tropical green background are still available. 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 the Secretary.

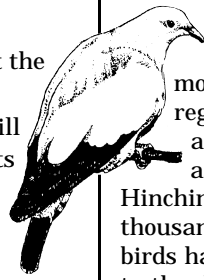


Birds Australia

## Bowen looks after the birds Torresian Imperial Pigeon count is on!

**Bowen Shire Council** are to be *Congratulated* for taking action against the destructive vehicles at Kings Beach. The Council have placed large piles of fill as well as large rocks at all access points to deny 4WD's access into the Kings Beach Creek area & onto Kings Beach. This is an important area for the rare and vulnerable **Beach Thick-knee**.

*Jon Wren, Bowen*



Now called the **Pied Imperial-Pigeon** (*Ducula bicolor*), this is one of the most outstanding of all the Australian pigeons. For six months of the year these pigeons inhabit the Papua New Guinea region. Then in August, when our rainforests start to fruit, the birds arrive to commence their nesting and breeding season. As far back as the 1860's the Brook Island group (five nautical miles north of Hinchinbrook Island) was recorded as an important nesting site for thousands of these pigeons. For the past 27 years seasonal counts of the birds have been conducted from a sand spit on North Brook Island thanks to the dedicated work of the Thorsborne's. There are normally six counts per year, with this year's getting off to a great start with 22,000 birds for October and 31,200 for November. A full report will be in the March edition of Contact Call.

## Great Basalt Wall Discovery Weekend ...Len & Chris Ezzy, Townsville

In five 4WD's, eleven travelers from various coastal locations in the Herbert-Burdekin, met at the rendezvous campsite on the dry, sandy bed of the Clarke River just upstream from the Gregory Developmental Road Bridge. En route, all travellers reported sighting **Emus** with chicks.

Since each of us would be covering some new territories, this weekend was one of *discovery*. Our goals varied substantially, however eyes were peeled for the elusive **Black-breasted Buzzard**. The Clarke River camp netted about 50 species, some of which included **Nankeen Night Heron, Yellow-billed** and **Royal Spoonbills** as well as **Brolgas, Squatter Pigeons, a Great Bowerbird** and numerous, busy **Black-fronted Dotterels** on the sand beside the water's edge. Smallest birds seen were a group of 6 **Double-barred Finches** drinking at a waterhole just a few metres away from the sizzling bacon and eggs.

On Saturday we rolled the convoy west on the dirt and bull-dust Niall - Maryvale Road completing atlas sheets at every opportunity. The Ironbark and Box woodland near Niall Station housed 16 fairly common species ranging from the tiny **Yellow Weebill** and **Striated Pardalote**, the cheeky **Torresian Crow**, and the rowdy **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**. Traveling further west to the grid-bridge crossing of Maryvale Creek, we combined our morning tea break with another atlas. More **Weebills, Black-fronted Dotterels, Great Egrets, White-faced Herons, Striated Pardalotes**, an **Olive-backed Oriole** and a high-soaring **Wedge-tailed Eagle** to name but a few of our sightings there. Never far from our lenses were herds of timid wild **Deer** grazing the green banks and drier hill slopes.

Next stop, Bluff Downs, and both Rhonda Smith and the family's pet porker "Babe", welcomed us to Bluff Downs. Having tasted not only all our vehicles' running gear, mudflaps and side-steps, but also Ian's legs and sandals, boisterous "Babe" was promptly caught and caged for the remainder of our visit. Bluff Downs is an historic working cattle station set around the spectacular deep-water lagoons of the Basalt River. Right on its shady banks, just below the enchanting homestead, we settled down for a relaxing picnic lunch while the **Apostlebirds** chattered about us, and the **Darters, Little Pied Cormorants**, and a pair of nesting **Whistling Kites** kept a watchful eye on our presence. Afterwards, as we ventured along the banks to walk our food down, the **Hardheads, Pacific Black Ducks, Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbills** and the solitary **Intermediate Egret** took flight as we encroached on their territories.

We then drove a kilometre downstream from the homestead to the popular Bluff Downs natural swimming hole where a few of us took the plunge to cool off. The others completed another atlas survey and also observed the families of **Rock Wallabies** cliff-hopping around their caves in the walls of the basalt flows. Back on the road east to the Fletcher Creek Camping Reserve where we set up for an overnight stay. With some daylight left we headed down to Dalrymple National Park on the banks of the Burdekin River. Notable species sighted included a family **Black-necked Storks** (2 adults and 3 juveniles) **Brolgas, a White-necked Heron, Little Egret** and more **Black-fronted Dotterels** feeding in the shallows. Some other sightings were **Red-winged Parrots, Pale-headed Rosellas, Squatter Pigeons, Spangled Drongo, Nankeen Kestrel** and a **Whistling Kite**. Back at camp a **Tawny Frogmouth** watched us prepare our evening meals. After a couple of social drinks and conversation, we turned-in early, with high expectations of the day ahead.



Sunday dawned with the maniac chorus of the **Blue-winged Kookaburras** and the melodies of the **Magpies** and **Brolgas**. Breakfast down and the binoculars out, we set off on foot up and down the Fletcher, spotting amongst others, an **Azure Kingfisher, Great Bowerbird, Nankeen Night-heron, Pheasant Coucal** and **Chestnut-breasted Mannikins**. In the morning, the convoy filed westward along the Lolworth Road to Reeves Lake where we had a magnificent half hour of birding. Although we recorded 31 species there, it was the sheer number of birds that impressed us most. **Black Swans, Pelicans, Cotton Pygmy-Geese, Hardheads, Pacific Blacks, Grey Teals, Yellow-billed Spoonbills, Darters, Egrets, Comb-crested Jacanas, Black-winged Stilts, Cormorants, Australasian Grebes** and the icing on the cake was the **Great Crested Grebe**, which could not escape our lenses. With those treats under our belt, we headed 20km further west to Red Falls National Park. The screeching **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Laughing Kookaburras** greeted us; but it was away from the car park on the bed and banks of Lolworth Creek that returned some more interesting sightings: **Nankeen Night-heron, Brown Falcon, Grey Butcherbird, Yellow-bellied Sunbird, Spotted Pardalote** and an **Emu** with 5 chicks. The more adventurous of us decided to cool off in the pool below the falls. Our penultimate atlas survey was completed in the late morning a further 22km up the Lolworth Road at the Toomba Road turn-off. Considering it was midday, we still managed to pick up 15 species in the open Ironbark and

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Trip Reports

### Heathlands Atlasing Trip - 5th to 15th August 2001

A group of seven intrepid Birds Australia members used Heathlands Ranger Station on Cape York as a base to Atlas an area that had little data collected. We used the Red Spot/Green Spot vegetation survey system to ensure that we covered as many vegetation types as possible. This found us struggling through dense heath vegetation, rainforest and swamps sometimes to only find a handful of species, but other times we were rewarded with views of Cape York specialties such as **Fawn-breasted Bowerbird** at a bower or a solitary **Palm Cockatoo** gazing down at us. We accessed the west coast of the Cape at Scardon River, mouth courtesy of the Skardon River Kaolin Mine, finding an **Emu** (a male with chicks was seen only days before), large flocks of waders and frigate birds. On the east coast we were almost blown away at Ussher Point after a three hour journey along a very rough and winding road. We surveyed along the famous Telegraph Track and down to Captain Billy's Landing finding **Satin Flycatcher**, **Banded, Tawney-breasted** and **White-streaked Honeyeaters**, but in the end it was **Graceful** and **Yellow-spotted Honeyeaters** that were the most common. When all the surveys were analysed, **Rainbow Lorikeets** were the most atlased bird. Having a base at the Ranger Station meant we had the luxury of hot showers and a kitchen to cook in which was most appreciated after long days in the bush. Our thanks go to Shaun the Ranger for his hospitality and Mango his dog for giving us lots of entertainment.

*Keith & Lindsay Fisher*

### Lake Morris (Copperlode Dam) - 26th August 2001



10 members drove up to Lake Morris at the back of Cairns for breakfast overlooking the lake. The newly installed gas barbeques and tables were well used in between birding distractions. After breakfast we started on a leisurely stroll down to the dam wall, some of us managing to see the **Superb Fruit-dove** which had been calling during breakfast. A snake cruising along the spillway wall poking into every nook and cranny looking for frogs momentarily distracted us. One frog leapt out of a crack as the snake put its head in and avoided becoming breakfast, the general consensus amongst us was that it was a Keelback. Meanwhile some were checking out the birds behind the dam wall, a couple of **Comb-crested Jacana** were moving across the water lilies in a small corner of the dam and several cormorant species were perched on the aeration pipes. Across the dam the vegetation becomes rainforest, here we had some good sightings of **Yellow-breasted Boatbill**, **Pied Monarch**, **Rufous Fantail** but not the **Cassowary** which has been seen here in the past.

Upon returning to the kiosk, to indulge in some more food and coffee, our hosts Jenny and Dietmar gave us a bird species list, which we offered to update for them. They also told us that several **Cassowaries** were in the area and visited the kiosk from time to time. Whilst sitting here we enjoyed some of the best of the mornings birding, with many species passing by including several honeyeaters and a great view of a **Barred Cuckoo-shrike** perched in the open. The morning proved to be very productive, leisurely and enjoyable with 39 species seen.

*Keith & Lindsay Fisher*



### Redden Island - 10th September 2001

Threatening clouds greeted us as we started on our walk around Redden Island but luckily we only received a few drops of rain, which did not deter us, but it was unusually quite for birds. We saw very few birds in the first woodland section and the mangroves with no improvement beyond the mangroves in the second woodland area. This area had recently been burnt, which made walking along the track easier but contained virtually no birds. It wasn't until we walked back along the road on the woodland edge that we started to see plenty of birds. A fruiting fig had a pair of **Double-eyed fig-parrots** feeding in the open, a female **Rufous Whistler** – uncommon on the coast here, was also in the fig. The **Cicadabirds** and a **Collared Kingfisher** were very vocal as was the **Gould's Bronze-Cuckoo**. From here we moved up to the mouth of the Barron River to spot some waders. This was a good opportunity for the members to test their identification skills, as there were a good variety of birds on the mudflats. Amongst the waders was a **Ruddy Turnstone**, more often seen out on the islands than along the coast and a **Black-necked Stork** was fishing from a sandbar in the river.



With the help of the waders we managed a respectable total of 60 species along with four atlas sheets, adding a **Little Pied Cormorant** onto the total species list for Redden Island, which now stands at 148.

*Keith & Lindsay Fisher*

### Dalrymple Gap Walking track—16 September 2001

About 16 birdo's joined in on the historic adventure along the Dalrymple Walking Track. Now open to the community, the walking track offered a variety of vegetation communities from casuarina woodland to riparian rainforest and open eucalypt woodland.

After a short climb to the historic bridge we stopped for morning tea and an atlas opportunity and caught a glimpse of a **Wedge-tailed eagle** and a **Pacific baza**, while we heard a few classics including the **Victoria's riflebird**, **Varied triller** and **Rose-crowned fruit-dove**. We then headed downhill, along Dalrymple Creek, through riparian rainforest spotting an array of forest beauties such as the **Grey Goshawk**, **Yellow-breasted Boatbill**, **Noisy Pitta**, **Goulds' bronze cuckoo**, **Golden whistlers** and **Satin flycatchers**. We also picked up a (dead) **Papuan Frogmouth** which will be sent to the Qld Museum for research. Although excited about the possibility of seeing the elusive **Cassowary**, only scats were sited on the track. Thanks to QPWS we were picked up in Abergowerie State Forest and taken back to our vehicles at Damper Creek.

*Helen McLaughlin, Ingham*

### Annual Crane Count - 6th October 2001

Thanks go out to everyone involved with this year's Crane Count. There were certainly more entries this year, including counts from Townsville and Ingham. Numbers were higher than last year at some sites but dramatically down at others. Full story in the next issue....

*Elinor Scambler, Atherton*

We recently spent one and a half weeks birding in the far north western corner of Queensland. Our overnight stop from Mount Isa was at Chinaman's Gardens on the spring fed Louie Ck. This location is 8km south east of the Lawn Hill National Park headquarters. We recorded a total of 42 species including **Northern Rosella, Australian Bustard, Azure Kingfisher, Channel-billed Cuckoo** (my first for the season) and a **Northern Fantail** plus **Bush Stone-curlews** that called all night. However the four clans of **Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens** that I saw two months previously were missing.



Excitement headed our way when we were caught in the middle of a wildfire, which recently swept through two million hectares of NW Qld. After beating off the flames only metres from our camp, the fire then headed into the gorge where it produced some magnificent flames up to four metres high, fuelled by Spinifex. Congratulations must go to local property owners, Century Mine staff and the QPWS rangers for saving Adels Grove and the national park camping areas.

We continued through to the Bowthorn outstation on the Nicholson River (139km due west of Burketown) called Kingfisher Camp (in search of the resident **Azure Kingfisher**). I was more than impressed: water and fireplaces at all sites; soft green grass under shady trees; toilets & showers spotless; with a water hole 6km long. About one and a half kilometres away is Goose Swamp (named after **Magpie Geese** that have breed there). It is a natural water storage (maybe 4 km around) and teeming with birds, and because this is the end of the tourist season we often had the swamp to ourselves and the birds! In the six days I observed 113 species including **Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens** that passed close by our camp twice each day (We did not have to leave our chairs!). We hired a small outboard to get views of the water birds and to reach the upper part of the hole to see the **Spinifex Pigeons, Black-tailed Treecreepers** etc. We were lucky to see from our

boat an **Azure Kingfisher** having its afternoon bath. It repeatedly flew into the water before preening itself. Unexpected sightings were **Striated Bittern** (tick) and **Pied Heron** (tick). Both **Australian Ravens** and **Torresian Crows** are present (I think) to test out the Corvid experts. I was not confident to identify Forest from the **Sacred Kingfishers** as I did not get any views of the wing patch. Lots of Sandstone hills, but no **Shrike-thrush's**. Is this species another cruel hoax? Even on my way back to Burketown at the Doomadgee sewage ponds I chalked up 29 species (in the rain). While just out of town was a **Jabiru** (Black-necked Stork) gazing at its reflection in a pool of water in the middle of the road. There were 31 species in the 500m radius around Burketown that includes its artesian bore. Interesting birds were **Magpie-Goose, Radjah** (Burdekin) **Duck, Pied Heron, Marsh Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**. At the sewage ponds were a pair of **Black-tailed Native-hens** and amongst the **Brolgas** a pair of **Sarus Cranes** (tick). The Cemetery hosted **Nankeen Kestrel, Brolga, Singing Bushlark** and **Richard's Pipit**, which were not seen elsewhere in the immediate area. The Escott Weir turned up **Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens** a few metres from the causeway. In the mangroves at the edge of the Albert River I heard, but could not see, a **Mangrove-golden Whistler**. I reckon it was only 2m away from me each time it moved, and pushing through dense mangroves in thick mud isn't my idea of a pleasant 35°C afternoon's birding!!

At Truganini landing a **Jabiru** allowed me to take photos from 2 m. (These birds do not appear to be endangered in my part of Qld). Unfortunately I could not venture out to the mouth of the Albert River over the salt flats, because of the high tides. I returned via the Burke & Wills roadhouse at three-ways (now 4) on the Cloncurry/Normanton Road. And to finish the trip I then saw about 8 **Plum-head Finches** feeding with a group of **Zebra Finches**. These are well outside their published territory.

*Good birdin'*

### INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF VOLUNTEERS 2001

BA-NQG has received a Certificate of Recognition for supporting rehabilitation of the endangered Mabi forest – the dry rainforest formerly found from Yungaburra to Atherton, Tolga and Kairi. BA-NQG was represented at a recent function on the Tablelands, organised by Trees for Evelyn and Atherton Tablelands (TREAT), to celebrate all aspects of Mabi forest support work. Specifically, various BA-NQG members have surveyed birds (and organised surveys with non-members) in Mabi remnants and restoration projects including Peterson Creek, Mazlin Creek, Priors Creek, Wongabel and Curtain Fig.



*(Continued from page 3)*

Bloodwood woodland. The **Weebill, Rufous Whistler, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Crested Pigeon, Pheasant Coucal** and a juvenile **Olive-backed Oriole** to name a few. We continued on to Toomba Station, where owners and fellow BA members, **Ernest and Robyn Bassingthwaight** welcomed us at the homestead. As we lunched on the shores of the lake, we completed our final atlas survey - recording 21 species. Unfortunately no additions to Robyn's already extensive bird list, but we did record **Gulled-billed** and **Caspian Terns, Masked Lapwings, White-faced Herons, Yellow-throated Honeyeaters, Peaceful Doves, Magpie Larks** and **Wedge-tailed Eagles**.

With that, our long weekend had drawn to a close as we farewelled and headed for home. On reflection, it should be noted that **Torresian Crows** were sighted at each and every atlas site, and that, extraordinarily, not one **Willy Wagtail** was sighted over the 3 days. Even though Roy missed seeing his **Black-breasted Buzzard**, the group still enjoyed a weekend of adventure.

For organising such an enjoyable weekend, our sincere thanks go to **Marty & Helen McLaughlin**. Thanks also to **Rhonda Smith** of **Bluff Downs** for permitting us on to the property and to use the facilities. Similarly, thanks to **Ernest and Robyn Bassingthwaight** of **Toomba**.

*Len & Chris Ezzy, Townsville*

### A recent letter from the President....Henry Nix

Dear Keith and Lindsay,

A sincere thank you for your pioneering efforts with **Contact Call** and for your contribution to BA-NQG. Regional Groups are where much of the on ground action occurs and where BA meets the public. I read all the regional group newsletters with great interest, but **Contact Call** has a special place because of my long term involvement in research relating to northern Australia in general and FNQ in particular. The most recent **Contact Call** contains many items of interest. Comments on species distributions were noted and deserve further comment: 1. The **House Sparrow** has been recorded around a number of the large homesteads on the Barkly Tableland and is very well established at 'Alexandria', having been there for at least two decades; 2. The **Red-capped Robin** was recorded at 'Redwall' on the Upper Burdekin ("Hillgrove Station") by Gilbert on the Leichhardt expedition in 1844 and I have recorded it there on every camp at that site in the 1990's, as well as further north at 'Valley of the Lagoons'. In mid July this year, I recorded a female **Red-capped Robin** at 'Old Morestone Homestead' on the O'Shanessy River NW of Camooweal, which is as far north as I have ever recorded them.

A request for BANQ members who may have wintering records of **Stain Flycatchers**. Most **Satin Flycatchers** appear to go through to New Guinea and outer islands, but I am accumulating a steady set of records from FNQ with each winter trip north. All are inland from the coast, with two from the 40 Mile Scrub NP rest area, one in August 1999 and one in July 2001. Other records in July, through the 1990's have been at 'Valley of the Lagoons HS' gardens, junction of Tate and Lynd Rivers at 'Torwood' west of Chillagoe; Mitchell River falls on 'Mount Mulgrave' and on the middle Normanby River, directly inland from Cooktown. All of these records were of males, but records of females are of a lesser degree of certainty".

**Keep up the good work, Kind Regards—Henry Nix (President BA)**

You can send any flycatcher records to Henry via BA Head Office, 415 Riversdale Rd., Hawthorn East, Vic 3123.

### Anyone for Owls?

A recent outing to look for owls using nesting boxes around Atherton/Tolga was very successful, with a number of birds seen and a good time had by all sighting both Barn and Grass Owls. As a result, another night will be organised in February, to hopefully see Masked Owls (and learn the differences between Barn, Masked and Grass owls) and Barking Owls. We may even see/hear Boobooks, Nightjars and Lesser Sooty Owls depending upon the energy of the participants. Contact Ian Sinclair on ☎40966690 for details.

There is also a project with landholders looking at raptors and mice/rat populations. Volunteers may be needed for monitoring and other activities. Further details for this project in next Contact Call.

#### Changing bird populations of Atherton Shire, Far North Qld

Glenn Holmes & Elinor Scambler.

Shows the bird species and habitats that have changed in the last thirty years since JA Bravery's study on birds of the Atherton Shire (1970). We consider 27 species are definitely increasing (around Tinaroo Dam, farms and gardens), and 19 decreasing (ie in wooded streams, swamps and woodlands, plus a few in rainforest). Illustrated with Jenny Holmes' stunning watercolours of Magpie Goose and Southern Cassowary.

### BA-NQG Display Posters

BA-NQG now has two new display posters – laminated A1 size – prepared for the inaugural Australian Ornithological Conference in Bathurst, 4-8th December. They were also shown at the Rainforest CRC Conference in Cairns during November. Though both relate to projects on the Atherton Tablelands, in future they will be available for BA-NQG displays in other areas as well, contact Elinor on Ph (07) 4095 3296 or Email: [dacelo@austarnet.com.au](mailto:dacelo@austarnet.com.au). We are very grateful to QPWS Atherton for expert scanning advice and printing, which were offered in support of community conservation work by both TREAT and Birds Australia. Special thanks to Cathy James and Dan Murphy.

#### Community bird surveys at the Pelican Point Revegetation Project, 1992-2001

Elinor Scambler.

History of the site (a Bravery site) and project (TREAT with other groups and government agencies), habitats, recolonisation of the planted areas of Pelican Point by forest birds alienated by clearing after 1910. Graphs of species richness trending down in grassland, and upwards in trees, from bird count data (TREAT & Birds Australia 1994-97 & 2000-01). Illustrated (including the graphs) with on site photos by various donors.

### Plea for information on the BBFK

As part of a study of migration in paradise kingfishers, I want to investigate the temporal pattern of arrival dates for this kingfisher throughout their range, from the Tip of Cape York right down to Mackay. If people see kingfishers early in the season anywhere in their range, and think they are recent arrivals, I would be extremely grateful if they noted down the date and passed on any information. Retrospective records would also be very valuable. Please send any information to Sarah Legge, King Park, CMB 52, Cairns Mail Centre, QLD 4871; Phone (07) 4060 7364; or Email [Sarah.Legge@anu.edu.au](mailto:Sarah.Legge@anu.edu.au)

Under a Flyway-wide Flagging program small plastic flags have been placed on the legs of waders. Each country or region has been given a colour combination code. The program has been hugely successful in tracing the movements of waders, the timing of migrations of different populations, and the locations of breeding areas and non-breeding areas. It is clarifying many hitherto unanswerable questions about waders. The new knowledge is feeding directly into our understanding of the conservation needs of

waders. There are estimated to be about 60,000 waders which are alive today carrying flags. A massive increased effort is needed everywhere to search for flagged birds, and anybody can do it. Details about the flagging program, the colour combinations used an electronic reporting form, and who to send sightings to, are shown on the **Australasian Wader Studies Group** website at: [www.tasweb.com.au/laws/index.htm](http://www.tasweb.com.au/laws/index.htm)



# Sightings .....

SPECIES	DATE	LOCATION	OBSERVER	COMMENTS
Rajah Shelduck	3/06/2001	Lake Mitchell (Quaids/Southedge)	Igor Debski	2, always good to see in the area
Beach Stone-curlew	29/07/2001	Wallaby Island, 5 km West of Weipa	Sue Gould	
Great-billed Heron	7/8/2001	Lakefield NP, Seven Mile Waterhole	Glenda Jeffries	
Sarus Crane	2/08/2001	Weipa	Sue Gould	1 adult & 2 Juvs. Unusual here
Rufous Owl	5/08/2001	Myall Creek, 50 km East of Weipa	Sue Gould	
Brown Treecreeper	9/08/2001	Skardon River Road - Cape York Peninsula	P.Brook, G. Harrington, J.Clarkson, K&L Fisher	Race <i>melanota</i> , Black Treecreeper northern extreme of range
Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo	4/09/2001	2km NW of Yungaburra	Jack Leighton	
White-throated Nightjars	6&8/09/2001	One near Tarzali , two at Bromfield Swamp, Malanda	Graham Harrington	Obviously on migration
Black Noddy, Roseate Tern & Sanderling	10/09/2001	Michaelmas Cay	Phil Gregory	Single bird
Grey Goshawk	10/09/2001	Atherton Graveyard	Graham Harrington	
Channel-billed Cuckoo	19/09/2001	Cairns	Ian Cowan	1st reported in Cairns for season
Common Koel	20/09/2001	Kamerunga, Cairns	Keith & Lindsay Fisher	1st of season here.
Red-kneed Dotterel	24/09/2001	Hasties Swamp	Glenn Holmes	Irregular visitor
Crimson Finch	27/09/2001	Yorkeys Knob Lagoon, Cairns	Keith Fisher	M+F in fresh plumage with 1 Juv.
Wandering Whistling-duck & Cotton Pygmy Goose	28/09/2001	Lake Moondarra, Mt. Isa	Bob Forsyth	4 duck- Irregular visitors to Mt. Isa & 2 male geese- believed to be 1st records for Mt. Isa
Red-necked Avocet	29/09/2001	Mt Isa sewage ponds	Bob Forsyth	Irregular visitor
Red-necked Crake	6/10/2001	Foley Road, Palm Cove - creek crossing	Ian Cowan	
Broad-billed Sandpiper	7/10/2001	Cairns Esplanade	John Crowhurst	1st reported this season.
Great-billed Heron	7/10/2001	Mouth of Hartley Creek, Wangetti	Ian Cowan	
White-eared Monarch	8/10/2001	Green Island, 27 km NE of Cairns	Keith Fisher	Interesting
Sooty Oystercatcher	8/10/2001	Green Island, 27 km NE of Cairns	Keith Fisher	Uncommon along the coast here.
Banded Honeyeater	12/10/2001	3 km north Kairi	John Allen	1 bird
Black-tailed Native Hen	14/10/2001	Burketown Sewage Ponds	Bob Forsyth	Nth of normal range (500 seen around Karumba in '85).
Painted Snipe	15/10/2001	Lake Mitchell	Del Richards	one sighted
Fork-tailed Swift	19/10/2001	Muellers Lagoon, Bowen	Jon Wren	35+ feeding 5-20m from the ground.
Oriental Plover & Little Curlew	20/10/2001	Kairi, Atherton Tableland	Glenn Holmes	Irregular visitor
Rajah Shelduck	20/10/2001	Northern Sewage Treatment Works, Cairns	Keith Fisher	1 bird. Thanks to Ron Elsdon for the info.
Painted Snipe	27/10/2001	West Leichhardt River, Mt. Isa	Bob Forsyth	irregular visitor
Pied Heron	30/10/2001	Southern Sewage Treatment Works, Cairns	F.van Gessel, B.Rankin K.Fisher	2 birds - irregular visitor
Pallid Cuckoo	6/11/2001	Lake Mitchell	Del Richards	one sighted
Oriental Cuckoo	12/11/2001	Port Douglas area	Del Richards	two sighted
Male White-winged triller	14/11/2001	Mossman	Del Richards	three sighted
Yellow Wagtail	16/11/2001	Kairi Research Station	Glenn Holmes	1 bird
Broad-billed Sandpiper	18/11/2001	Cairns Esplanade	K & L Fisher, Linda & Phill Cross	1 bird
Buff-breasted Kingfisher	? Nov-01	My garden, Mareeba	John Clarkson	Flew into window and survived!

## Cassowary sightings needed

The Department of Natural Resources and Mines and the Environmental Protection Agency are currently collating all known **Cassowary** sightings in the wet tropics bioregion. Information has been sourced from both the 1977-81 and 1998-2001 Atlas projects, as well as data from community groups (eg C4) and wildlife experts in the area. This information is being used to identify essential **Cassowary** habitat and will be incorporated into the regional vegetation management planning process currently being undertaken by NR&M. Therefore if anyone has sighted a **Cassowary** and has not sent a record of this to BA, please fill in an *Incidental Search Form* before the end of the year. This information is vital and will be used in the protection of **Cassowary** habitat. *For more information contact Helen on ☎ 4777 2822.*



## They're nesting where???

Managers of the **Matson Resort Hotel** recently discovered that they were playing host to a couple of unusual and unregistered guests. With impeccable taste, a pair of **Peregrine Falcons** had chosen to nest in a narrow planter box, just below the bedroom window of a top story penthouse suite, with a perfect bird's eye view of the Esplanade. Matson Resort management are now happy to accommodate their uninvited but exciting guests and QPWS is providing assistance and support in managing the birds. If you have a problem with wildlife, please contact QPWS on (07) 4046 6600.

## Welcome to new members.....

- ✎ Mareeba Wetland Foundation, MAREEBA
- ✎ Ms L Joseph, TRINITY BEACH
- ✎ Mr S McKenna, TRINITY BEACH
- ✎ Mr D Robinson, KARUMBA
- ✎ Mr A Roma, SMITHFIELD
- ✎ Ms E Terrell, MOSSMAN

**We look forward to seeing you all on some of our many activities or drop us a line about your recent birding adventures.**

*Check out these websites*

Wet Tropics Mgt Authority: [www.wettropics.gov.au](http://www.wettropics.gov.au)

Oriental Bird Club: [www.orientalbirdclub.org](http://www.orientalbirdclub.org)

International Year of Volunteers: [www.iyv2001.gov.au](http://www.iyv2001.gov.au)

## Classifieds.....

### 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

### Rose Gums Wilderness Retreat

Private self-contained timber chalets with spa, fireplace and spectacular mountain views—great bird watching (150+ species). Look for specialties such as Blue-faced Parrot-finch, Red-backed Button-quail, Lesser Sooty Owl, Victoria's Rifle Bird and King Parrot.

**Land Road, Butchers Creek, Malanda  
Atherton Tablelands  
Phone Jon and Peta Nott (07) 4096 8360  
[www.rosegums.com](http://www.rosegums.com)**

## They've done it again..... Dawn Magarry, Cairns

On 1st July 2001 I noticed the female Grey Goshawk adding and arranging sticks on the same nest where the pair successfully raised two young last year. On 28th August she appeared to be sitting on eggs and as time progressed two young became visible in the nest. On the 8th October, our neighbour Don, reported finding a young bird on the ground beneath the tree. I had heard several Spangled Drongos harassing the nest early that morning—possibly one took fright and lost its balance. Don bravely fought off the lice infestations, and took the bird to the Wildlife Rescue Unit's vet. Sadly its back proved to be broken and the youngster had to be put down. Happily though on 28th October the remaining chick has done well and is flying round the neighbourhood trees though still being fed by the parents.

## Notice Board

### CONGRATULATIONS BILL COOPER

Each Year the Cassowary Awards recognise individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the Wet Tropics. This year the Cassowaries were presented to twelve amazing achievers by the State Minister for Environment, Rod Welford. Bill Cooper was among the elite as one of Australia's most acclaimed wildlife artists.

Described by David Attenborough as "one of the greatest ornithological painters of the world", his published work includes 10 books on birds, probably the most famous being his paintings of parrots, bowerbirds, kingfishers and birds of paradise. Bill's paintings hang in the Australian National Library and are represented in private collections all over the world. He has been awarded the US Academy of Natural Sciences Gold Medal and in 1994 was awarded the Order of Australia. Bill's intimate portraits combine science, ecology and art in a way that a camera could never achieve. Although his research expeditions have taken him

to wild places in many parts of the world, Bill says the Wet Tropics remains his "true paradise".

Members of Birds Australia are invited to purchase a special Birds Australia Centenary print of an oil painting of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos by Bill Cooper, the world renowned bird artist. They make an ideal Christmas present for anyone interested in birds. The cost is \$79 (including GST, postage & packing) for a high quality print of dimensions 510 x 525 mm. The edition is limited to 500 prints and each one is numbered and signed by Bill. All proceeds are donated to HANZAB. This is a BA-NQG Centenary Project, and the production and postage costs are contributed by Bill and Wendy Cooper. You may order by email: [info@rosegums.com.au](mailto:info@rosegums.com.au) quoting a Visa, Mastercard or Bankcard number or by sending a cheque in favour of BA-NQG and addressed to BANQ Print Offer, PO Box 314, Malanda, QLD 4885.

Please send items for March 2002 Contact Call by Mid February to: Helen McLaughlin, PO Box 91, Ingham Q4850 or Email either Helen or Ian on [helen.mclaughlin@dnr.qld.gov.au](mailto:helen.mclaughlin@dnr.qld.gov.au) or [ian.sinclair@dnr.qld.gov.au](mailto:ian.sinclair@dnr.qld.gov.au).