



Birds Australia
Conservation Through Knowledge

Contact Call



Birds Australia
North Queensland Group

Newsletter of the Birds Australia
North Queensland Group

*December 2005 Issue:
Collared Sparrowhawk*

Regional Groups - where do we fit in?

Birds Australia North Queensland is just one of several Regional Groups of Birds Australia (BA). Other groups operate in the Capricornia region of Queensland, southern Queensland, northern and southern New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. While BA concerns itself with national issues of research, conservation and education in relation to birds, the Regional Groups represent one means whereby the organisation can play significant roles at a regional level. Representatives of the various Regional Groups, usually but not always convenors, meet periodically. The most recent of these meetings was held at the BA National Office in Melbourne. These meetings present an opportunity for interchange of ideas and information between regions as well as a chance to interact with the CEO of BA (Graeme Hamilton) and members of national Council and to meet the very busy staff at National Office. Regional Groups meetings are usually chaired by the Convenor of the local region.

The following list of items discussed at the most recent Regional Groups meeting will give an idea of the variety of topics covered.

- Graeme Hamilton provided an up-date on progress toward the BA Strategic Plan.
- There was discussion of a "Regional Groups" page on the BA website. This page would provide basic information on each of the Regional Groups and provide a link to web sites maintained by individual Regional Groups.
- We discussed progress toward an email newsletter designed to provide closer and more regular links between regional groups. This will allow for the more effective exchange of ideas and information
- Ian Hume (Chair BASNA) up-dated the meeting on plans for an Australian Bird Education Centre in Sydney.
- We investigated prospects for new Regional Groups, for example, in the Northern Territory. Currently, many members of BA do not have the benefit of being involved in a Regional Group because of distance.
- We discussed ideas for building membership of BA and for a stronger involvement by Regional Groups in processing bird atlas data.
- The meeting discussed the BA response to the prospects of a bird flu outbreak in Australia. A situation statement has been prepared and is available through the BA web site.
- To more effectively co-ordinate interactions between Regional Groups in general and Regional Group meetings in particular, the meeting decided to appoint a Coordinator. This is to help ensure continuity between Regional Groups meetings. Grahame Rogers (BA Southern Queensland) has taken on this role in the first instance.

In addition to these topics, the meetings provide insight into the great variety of issues that Birds Australia is involved in both at the national level and through its regional groups. Regional Groups are an important way in which BA as a whole works toward meeting its aims in research, conservation and education.

Finally, it is *that* time of year again. On behalf of the committee for *our* Regional Group (BANQ) I would like to wish you the best for the Christmas season and trust that it will provide you with some time for refreshment and relaxation and so good birding.

Tony Grice, Convenor

BA North Queensland Group—Events Calendar Dec 05 - March 06

~ Merry Christmas ~

Wishing you a safe holiday

January 2006

Saturday & Sunday 14 & 15th - Summer Painted Snipe Survey

Members are encouraged to survey your local creek or wetland in search of the elusive Painted Snipe. Contact the national coordinator (03) 9882 2622 or email tbn@birdsaustralia.com.au for details.

Thursday 27th until Sunday 30th Australia Day Long Weekend

Join Keith and Lindsay Fisher, the new managers of Kingfisher Park for our annual campout at Julatten. Communal dinner Saturday night, please bring a plate. Book accommodation directly with Keith and Lindsay Fisher on (07) 4094 1263. Details on page 3.

March 2006

Sunday 5th - Clean Up Australia Day

www.cleanup.com.au or call 1800 282 329.

April 2006

Anzac Day Long Weekend - Beach Stone-curlew survey

More details in the March newsletter.

May 2006

17 & 18th NQ Field Days, Townsville.

More details in the March newsletter.

July 2006

9-14th - International Wetlands Conference, Cairns

Check out www.catchments.org.au

October 2006

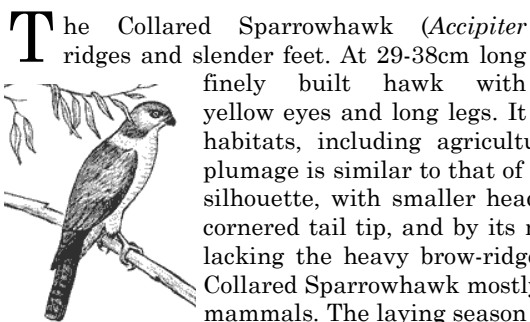
Saturday 7 October 2006—NQ Crane Count

An annual BA-NQG research activity, across the Atherton Tableland, Upper Herbert, Townsville-Giru, Ingham, Gulf country, Cape York. Write this in your diary now. Email Elinor Scambler at cranesnorth@austarnet.com.au, write to PO Box 59, Atherton Qld 4883 or check out www.ozcranes.net for details.

Inside this issue:

- Birddata now online
- Crane Count 2005
- Australia Day campout
- News—Avian Influenza, Gouldian Finch, Siam Weed
- Book Review—The Big Twitch
- Around the Region—Townsville's Crane Count, Mt Isa, Cotton Pygmy-Goose
- Noticeboard





Collared Sparrowhawk
Bevly Hughes
© Birds Australia 2003

Collared Sparrowhawk

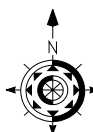
The Collared Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter cirrhocephalus*) is characterised by slight brow ridges and slender feet. At 29-38cm long finely built hawk with yellow eyes and long legs. It is a habitats, including agricultural land, urban areas, and watercourses. The Collared Sparrowhawk's plumage is similar to that of the Brown Goshawk. In flight, the Sparrowhawk is best distinguished by its silhouette, with smaller head, more curved trailing edges to the wings, and square or notched, sharp-cornered tail tip, and by its more flickering flight. At rest, the Sparrowhawk has more staring eyes (i.e. lacking the heavy brow-ridges of the Brown Goshawk), more spindly legs and longer middle toe. The Collared Sparrowhawk mostly eats small birds, particularly passerines, but also lizards, insects and small mammals. The laying season is July-December, pairs nesting solitarily, having 3-4 eggs. While incubation takes 35 days, dependence after fledging lasts up to six weeks, after which the young disperse.

cirrhocephalus) is characterised by slight brow with a wingspan of 55-78cm, it is a small, fierce, rounded wings, long square-tipped tail, staring solitary, secretive hawk of most well-wooded habitats, including agricultural land, urban areas, and watercourses. The Collared Sparrowhawk's plumage is similar to that of the Brown Goshawk. In flight, the Sparrowhawk is best distinguished by its silhouette, with smaller head, more curved trailing edges to the wings, and square or notched, sharp-cornered tail tip, and by its more flickering flight. At rest, the Sparrowhawk has more staring eyes (i.e. lacking the heavy brow-ridges of the Brown Goshawk), more spindly legs and longer middle toe. The Collared Sparrowhawk mostly eats small birds, particularly passerines, but also lizards, insects and small mammals. The laying season is July-December, pairs nesting solitarily, having 3-4 eggs. While incubation takes 35 days, dependence after fledging lasts up to six weeks, after which the young disperse.

Information sourced from *The Birds of Prey of Australia* by Stephen Debus.

Birddata now on line...

You can now enter your atlas data directly onto the website www.birddata.com.au. It can also map bird distributions and produce bird lists. All BA members and atlasers have been allocated a Birddata username (i.e. membership number) and password (i.e. your surname). You can of course, still send your Atlas forms to the coordinators listed below:



Southern Region (Bowen to Cardwell)

Regional Organiser—Jo Wieneke 4771 4707

22 Bishop Street, Belgian Gardens Qld 4810

Northern Region (Cardwell to Cape York)

Regional Organiser—Graham Harrington 4096 5051

PO Box 680, Malanda Qld 4885

Other Contacts:

- Glenn Holmes (Atherton Tableland) (07) 4091 4364
PO Box 1246, Atherton Qld 4883; or
- Elinor Scambler (Atherton Tableland) (07) 4095 3296
MS1318 Gadgarra Road, Yungaburra Qld 4872.

2005-2006 BA-NQG Management Committee

Executive Committee

c/o PO Box 37 Belgian Gardens QLD 4810

Convenor—Tony Grice home phone: (07) 4725 7201

Email: tony.grice@csiro.au

Deputy Convenor—currently vacant

Secretary—Helen McLaughlin home phone: (07) 4771 3239

Email: helen_marty2000@hotmail.com

Treasurer—Harry Cassidy home phone: (07) 4057 5278

Email: harrycass40@hotmail.com

Committee members

Jo Wieneke (Townsville) John Frois (Cairns)

Elna Kerswell (Townsville) Allan Gillanders (Atherton)

Committee-elected Positions

Conservation Officers—Graham Harrington (northern) & Jo Wieneke (southern)

Newsletter Editor—Helen McLaughlin

IBA Coordinators—Alastair Freeman & Graham Harrington

Project Contacts

Beach Stone Curlew Survey Amanda Freeman
4095 2655 or aafreeman@qldnet.com.au

Tableland Crane Count Elinor Scambler 4095 3296
Email: dacelo@austarnet.com.au

Townsville Egret & Ibis Count Jo Wieneke 4771 4707 or
Glenda Jeffries 4773 1802.

Cape York Atlas Surveys Graham Harrington 4096 5051

Regional Contacts

Townsville: Jo Wieneke Ph: 4771 4707

Cairns: vacant

Atherton Tableland: Mark Newton Ph: 40484747 (wk)

Email: mark.newton@nrm.qld.gov.au

Mossman / Daintree: Del Richards Ph: 4094 1199

Email: info@finefeathertours.com.au

Cape York: Sue Gould 4069 7585

Email: susanfgould@yahoo.com

Mount Isa: Bob Forsyth Ph: 4743 3210

Email: isabird0@bigpond.net.au



Birds Australia Membership

Subscriptions: \$68 Single \$108 Family \$50 Single Concession \$87 Family Concession

This includes membership of the national organisation plus membership of our regional group,

Birds Australia—North Queensland Group.

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

You can now join directly through our web site: www.birdsaustralia.com.au.

Check out the website for local and national events



Birds Australia



Birds Australia

North Queensland Annual Crane Count 2005

Thanks very much to all 92 people who joined the Birds Australia NQ Group Annual Crane Count on Saturday, October 1st and covered roosts north, south, east and west with skill and enthusiasm. In terms of results, the most unusual year since surveys began in 1997. Here's a table showing the percentage of cranes landing in each region.

Brolgas & Sarus Cranes landing in north Queensland roosts, 1 October 2005

Species	Total Landed	% Inner*	% Outer~	% Wet Coast+	% Dry Coast#
Brolga	4,432	2.7	75	22	0.3
Sarus Crane	1,369	98	2	0	0



* Inner = Inner Tableland, including Atherton, Malanda, Yungaburra and Tinaroo Dam; ~ Outer = Outer Tableland, including Mareeba, Innot Hot Springs, Kaban and Mt Garnet; + Wet Coast = Ingham area; # Dry Coast = Townsville/Giru.

Previous highest Brolga count (landed birds)": 4,150 in 2004

Previous lowest Sarus count (landed birds): 1,616 in 1999.

Please note these figures are raw data and should not be quoted, they are presented for indicative information only.

So where were the Sarus? Effort (the number of people, and roosts counted) was much the same as in previous years, so it seems the Sarus were elsewhere this year. Early suggestions are that many Sarus stayed in the Gulf country throughout the Dry season, due to wetter than usual conditions in some areas. Possibly also, cranes that did migrate to the Inner Tableland left earlier than usual, due perhaps to an uneven maize harvest.

John Grant and Rob Heinsohn are reviewing data from their Gulf aerial surveys but in view of the low Tableland results it seems we'll have to wait for 2006 to develop a new estimated population for Australian Sarus Cranes. Co-ordinator Elinor Scambler is working on a more comprehensive report including highlights and notes from all the teams, if you have photos or notes to contribute, please email her at cranesnorth@austarnet.com.au or write to Australian Crane Network, PO Box 59, Atherton Qld 4883.

Thanks to the people at ABC Radio Far North and Western Queensland for great interviews about Brolgas, Sarus Cranes, the 2005 Crane Count and the Cowboys. (Cowboys? Quote: 'The Count's not Sunday night is it?' Answer: Luckily, no – the evening after the Count, north Queensland's Rugby League team contested their first national grand final. And it wasn't only radio interviewers who anxiously asked that question, either!)

**The most
Brolgas ever!**

**The least
Sarus Cranes
ever!**

Ozcranes also went online just in time for the 2005 North Queensland Crane Count, including downloadable forms. Thanks to everyone who contacted us with comments, suggestions, a few corrections, and offers of more photographs and articles. Some ideas for the future –

- 🦩 Ozcranes Resources: A photo exhibition (limited period, say three months) in cooperation with contributing photographers. The first theme is likely to be Cranes in Flight;
- 🦩 Ozcranes Research: More scientific abstracts and articles;
- 🦩 Ozcranes Conservation: More about Cranes on Farms. Coming soon, southern Australian farmers showcase their Brolga wetlands;
- 🦩 Sarus Cranes: A comparative table of the current conservation and research issues for Sarus Cranes in different regions (India, Australia, SE Asia).

We hope Ozcranes will be a continuing resource for everyone wishing to understand Brolgas and Sarus Cranes, and manage their varied habitats.

Check out www.ozcranes.net.

Brolga takeoff, flight and landing will feature in a future Ozcranes exhibition of Australian and New Guinea cranes in flight, with contributions from a number of photographers (Michael Todd, Bowra Qld).



North Queensland Annual Australia Day (Extra) Long Weekend

Join the BANQG team for a great weekend of birdwatching and socialising. Arrive Wednesday night or early Thursday morning. There will be field trips to Mt Lewis Forest Reserve, and possibly an all day trip to Mt Spurgeon Forest Reserve. Other areas of birding interest which may be visited include Mowbray State Forest, Mt Carbine Dam and Mitchell River on Brooklyn Station. The day's program will be available in the communal kitchen for those arriving at different times. There will be the traditional communal dinner on Saturday night.

Although access to the Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge is via the main road and accessible by conventional vehicle, 4WD's are recommended due to the clearance needed along forest tracks. Car pooling on the day may be available and will help to reduce the number of vehicles on those roads.

Spectacular birds are (almost) guaranteed, such as the **Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher**, **Lesser Sooty Owl**, **Owlet Nightjar**, **Victoria's Riflebird**, **Noisy Pitta**, **Tooth-billed Bowerbird** and of course **Blue-faced Parrot-Finch**.

Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge is offering BA members a 10% discount on accommodation and a three day camping package of \$30.00 per person (normally \$12.00 per day) + \$1.00 per site a day if you need power. The facilities, as always, will be available to all.

Contact Keith and Lindsay directly to book your accommodation for this great weekend on phone (07) 4094 1263 or email sootyowl@bigpond.com.



Blue-faced Parrot-Finch
Andrew Plant
© Birds Australia 2003

Birds Australia statement on Avian Influenza

The recent spread of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza to Kazakhstan, the Black Sea coast and eastern Europe is causing public concern about its potential to reach Australia. Because of the possibility that migrating water birds are assisting the spread of the disease, Birds Australia is keeping a watching brief on developments overseas as well as working with Australian Government Health and Agriculture Departments to monitor the situation in Australia.

Birds Australia has released a statement on the Avian Influenza which can be accessed directly from the website www.birdsaustralia.com.au. The following is an extract from this statement:

What are Birds Australia Doing?

Birds Australia is directly monitoring the international situation as the outbreak unfolds. Our colleagues at Birdlife International and Wetlands International are assisting by providing us with information. We are cooperating with the Australian Government Departments of Health and Ageing, and Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, who in turn have international links through the World Health Organisation (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Birds Australia's vast datasets are being used by authorities to examine areas where migratory birds might occur near poultry facilities. This planning will aid Australia's preparedness. Birds Australia is also assisting with surveillance, and in understanding the ecology of migratory and resident wild birds. Thus, we are contributing to longer term solutions of this problem.

Further information:

In 2004, Birds Australia's journal, *The Emu*, published a review of the role of wild birds in the possible transmission of avian influenza. Further information can be obtained from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry: www.fao.org/ag/againfo/subjects/en/health/diseases-cards/special_avian.html.



Gouldian Finch
Steve Paton
© Birds Australia 2003

Over the last several years as we all know Mareeba Wetlands and Savanna Reserve has developed a release programme to re-establish **Gouldian Finches** in the wild.

Over the last year a Sighting Report Form has been set up with the Mareeba Wetlands Foundation and recently Warren Entsch and the Foundation has printed a poster, which so far has been distributed from Coen to Karumba, Georgetown to Chillagoe.

The recent sighting of note was the small flock located in Lakefield National Park in July 2005 by Peter and Annette O'Reilly and a week later by Klaus Uhlenhut. Other reports recently that have come in are from Kowanyama and a flock of 30+ south of Langlo Lake, south west of Georgetown.

Historically the species was in vast numbers west of Mareeba with families being able to live well through the Great Depression on the sale of live birds to Chinese merchants.

With research I have found firm records from Lake Mitchell in 1987, north of Maytown in 1989, The Lynd in 1990, Walsh River near Dimbulah in 1995, along the Mitchell River in 1995 and 2004, and more recently at Big Mitchell

Gouldian Finch Database formed

Creek in June 2004. In 2003 two banded male **Gouldian Finch** returned to the Mareeba Wetlands after an absence of twenty six weeks which proved the released birds have the capability to survive in the wild.

During 2005 various reports have surfaced around Mareeba, however due to other time commitments neither the Mareeba Wetlands' staff nor myself have been able to follow these up. A great deal of caution has to be in place with regard to building up confidence amongst landholders because of fears of inundation of their properties by "ticking birders" and the real life issues of public risk insurance. In the short term it has been decided to place a moratorium on records in the Mareeba district as public participation is essential in what is really a closely knit community.

It is very early days in this worthwhile project and I don't know how it will unfold. At this stage I would welcome participation from my fellow BA-NQG members with ideas and ANY past reports that they have. With these reports we may be able to get an overall picture of at least their past distribution.

Del Richards can be contacted on email del@finefeathertours.com.au and phone (07) 4094 1199.

Hunt is on for Siam Weed

A national survey is commencing for one of the world's most invasive tropical weeds: Siam weed *Chromolaena odorata*. The Department of Natural Resources and Mines (NR&M), with the support of a number of other States and the government agencies is coordinating a pest plant survey aimed at establishing the full extent of Siam weed within Australia. Siam weed infestations currently exist in several north Queensland locations. At present these infestations are being controlled with an aim to eradication. "Siam weed is toxic to stock and has been known to degrade agricultural lands in southeast Asia to the extent that this land has now been abandoned," says NR&M Principal Project Officer, Frank Fox. Flowering occurs predominantly in the May to July period which is an important time for people to be on the look out for Siam weed's white-pink flowers," he said. "Landholders, bushwalkers, and naturalists will be crucial in helping to search their properties and watercourses for Siam weed," Mr Fox said. If you think you have seen Siam weed in any location, please

report by calling toll free **1800 084 881** or report on line at www.weeds.org.au.

Further identification material can be found at: www.nrm.qld.gov.au/pests.

For further information contact: Frank Fox, Principal Project Officer 0409 989 603 OR Brett Davis, Senior Project Officer (Communication) 07 3405 5531 or 0422 802 296 OR Sarah Funkhouser, Project Officer (Communication) 07 4799 7013.



The First Koel

Thanks to Jo Wieneke who wrote this in 2004 following her many sleepless nights. The tune is that of the First Noel....



*The first Koel in October is here,
From the top of the mango tree calls loud and clear,
In November they're calling before it gets light
And so it continues all day and night*

*Chorus: Koel, Koel, Koel, Koel
Oh how I wish that you'd all go to*

*The first Koel, make a note of the date,
Is it early this season or maybe its late.
Known as the stormbird it heralds the rain
And we know that we'll soon be hot and humid again.*

*Chorus: Koel, Koel, Koel, Koel
Oh how I wish that you'd all go to*

*Oh First Koel, you insomniac bird,
Of your incessant calling, enough I have heard.
Roost quiet in the mango tree. Make not one peep
Till the morning and hopefully I'll get some sleep.*

*Chorus: Koel, Koel, Koel, Koel
Oh how I wish that you'd all go to*

The Universal Laws of Birding

- 🦅 **Sacrificial Lamb Law**—The bird will be seen by others only after you, as the sacrificial lamb, leaves.
- 🦅 **Theorem of Diminishing Returns**—The longer you look for a bird, the less likely you are to find it (Carolyn Hoffman).
- 🦅 **Hoffman's Corollary**—The further you travel to see a particular bird, the less likely you are to find it (Carolyn Hoffman).
- 🦅 **Arie's Nemesis Theory** – If you don't see the bird within a certain amount of tries, it becomes insulted and deliberately avoids you from then on (Arie Gilbert)
- 🦅 **Gilbert's Wishful Thinking Hypothesis** – This takes place by casually mentioning a bird and then the bird shows up (Arie Gilbert).
- 🦅 **Hoffman's Law**—You may look for a particular bird for 20 years without finding it, but once you DO find it you find them everywhere. They up in your driveway, on your porch, EVERYWHERE. They suddenly become robin-like in their numbers (Carolyn Hoffman).
- 🦅 **Field Mark Tendencies Scenario**—Whenever you are out birding without a field guide and see a new bird, the field mark you think is the important one is never the important one. The bird always flies before you can look at the important one. If there is an important field mark, the bird never lets you see it. If the bird sits there all day and lets you look at all its field marks, it is not a rare bird (Carolyn Hoffman).

Book Review - "The Big Twitch" - Sean Dooley

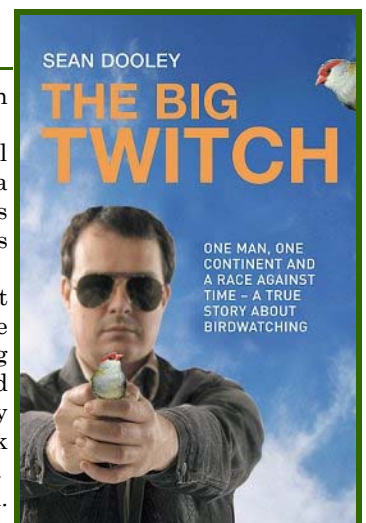
The *Big Twitch* is an entertaining account of what various people have described as an unthinkable achievement; the ultimate dream; and why would you do that.

In 2001 Sean Dooley took a year out of the mainstream to attempt the Australian annual twitching record (633 species) and challenge himself to the ultimate goal of 700 species in a calendar year. The story told by Sean is an intriguing and comical account of his adventures over the 12 months. The key people and places he visited will be familiar to many birders as to the determination and single mindedness of his quest.

As a story *The Big Twitch* is easy to read in its free flowing style, maintaining your interest throughout its 300 pages. The greatest concern before reading such a story is how the author can tell it in a way that will keep you hooked. Sean does this through interspersing the journey with comical observation, linking childhood dreams to his achievements and being frank about personal stories of loss, struggle, ambitions, romance and friends. Many younger members of BA can easily relate to his anecdotes of new dates or new work colleagues going cold when you describe your principle interest outside of work to be birding. Many BANQG members will appreciate the stories of the species and places in our region.

On reading *The Big Twitch* you are reminded of the depth of talent we have in the region and the respect some of our members are held in across the country. We are also fortunate to have many endemic species, which will continue to attract birders from around the globe (as well as satisfy our local interests).

The Big Twitch is recommended to all twitchers and those that dream of having the birding skill, enthusiasm and opportunity shown by Sean Dooley. For the rest of us it is just a good fun read. *Marty McLaughlin, Townsville*



"The big twitch: one man, one continent, a race against time - a true story about birdwatching".

**Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2005
Octavo, paperback, 322 pp. RRP \$27.00**

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Phone: (03) 9510 5750 Fax: (03) 9529 1256
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**Thank you to the publishers Allen and Unwin
for providing BANQG a copy of this fascinating book.**

*"I have just finishing
reading it and this book is
a gem! I laughed, cried
and wept tears. It is
brilliant."*

*Jim Downey, former
president Birds Australia.*

Annual Crane Count 2005, Townsville Town Common

Picnic at Teegoora Rock - The Other Birds...

Chris and I set out on foot from the Pallarenda carpark at about 4:30 on the Saturday afternoon of the Annual Crane Count (1 October 2005). We followed the Aboriginal Plant Trail to meet up with the Many Peaks Range walking track, which overlooks the Townsville Town Common Conservation Park. We noticed that the **Channel-billed Cuckoos** are back, as are the **Common Koels** in the open woodland. As we gained altitude up the track, we saw an **Osprey** and a pair of **White-bellied Sea-Eagles** patrolling overhead as the **Pied Currawongs** flew about below us. Through the telescope we picked up **Pied Imperial Pigeons** moving through the coastal vegetation. As we continued westward, there were lots of **Varied Trillers**, **Dusky Honeyeaters**, **Red-backed Fairy-wrens** and a **Superb Fruit-Dove**.

At Teegoora Rock the panoramic views are breath-taking, directly over the Town Common wetland, east to Magnetic Island, south down the coast to Cape Cleveland and west to Mount Louisa. As we positioned the telescope on 'the

rock', a **Peregrine Falcon** cruised through. We panned about and found a **Swamp Harrier** hunting about the grasslands below. At 6:00pm, two **Brolgas** flew in and landed in front of the Jacana bird-hide, and about 15 minutes later, two more arrived from the south.

As the twilight turned into darkness, we packed up and headed back down to the lowlands, where we did some spotlighting along the fire-break track. We lit up the red eyes of a **Large-tailed Nightjar** and spotted a solitary **Barn Owl** in flight. Our 2km walk back to the carpark was filled with the sounds of more chopping Nightjars accompanied by the wailing of **Bush Stone-curlews**. The **Blue-winged Kookaburras** cacophonied along too, and we were left with a **Tawny Frogmouth** 'ooming' us back to the car. We tallied 39 bird species for our three hours - This was our first visit to Teegoora Rock and it definitely will not be our last. What a jewel of a spot, right in the middle of Townsville.

Len and Chris Ezzy, Townsville

Down in the (dry) swamp

As Len and Chris were walking the slopes of Many Peak Range, we were watching the wetlands below. The afternoon started out with the standard birds at the first hide including **Varied Triller**, **Red-backed Fairy-wren** and **Brush Cuckoo**. There certainly wasn't much water around, although not surprising for this time of year. The **Bush Stone-curlews** were being very vocal, as were **Yellow** and **Brown-backed Honeyeater**. Then at the second viewing area, where there was a small amount of water, were 14 **Brolga**. With some juveniles amongst them, they were foraging around the edge of the wetland. A drive out to the Bald Rock carpark



gave us magnificent views of a **Peregrine Falcon** (we believe to be the same one as at Teegoora Rock not long after). Then with the sun going down and visibility significantly reduced we had a quick look at the compensatory habitat. Although the sandflies were biting we were able to watch two **Black-necked Stock** (male and female) and a juvenile **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** coming down for the last drink of the day.

As we drove away we could see more brolgas flying low towards the Mt St John sewage plant on Ingham Road. This is believed to be the most recorded number of Brolga on the Town Common for the Annual Crane Count over the past 10 years.

Helen McLaughlin, Townsville

Unusual sightings around Mount Isa

A new site in Mount Isa 'found' by resident Helen Morgan on her daily walk at the top end of Pamela Street, near the water tanks. Here there are plenty of **Carpentaria** (Ballara) **Grasswrens**. Although these birds are probably on every hill, it's usually on the other side of the hill that you are searching!

Other very good sightings at Lake Moondarra include:

- 🦩 Painted Finch in their 100's opposite the Booster Pump Station, near the dam wall
- 🦩 Cotton Pygmy-geese, one pair, outside their range but are now considered locals
- 🦩 Swamp Harrier, one pair, a rare visitor
- 🦩 Spotless Crake, two, outside their accepted territory
- 🦩 Baillon's Crake, two
- 🦩 Black-tailed Godwit, my first one for Mount Isa
- 🦩 Freckled Ducks, 24, an occasional visitor of recent years.

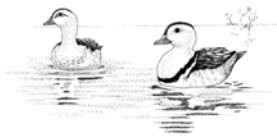
Bob Forsyth, Regional Contact - Western Queensland

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- photo adapter tube 850mm.
- This equipment is as new.
- Price for both \$350 ono.
- Enables photography using
- Nikon camera through Kowa
- spotting scope.
- (Our scope is a Kowa TSN
- 821-M).
- To make enquiries or an offer
- please call Sue Gould (07)
- 4069 7585 or email
- susanfgould@yahoo.com.

North Queensland Cotton Pygmy-Goose Survey 2005

Only a small number of **Cotton Pygmy-Goose** were recorded this year despite seventeen locations surveyed: 2 birds at Bosworth's causway (Ingham) along with three goslings, 14 birds between Aplin's Weir and Nathan St bridge (Townsville), 2 birds between Nathan Street bridge to Gleasons Weir (Townsville) and 16 birds at Emu Swamp Dam (Blackbraes National Park). These records have been sent on to Roger Jaensch (Queensland contact of Wetlands International). Thank you to Mark Parsons (Ingham), Alan Gillanders (Yungaburra), Steve Christie (Blackbraes National Park), Tony Grice, Jo Wieneke, Rob Hunt and Rosemary Payet (Townsville) and BANQG Townsville members for their assistance.



Cotton Pygmy-Goose
Mike Bamford
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Interesting sightings

Species	Date	Location	Observer	Comment
Yellow Oriole	13.9.05	Bush Garden Townsville	TG	South of usual range but seen here earlier than last year's sighting
Banded Honeyeater	18.10.05	Yellow Dam Townsville	JW	1 bird, rare in area
Black-chinned Honeyeater (4)	21.9.05	Serpentine Lagoon Townsville	BANQG survey	Uncommon
Square-tailed Kite	24.9.05	Cook Highway Trinity Beach	MC	
Great Knot	24.9.05	Mouth of Ross River Townsville	JW & VENT tour	2 birds leg-flagged – orange from Victoria and white/black from Chongming Dao, Shanghai, China
Wood Sandpiper	24.9.05	Hodel Road Giru	JW	Rare in area
Rufous Owl	25.9.05	Bush Garden, Townsville	TG	Unusual so close to city, one bird
Yellow Chat	25.9.05	Wide Bay, Lake Moondarra	BF IF TH	12 birds
White-winged Chough	4.10.05	Hervey Range	EP	Uncommon
Rufous Owl	7.10.05	Bush Garden Townsville	TBOCA survey	2 birds
Swinhoe's Snipe (?)	8.10.05	Wide Bay, Lake Moondarra	BF IF TH	Highly probably Swinhoe's
Kelp Gull	21.10.05	Townsville Strand	MT	Rare in area
Black-chinned Honeyeater	21.10.05	Riverview, Ross River	AA	Uncommon
Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher	23.10.05	Kingfisher Park Julatten	K&LF	First arrival back
White-winged Triller	21.10.05	Smithfield Water Treatment works	MC	Unusual on Cairns coast
Little Bittern	27.10.05	Daintree	BM & AS	Very unusual
Pied Heron	29.10.05	Yorkeys Knob Lagoon	DM	3 Birds
Little Friarbirds	29.10.05	Yorkeys Knob Lagoon	DM	Flocks hawking for insects. Also reported at Daintree by BM and AS
Papuan Frogmouth	29.10.05	Whitfield Cairns	DM	A good backyard bird!
Pectoral Sandpiper	30.10.05	Greenhills Station Dam, Georgetown	MC	3 birds
Australian Pratincole	30.10.05	10 km south of Cumberland Dam	MC	15 birds
Black-tailed Godwit	30.10.05	10 km south of Cumberland Dam	MC	2 birds unusual in area
Radjah Shelduck	30.10.05	10 km south of Cumberland Dam	MC	5 Adults
Australian Brush Turkey	30.10.05	5km N of Gilbert River on Greenhills St Road	MC	1 adult – at edge of range – unreported in first atlas
Australian Pratincole	4.11.05	Wide Bay, Lake Moondarra	BF IF TH	8 birds
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	7.11.05	Cairns	MC	Unusual on Cairns coastal plain
Asian Dowitcher	7.11.05	Cairns Esplanade	MC	1 juv – around for over a month or so
Broad-billed Sandpiper	7.11.05	Cairns Esplanade	MC	4 adults - annual regular?
Masked Owl	2.12.05	Kingfisher Park Julatten	K&L F	Still in residence
Pied Oystercatcher	9.12.05	Wunjunga Beach	M&H Mc and T&B Manners	43 birds on sand spit with numerous other waders including a Beach Stone-curlew

Jo Wieneke is the new coordinator for Interesting Sightings:

Please send any unusual or interesting sightings to Jo Wieneke at email bowerbird14@bigpond.com.

Thanks for all who sent in sightings especially Martin Cachard. His reports from Greenhills Station Dam are particularly interesting as little is known of wader movements away from the coastal plain.

Contributors: AA- Alex Appleman MC- Martin Cachard, K&LF- Keith and Lindsay Fisher, BF- Bob Forsyth, IF –Ian Fox, TG -Tony Grice, TH-Trish Hammond, DM- Dawn Magarry, BM- Barbara Maslen, EP- Elizabeth Pearce, AS Alan Sheather, MT- Malcolm Turner, JW- Jo Wieneke, M&H Mc - Helen & Marty McLaughlin, T&B Manners - Tina and Bill Manners (BASQ) and TBOCA- Townsville Regional Bird Observers Club.

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Contact **Maureen Cooper**

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Thanks

Birds Australia—North Queensland is very grateful for the support given by **Member for Townsville**, the Honourable, **Mike Reynolds** for the printing of this edition of *Contact Call*



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Notice Board

- ✎ All members are encouraged to **organise events** in their area. If you are interested in organising an event, or even if you have an idea for one, please contact any of the committee members. We only ask that these events align with the key actions and priorities of Birds Australia. The committee can help with advertising your event through the website or newsletter, or support in other ways to raise its profile in the community.
- ✎ Currently copies of **Contact Call** are sent to all NQ **libraries**. To help promote Birds Australia, members are asked to donate their old copies of either Wingspan and / or Contact Call to practitioner waiting rooms or school libraries.
- ✎ Another successful **Yungaburra Market** in September. BANQG raised \$160 thanks to donations (especially Graham's plants!), will a lot of interest in the brochures and posters.
- ✎ BANQG are now ordinary members of the FNQ NRM **Board**. Alan Gillanders attended the recent AGM (18 November 2005) in Cairns followed by a Public Celebration commemorating the Board's natural resource management efforts of 2005.
- ✎ **HELP - The Committee has misplaced a large blue plastic envelope (possibly from last years Yungaburra Markets). Inside this envelope are several plastic brochure holders for our display boards. Could everyone please look out for that envelope as these are very expensive to replace. Please contact the Secretary to arrange a pickup. THANKS.**



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Please send items for March 2005 Contact Call by early February to:

Helen McLaughlin, Secretary, PO Box 37, Belgian Gardens 4810 or Email Helen at helen_marty2000@hotmail.com