



Contact Call



Newsletter of the Birds Australia
North Queensland Group
PO Box 37 Belgian Gardens Q4810
www.birdsaustralianq.org

March 2007
Issue: Brown Falcon



Are you interested in the birds ...

At the recent "Earth Day" organised by Thuringowa City Council I gave a talk that focused on the birds of Townsville-Thuringowa urban area. I used my monthly records of species observed since May 1996. In one way it is a "good news" story in that over the eleven year period I have recorded well over 200 bird species in the urban environment. That amounts to around one quarter of the total Australian list. (It does include marine and wader species seen from shore but that don't actually enter the urban area). This respectable species total was recorded without including the few areas of natural vegetation that do remain within the city (e.g. Castle Hill, Mt Louisa, Mt Stuart, Townsville Town Common). However, there is also a "bad news" story or at least some parts of this story that give one concern. First, a significant number of species found on my list are observed in the city either only sporadically or more regularly but only in very low numbers. For example, I know of only one small pocket of White-browed Robins and that contains only a handful of individuals. This means that either the city is not providing the species with what it needs to maintain a permanent population, or the population is too small to be viable.

The other "bad news" aspect of the story is that if one moves outside the urban area, the number of species observed increases substantially. One can add, for example, Apostlebird, Squatter Pigeon and Black-throated Finch. A large part of the explanation for this is that the urban environment does not provide habitat for these species. Given the current rate and planned extent of urban expansion, large areas of the Townsville coastal plain that currently provides habitat for these species could soon not be suitable for them.

How important are these urban and peri-urban bird populations? I think they are important for three reasons. The first is their significance to bird conservation overall; this will vary with species. For some, such as the southern sub-species of the Black-throated Finch, the population on the Townsville coastal plain is very important or even critical to the conservation of the species overall. It is important to get some measure of this importance for our more "at-risk" species. Second, their presence in close proximity to centres of human populations is valuable for helping raise awareness of conservation needs in general. Third, their close proximity and ready access improves quality of human life.

Another worthwhile question concerns how we might better manage urban areas so that they provide habitat for a wide variety of native bird species. There are probably many small modifications we could make to what we do, and where and when we do it that would make significant differences to habitat quality. I would be interesting to hear other's ideas on this.

Tony Grice, Convenor

BA North Queensland Group—Events Calendar March—June 2007

March 2007

Sunday 25th - Wave the Waders Goodbye, Cairns.

Join Alan Gillanders for a late afternoon survey of the esplanade to identify the waders who are about to depart. Meet at the wooden viewing playform just south of the Muddies Playground on the Cairns Esplanade. Contact Alan for more information on (07) 4095 3784.

April 2007

Sunday 15th - Serpentine Lagoon, Townsville

Meet at the Wulguru service station at 6:30am for a morning birding along serpentine lagoon. Contact Jo Wieneke on (07) 4771 4707 for more details.

Sunday 22nd - Important Bird Area Monitoring Workshop, Cardwell

Everyone is welcome to this exciting workshop. More details on page three.

Saturday 28 and Sunday 29th - Beach Stone-curlew survey

Members are encouraged to keep a special look out for their local curlews and submit their records to the BA Atlas survey.

June 2007

Saturday 2nd - BANQG Annual General Meeting, QPWS Ripple Creek, Ingham

Please join us at the AGM at 1pm. Further details will be published on the BA and BANQG websites.

Saturday 2nd - Tyto Wetlands Interpretive Centre Open Day, Ingham

Come and join John Young from 4pm for this amazing event. Years in the planning, Ingham now has a state of the art visitor centre showcasing the region's assets. BANQG will have a display.

October 2007

Saturday 6th - Annual Crane Count

Put this one in your diary's today. The annual BANQG research activity, across the Atherton Tableland, Upper Herbert, Townsville - Giru, Ingham, Gulf Plains and Cape York. Email Elinor at cranesnorth@austarnet.com.au and check out www.ozcranes.net for details closer to the date.

Saturday and Sunday 27-28th October - Black-throated Finch Waterhole Survey, Townsville

Join the Recovery Team in surveying key habitat areas around Townsville in the search of the BTF. Contact Tony Grice a/h on (07) 4725 7201.

Inside this issue:

- Important Bird Area monitoring workshop
- Australia Day at Kingfisher Park
- Night Parrot Discovery
- Tyto information centre grand opening
- Birds in Backyards update
- Wildlife-friendly Fencing
- Regional News: Mt Isa, Black-throated Finch
- Interesting Sightings for the region

The Brown Falcon (*Falco berigora*) is with a wingspan of 89-109cm. The name for this falcon. It is solitary or loosely vocal falcon inhabiting most open habitats. The birds, reptiles, amphibians, arthropods, carrion and rarely fish. He is a common roadside raptor, typically seen perched on fence posts, utility poles, shrubs or the top of dead trees. It is here that he does most of his hunting. The laying season is April to September in northern Australia where pairs breed solitarily, then use the old stick nest of another raptor or corvid. The Brown Falcon is not globally or nationally threatened. Information sourced from "The Birds of Prey of Australia—A field guide" by Stephen Debus.

Brown Falcon

41-51cm long (tail almost half), specific name is an Aboriginal gregarious, excitable and highly Brown Falcon eats mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, arthropods, carrion and rarely fish. He is a common roadside raptor, typically seen perched on fence posts, utility poles, shrubs or the top of dead trees. It is here that he does most of his hunting. The laying season is April to September in northern Australia where pairs breed solitarily, then use the old stick nest of another raptor or corvid. The Brown Falcon is not globally or nationally threatened. Information sourced from "The Birds of Prey of Australia—A field guide" by Stephen Debus.



Brown Falcon
Robert Mancini
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2006-2007 BANQG Committee and Contacts

Executive Committee

Convener—Tony Grice phone: (07) 4725 7201 a/h
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Committee members

Ian Montgomery (Townsville) John Frois (Cairns)
Elna Kerswell (Townsville) Elinor Scambler (Atherton)
Dick Eussen (Mareeba) Ron Hill (Cairns)

Committee-elected Positions

Conservation Officers—Graham Harrington (northern) & Jo Wieneke (southern)
Newsletter Editor—Helen McLaughlin
IBA Coordinators—Alastair Freeman & Graham Harrington

Project Contacts

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Your Committee

Welcome to: Ron Hill: I moved to Australia from the UK with my wife in 2004 after we experienced the delights of birding in North Queensland whilst on holiday here in 2001-02. Over the years we have birded many parts of the world and we have been particularly drawn to tropical rainforests and wish to see them preserved. In particular I am especially concerned about the continuing loss of coastal habitat in this region to developers. In my previous life I worked in the advertising and design business and hope that my skills in this area can help promote the aims and ambitions of BANQG to a wider public.

Elinor Scambler: Past occupations (include) Student; agency office work (switchboard, typing, reception) for real estate, industrial suppliers, furniture removalists etc; selling clothes in Sportsgirl; economics tutor; community

radio broadcaster; senior policy/project work in human resources (public service); National Park ranger. Current occupations: Farmer on 16ha, trying to recover 7000 native timber trees from Cyclone Larry & regrow rainforest on the rest; web design; ornithologist (I wish). Long-term main interests: Cranes; birds in rainforest reveg; web standards & usability; 'cosy' detective stories; the world in general. Earliest bird memories: Crested Shrike-tits in the back yard when I was about 11 (leafy Eastern suburbs of Melbourne), and Brown Goshawks trying to capture my sister's budgie on the back verandah. Joined BA: (As the RAOU) in 1986. Volunteer work: Doesn't seem to have stopped since about age 15. Gave up committees a few years ago, but joined BANQG Committee last year because I like the people - and good connection definitely helps the crane work.

Birds Australia Membership

Subscriptions: \$75 Single \$55 Single Concession \$119 Family \$96 Family Concession Library \$55

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
CONSERVATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE



Are you interested in bird conservation?

If so, we need your help!

Where: Reef and Rainforest Information Centre, Cardwell.

When: Sunday 22nd April from 9am – 4pm.

The most important program from Birds Australia, from now and into the future, is the IBA program. Important areas have been chosen – or rather the birds have chosen those areas by their presence – but will they stay there? With climate change threatening and unexplained declines in populations of once common birds, it is vital that we monitor changes in the populations of North Queensland's rarest or threatened birds and changes in the high concentrations of seabirds, shorebirds and waterbirds.

National Parks and nature reserves have been chosen to protect and conserve viable populations of our native plants and animals. As the climate changes each species may need to shift its range. This will pose a massive problem for us because we may need to change land use patterns in order to ensure the survival of our native species.

Similarly, many of our species are already in decline and it is not always apparent why. Seed-eating birds seem particularly vulnerable with Gouldian Finches in the north and the southern race of the Black-throated Finch in the south being prime examples of species in trouble. Climate change is not suspected, however.

BANQG is proposing to monitor the birds in as many of the IBAs as possible. Who will do this? Well it has to be us, the ordinary members. Actually, there is nothing more fascinating than to monitor the bird populations in any particular area and experience the changes that occur due to season, weather patterns and



(regrettably) perhaps changes in the climate.

The table below lists the regions' IBAs and the bird species important to that area. Is there one that is close to home or one in which you are particularly interested? Would you be interested in making regular visits and collecting data in a scientific way under the guidance of Birds Australia?

If you attend the workshop, you will participate in deciding what needs to be done and what is feasible. In some IBAs, it may be necessary to consult aerial photos each year and make field visits occasionally (I think of mapping spinifex burning to gauge whether Grasswrens may be in trouble). In other IBAs annual visits may be required, but perhaps only key indicator species may be of interest (for example upward movement of Golden and Tooth-billed Bowerbirds may occur if the climate gets hotter). In other IBAs regular Atlas surveys may be needed to adequately survey a suite of species. None of this is yet decided because the people who commit to doing the monitoring need to be the people who decide what can be done. That is why we are running this workshop. We have a limited amount of money to assist with your travel expenses to attend the workshop.

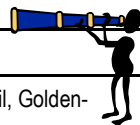
If you would like to attend the workshop please email the BANQG committee on birdsaus@birdsaustralianq.org including the number of persons attending and if you intend to claim travel expenses. BANQG will then contact you with more details over the coming weeks.

Graham Harrington, IBA coordinator

Phone: (07) 4096 5051 or email riflebird@austarnet.com.au

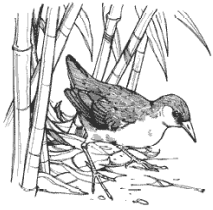
Information about IBA's, including the latest newsletter, can be obtained from www.birdsaustralia.com.au/projects/ibas.

Important Bird Area	Bird species important to that area
Lockerbie Scrub	Rainbow Bee-eater, Spangled Drongo (migratory bottleneck)
Iron / Mcllwraith Ranges	Southern Cassowary, Buff-breasted Button-quail
Lilyvale	Red Goshawk
Morehead River	Buff-breasted Button-quail, Golden-shouldered Parrot
Valley of Lagoons	Cotton Pygmy-goose
Pompuraaw	Star Finch
Boodjamulla	Carpentarian Grasswren and savanna birds
Gulf Plains	Many waterbirds and shorebirds
Staaten River	Golden-shouldered Parrot
Manowar and Rocky Islands	Brown Booby, Lesser Frigatebird
Bountiful Island	Crested Tern and Roseate Tern
Lake Tinaroo	Sarus Crane and various waterbirds
Daintree	Southern Cassowary and wet tropics endemics
Wooroonooran National Park	Southern Cassowary and wet tropics endemics



Important Bird Area	Bird species important to that area
Coastal Wet Tropics	Southern Cassowary and wet tropics endemics
Paluma	Southern Cassowary and wet tropics endemics
Fountain Springs	Kalkadoon Grasswren and savanna birds
Atherton Tablelands	Sarus Crane, Brolga
North Brook Islands	Lesser Crested Tern and Pied Imperial-Pigeon
Night Island	Pied Imperial-Pigeon
Buckley River	Carpentarian Grasswren and savanna birds
Lakefield grassland	Sarus Crane, Star Finch
IBA's under nomination or in need of better data	
Aurukun Wetlands	waterbirds
Ross River Dam	Black-throated Finch and waterbirds
Bowling Green Bay	Red-necked Stint and waterbirds

* Note that this list of birds are those that qualify the area to be listed as an IBA. The birds in the IBA includes others that may require monitoring even though they are not IBA qualifying-species.



Bush-hen
Andrew Plant
© Birds Australia 2003

BANQG Australia Day long weekend at Kingfisher Park

The early birds who arrived on the Thursday went for an early morning walk around Kingfisher Park and the surrounding area after overnight rain (36mm) had delayed the 6.00 am start. **Bush-hen** was heard but refused to come out of the long grass and a **Noisy Pitta** hopped amongst the rainforest for a brief view, 51 species were recorded in 1½hrs. Back for breakfast and then off to the Mowbray National Park about 10 km away for a walk through the rainforest. Good looks were had of the **Wompoo Fruit-Dove**, **Grey Whistler**, **Yellow-breasted Boatbill**, **Pied Monarch** and male **Victoria's Riflebird**. The most interesting bird of the morning was a cuckoo which caused some ID problems but the general consensus by the experts over the weekend, after seeing Ian Montgomery's photos, was an immature **Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo** – a very nice find. There is a population of these cuckoos in this area and across onto the lower slopes of Mt. Lewis.

In the afternoon it was off to Lake Mitchell alongside the road to Mareeba for views of some waterbirds including good views of many pairs of **Green Pygmy-goose** and **Comb-crested Jacana** amongst the various other birds present. A few bush birds were at the western end of the road including **Red-backed Fairy-wren**, **Grey-crowned Babbler** and **Double-barred Finch**. Just a few hundred metres from Lake Mitchell is Big Mitchell Creek where we had good looks at the resident **White-browed Robin** as it obligingly perched in the open preening itself.

The evening entertainment started out by seeing a **Masked Owl** fly into a tall eucalypt tree and after posing flew into its nest/roost hollow. This was followed by Cliff and Dawn Frith who showed excellent bird and animal images of a recent trip to South Africa, they were stunning. Most of the images were taken in Kruger National Park from a vehicle as you are not allowed to get out due to some rather hungry locals!

Saturday morning saw several car loads heading up the Mt. Lewis road to the famous **Blue-faced Parrot-Finch** site at 950m, we were not disappointed as the finches appeared almost as soon as we arrived, at least a dozen showing well for all to see. Some of the group walked down to the dam seeing **Fernwren**, **Yellow-throated Scrubwren** feeding young, **Atherton Scrubwren**, **Bower's Shrike-thrush** (adult and immature) and **Tooth-billed Catbird**. Back at the finch site for smoko a **Grey Goshawk** flew in and put paid to anymore finch sightings. A **Noisy Pitta** called which is quite unusual for the finch site, **Mountain Thornbill** fluttered around in the trees and the dark (montane) form of the **Grey Fantail** (*Keasti*) sallied back and forth across the road chasing insects, in all 34 species including most of the Mt.

Lewis "specials" were seen.

The afternoon's field trip was disrupted by a car crash outside Kingfisher Park where a car hit a tree, luckily not sustaining any major injury for the occupant who had to be cut out of the vehicle. Later in the afternoon some people headed up to Mount Carbine Dam via Maryfarms where an **Australian Bustard** was displaying, others chose to stay behind to assist the accident victim.

Saturday Night was the traditional communal dinner where we all ate too much! Jack Leighton provided the entertainment by showing his excellent 2 part DVD entitled "Rainforest Birds of Australia's Wet Tropics". This features 100 birds and their calls, which was no mean feat to film. Jack's dedication to his filming has certainly paid off with this DVD, which is available to be purchased. During the presentation and overnight the rain came down (73mm), unfortunately flooding access to the property we were going to visit on Sunday morning so some of us headed back to Mount Carbine Dam for a morning viewing. The lighting was perfect and allowed excellent views of the birds. Both **Plumed** and **Wandering Whistling-Ducks** were present swimming around together, along with **Pacific Black Duck**, **Hardhead**, **Great-crested Grebe**, **Darter**, **Little Black** and **Little Pied Cormorant**, **Australian Pelican**, **Little**, **Great** and **Intermediate Egret** plus plenty of **Eurasian Coot**. An immature **Yellow-billed Spoonbill** appeared foraging in the shallows and a **White-browed**

Crake darted amongst the reeds, occasionally coming out into the open for good distant views through the scopes. The morning was finished off with a visit to Maryfarms where no bustards were seen, unlike the day before but a visit to Windmill Creek turned up an immature **Black Bittern**. Also here was **Brown Cuckoo-Dove**, **Pheasant Coucal**, **Fairy Gerygone**, **Yellow**, **Brown** and **Scarlet Honeyeaters** and a female **Cicadabird**.

Thanks to all the people who attended the weekend (50+ in total), some only coming for the evening entertainment. Dawn & Cliff Frith for their wonderful images, Jack Leighton for his DVD presentation, John Clarkson for logistics and those who supplied their 4WD's for the field trips, all the cooks for the communal dinner – especially Ron Stannard for one of his legendary stews and for organising the Sunday field trip which unfortunately we were unable to run.

A total of 141 species was seen for the weekend. See you all next year for the 10th anniversary of the BA-NQ Australia day weekends at Kingfisher Park.

Keith & Lindsay Fisher, Julatten



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

Night Parrot Found in the Diamantina region

As reported in the Australian newspaper (16/02/07), Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service rangers found a dead **Night Parrot** at Diamantina National Park in November 2006. The specimen was positively identified by Queensland Museum. This is the first confirmed sighting since the Boulia specimen in 1990 although several unconfirmed but credible sightings have been made since, most recently in the Pilbara WA. The bird appears to have died after colliding with a fence some weeks before. Recent flood rains in the Channel Country has made access for follow-up surveys difficult and it is probable that any surviving Night Parrots in the area will have redistributed in the months since this bird died. Birds Australia will be looking to assist Queensland Parks and Wildlife with any subsequent surveys. Contact Graeme Hamilton for further information email: ceo@birdsaustralia.com.au.



Night Parrot
© Birds Australia 2003

Interesting Sightings...

This summer sightings of **Oriental Cuckoos** seem to have been more numerous than in previous years. **Painted Snipe** were seen by quite a few observers at Hasties Swamp and a mystery **wagtail** (now confirmed **Yellow Wagtail**) turned up at the Townsville Common in November. The **Laughing Gull** at the Cairns Esplanade was the real highlight – the first seen there since the late 80s.



Painted Snipe
© Threatened Bird
Network 2006

Jo Wieneke, Townsville
Ed: This year's Painted Snipe Survey will be in October so keep an eye out for the dates on the Birds Australia website.

Tyto's Grand Opening - 2nd June

Tyto Interpretive Centre's grand opening is now on Saturday 2nd June 2007 starting at 4pm. Come and join Hinchinbrook Shire Council and John Young for a great afternoon of activities. There will of course be the opportunity to see the famous **Grass Owl** and other wonderful species at Tyto. Birds Australia North Queensland Group will have a display.



Rufous-throated Honeyeater
Andrew Silcocks
© Birds Australia 2003

Please note that our AGM will be at 1pm at QPWS Ripple Creek. More details will be posted on our website very shortly
www.birdsaustralianq.org.

Wildlife-friendly Fencing

Many BANQG members will have heard the news of a rare **Night Parrot** recently killed by barbed wire, a hazard for wildlife in all rural areas. An exciting new project funded through the Threatened Species Network aims to reduce wildlife deaths and injuries through new, safer fencing methods for various primary industries. At the policy level, a key aim is to ensure that all Landcare or similar projects mandate safer fencing methods. Methods showcased will include: High tension plain wire, used electric fencing tape, bunting and flagging as well as special products used normally on horse breeding and agistment properties (BorderLine and KnightLine, available in 100m and 600m rolls). Although expensive the last two are highly visible, can be strained up and come with long guarantees. BorderLine is a high strength, white sighter wire with a solid nylon strand (no steel) while KnightLine absorbs sunlight during the day and glows at night.

Support: The very attractive project logo was designed by BANQG Committee member Ron Hill. BANQG will help publicise project activities, and incorporate some safe fencing guidelines in the new poster for Wetlands/ Birds on Farms. At least three NGOs in north Queensland already promote safer fencing – BRICMA (Barron River Catchment Management Assoc); TREAT; and Johnstone River Catchment Management Association. Contact the project, if you have data on bird (or other wildlife) injuries/ deaths for the database; are willing to try a new fencing method on your property; have suitable photos; or want to help in other ways. The current grant (via WWF Qld) runs until April 2008, but the organisers plan to continue indefinitely.

Links: Project site www.wildlifefriendlyfencing.com – some pages already up, more will be added during 2007, and *Ozcranes Crane-friendly fencing pages* <http://ozcranes.net/consrv/index.html> – extensive information on fence planning and construction for wetlands and crane sites.



Birds in Backyards update



We hope you're enjoying some of the new facilities on the Birds in Backyards website, and we'd like to thank to all the volunteers who keep providing data to our various survey projects. The website continues to provide updates on the various Birds in Backyard surveys, and yesterday's update shows some comparative results between years and between survey methods. We summarise the results from one garden in Tamarama for which the residents have submitted more than 50 weekly surveys and 300 20-minute surveys! To view the results click on <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/surveys/results-backyard-birds.cfm>.

Common Koels and **Channel-billed Cuckoos** still appear to be around, so keep on top of those surveys so that we can work out when they leave. One volunteer has sent in some fantastic photos of a young Channel-bill being fed by a **Pied Currawong**, and these now decorate the survey page: www.birdsinbackyards.net/surveys/channel-bill.cfm. We are gradually improving the site, replacing existing photos when we encounter better ones. New photos can be found in "Bird-finder" as well as the "Bird-friendly spaces" section, particularly of birds using bird baths: www.birdsinbackyards.net/spaces/bird-needs-resources.cfm.

Richard Major, on behalf of Birds in Backyards

Butcherbird breakfast

On Wednesday November 28 2006 a **Black Butcherbird** spent most of the day picking and growling (?) at something hidden in the thick vines on a tree close to our back patio.

Several **Sunbirds** and a **Brush Turkey** were also showing concern. Try as we may we couldn't see the cause of his alarm. Then, the next day as we arrived home from shopping and opening the patio door there at the foot of the steps was "Butch" on the lawn pecking at the head of a long snake. Despite severe damage to its head it was still alive. We identified it as **Brown Tree Snake** (probably the one I had chased out of the house then previous week). It measured a metre and a half long. By midday, "Butch" had long stopped pecking it and as it obviously wasn't going to recover we decided to put it out of its misery.

Several months ago we witnessed another episode of a **Black Butcherbird** with a dead snake.

Dawn Magarry, Cairns



Black Butcherbird
Nic Day
© Birds Australia 2003

Some news from around the region...

Good day all,
I attended the annual Australia Day BANQG campout at Kingfisher Park, Lodge Julatten (www.birdwatchers.com.au). Julatten is located between Mount Molloy and Mossman, north Queensland. In between the regular afternoon & nightly rain we got some good birds. These included **Blue-faced Parrot-Finch** at the Mount Lewis clearing (2 dozen), **Grey Goshawk** at the Mount Lewis clearing (some of us missed seeing it), **Masked Owl**, **Pacific Baza**, **Noisy Pitta** (at least 4), **Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher**, **White-browed Crake** (Mount Carbine dams), **Black Bittern** (Mary Farms road), **Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo** (pictures taken by Ian Montgomery were discussed at length) and lots more! We were entertained one night by Cliff & Dawn Frith's recent South African photographs and the second night by Jack Leighton's new Rainforest Birds' DVD that includes their calls. On the following Thursday, I went with Peter Cooper, the Mangrove Man (www.mangrovesman.com.au) on his tour up the Mossman River. The number of birds was a little down from my previous several journey's with Peter, but it was made up by the unforgettable experience of a close view of a Juvenile **Great-billed Heron** standing on a sand bar.

It was trying to outstare a two metre long crocodile which was sunning itself at the water's edge. As the tide rose the crocodile kept moving higher onto the sand bank, until it invaded the heron's personal space of 2 metres. The heron

blinked first, & flew off lazily up the river. Later we also got excellent views of an adult **Great-billed Heron**. For many years, and four maritime expeditions, I thought these birds were mythical birds until I saw one on the Daintree River. For my 2005 pictures see Dan Irby's website (www.mangroveadventures.com.au/clientfeedback.html). Guide then was Ian (Sauce) Worcester.

The Daintree area is a great place to visit and stay. Last year Ellen Terry found for me a **Southern Cassowary** that fed slowly right around us for nearly 10 minutes. Its chicks could be seen occasionally in the nearby bush. They certainly are a BIG bird and need to be respected. For some links to other tour operator's of this area see the website of Redmill House (www.redmillhouse.com.au/daintree_tours.html).

On the way home I diverted at Normanton to check out Karumba (SE Gulf of Carpentaria). The trash birds were **Pied Herons** and to a lesser extent **Little Egrets**. There were plenty of waders out on the sandbars opposite airstrip, but generally to far away to ID. The once daily high tide, that would have forced them closer the shore, was much later that night.

I decided to travel home to the Isa that afternoon. Just as well, as rains and storms from Cyclone Nelson subsequently hit the area, even putting the 5000t vessel Cargo barge MV Wunma out of action www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200702/s1842084.htm.

Regards from Bob Forsyth, Mount Isa, NW Qld.

Have you seen the Black-throated Finch lately?

The Black Throated Finch Recovery Team is interested in records (old or new) of the southern subspecies of the **Black-throated Finch** (*Poephila cincta cincta*).

If you have sightings of this species that may not have been previously registered with any of the major wildlife databases then we would like to hear from you. Important information includes the number of Black-throated Finches seen, the date and location of observation (s). Location information should be as accurate as possible and preferably obtained using a GPS. If this is not possible then accurate locality descriptions are needed. Please indicate the datum for any GPS locations. Other useful information may include notes on the weather, what the birds were doing, and habitat (eg waterhole, woodland, roadside).

A sighting sheet is available if you wish to use it. Sightings should be sent to: Marnie McCullough, c/o PO Box 1085, Townsville QLD 4810. Ph: (07) 4722 2519, mobile: 0428 739819 or email: marnie.mccullough@dpi.qld.gov.au.

Threatened Finch discovers nature refuge?

Recently at Stuart Creek Nature Refuge, located outside of Townsville, an exciting discovery was made — a pair of **Black-throated Finch**! Stuart Creek Nature Refuge, owned by Queensland Rail, was recently declared a nature refuge after 10 years of hard work by numerous people, mostly contractors and volunteers, to rehabilitate the once degraded site.

The southern sub-species of **Black-throated Finch** *Poephila cincta cincta* once extended from north eastern New South Wales to north Queensland. Since the early 1970s there have only been five sightings of this finch in New South Wales. As such it is now listed as endangered under Commonwealth and New South Wales legislation, and vulnerable under Queensland legislation.

In north Queensland, the **Black-throated Finch** can still be seen at sites near Townsville and Charters Towers and small flocks have been regularly seen scattered throughout the Northern Brigalow Belt and Desert Uplands. In areas where the finch still exists we need to

do all we can to protect its habitat. The **Black-throated Finch** inhabits grassy woodland dominated by eucalypts, paperbarks or acacias, where there is access to seeding grasses and water. Threats to the **Black-throated Finch** are thought to include habitat fragmentation, heavy grazing regimes, altered habitat by changes in fire regimes, and introduced pasture species that dominate natural grasses. Ecology of the finch in the wild is poorly known and more research is needed regarding breeding and feeding requirements, and optimal grazing and fire regimes.

The **Black-throated Finch** Recovery Team are keen to hear from anyone who has observed the finch in the wild.

Any information regarding sightings should be sent to Marnie McCullough, c/o PO Box 1085, Townsville QLD 4810. Ph: (07) 4722 2519, mobile: 0428 739819 or email: marnie.mccullough@dpi.qld.gov.au.



Interesting sightings

Species	Date	Observer	Location	Comment
Yellow Wagtail	26.11.06	EP	Townsville Town Common	Found at the Jacana Hide
Azure Kingfisher	30.11.06	TG	Aplins Weir, Townsville	Unusual in area
Oriental Cuckoo	5.12.06	BV	Between Charles & Grove St Cairns	First of many sightings in area
Chestnut Teal	6.12.06	ET&TF	McDowall Swamp	2km before Daintree ferry
Broad-billed Sandpiper	12.12.06	GW	Esplanade Cairns	
Painted Button-quail	15.12.06	BH	30km SSW of Townsville	
Topknot Pigeons	15.12.06	BH	25km SSW of Townsville	Flock of 60
Wood Sandpiper	18.12.06	AG	Hasties Swamp, Atherton	
Oriental Cuckoo	22.12.06	EP	Townsville Town Common	
Greenshank	As above	AG	Hasties Swamp, Atherton	
Red-kneed Dotterel	As above	AG	Hasties Swamp, Atherton	
Marsh Sandpiper	As above	AG	Hasties Swamp, Atherton	
White-throated Nightjars	25.12.06	L&CE	Taravale	3 birds
Black Bittern	25.12.06	L&CE	Deception Creek, Mt Zero	
White-winged Triller	26-30.12.06	AG	Hasties Swamp, Atherton	Female and fledgling
Painted Snipe	As above	AG	Hasties Swamp, Atherton	Pair
Great-crested Grebe	27.12.06	GW	Lake Barrine, Yungaburra	200+
Blue-faced Parrot-Finch	28.12.06	AG	Gourka Rd, Butchers Creek	6 birds
White-winged Chough	30.12.06	L&CE	10km S of Ravenswood	Small flock
Little Kingfisher	2.1.07	L&CE	Palmetum Lagoon, Townsville	
White-winged Chough	3.1.07	BH	25km SW of Townsville	
Glossy Ibis	5.1.06	JS	Centenary Lakes, Cairns	1 bird along boardwalk
Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo	5.1.07	DR	Mowbray State Forest	Immature bird
Oriental Cuckoo	14.1.07	L&CE	Oak Valley Reserve, Townsville	First seen here
White-throated Nightjar	15.1.07	BH	33km SSW of Townsville	Coming in to drink
Oriental Cuckoo	19.1.07	ET&TF	Stewart Ck Bridge Daintree	
Swinhoe's Snipe	26.1.07	PG	Hasties Swamp, Atherton	
Latham's Snipe	26.1.07	PG	Hasties Swamp, Atherton	5 birds
Bush-hen	26.1.07	PG	Hasties Swamp, Atherton	At start of approach track
Black-throated Finch	26.1.07	PG	Tinaroo Creek Road	5 birds
Green Pygmy-goose	1.2.07	JS	Centenary Lakes, Cairns	On Freshwater lake
Kelp Gull	1.2.07	JS	Cairns Esplanade	Immature
Pacific Golden Plover	3.2.07	BH	South Townsville	20 approx
Laughing Gull	11.2.07	FH	Cairns Esplanade	Immature bird
Wandering Tattler	12.2.07	BV&GS	Flying Fish Point, Innisfail	1 at mouth of Johnstone River
Great Frigatebird	13.2.07	R&LH	Kewarra Beach, Cairns	2 birds
Southern Cassowary	15.2.07	P&JM	Birthday Creek, Paluma	Rare in this area
Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher	15.2.07	P&JM	Birthday Creek, Paluma	
Shining Flycatcher	16.2.07	IS	Ball Road, Malanda	Female only in yard
Tree Martin	18.2.07	JW&BH	Morris Creek Road, Giru	200 approx
Glossy Ibis	18.2.07	JW&BH	Morris Creek Road, Giru	Flock of 50+
Brown Songlark	18.2.07	JW&BH	Morris Creek Road, Giru	Edge of range but often here



OBSERVERS: AG – Alan Gillanders; BH- Bill Holmes; BV – Brian Venables; DR- Dell Richards; EP – Eddie Pierce; ET – Ellen Terrell; FH – Frank Harrison; GS – Graham Snell; GW – Graham Winterflood; IS- Ian Sinclair; JS- John Seale; EP - Eddie Pierce; L&CE- Len and Chris Ezzy; PG-Phil Gregory; P&JM - Pat and John Mant; TF- Trish Forsyth; TG- Tony Grice; JW- Jo Wieneke. Thanks also to BOCA's Drongo and John Seales website.

Thanks to observers for sending in their sightings ~ Please check with observers before quoting any of these sightings. Please note that Jo Wieneke is the coordinator for collating Interesting Sightings. Please send any unusual or interesting sightings to Jo at bowerbird14@iqconnect.net.au

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Welcome to our new members...

- Mr Graham Snell, INNISFAIL;
- Mr Steve Russell, MISSION BEACH.

Welcome to our new members.

Please join us on any of our outings.

Check out Birds Australia website www.birdsaustralia.com.au for up to date information on field trips as details may change after publication. Please note that additional events may be arranged post publication. For more information specific to north Queensland visit our own website (still in development)

www.birdsaustralianq.org

Don't forget: National Office will have a new address from February 2007 at the Green Building, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton Victoria 3053.

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*

Notice Board

HELP - The Committee is still searching for a large blue plastic envelope (possibly from the 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 an anon pickup. THANKS.

Australasian Ornithological Conference 2007 will be held at the University of Western Australia, Perth 3-5 December 2007. This conference provides a regular forum for the exchange of information and ideas between avian researchers and conservationists throughout the Australasian region. The venue will be the University of Western Australia, and the Western Australian group of Birds Australia (RAOU) will host the conference. Post-conference field excursions will be available.

You are invited to express your interest in attending this conference, and presenting a paper by visiting www.birdswa.com.au/aoc2007 or by writing to the conference coordinator: S. Mather, Birds Australia Western Australia, 167 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat, WA 6014 Australia. Email: aoc2007@birdswa.com.au or phone (08) 9389 6416.

Please note that the **Birds Australia Volunteer Accident and Illness Insurance Policy** has been updated so that it now covers 16-80 year olds (it previously only covered 18-80 year olds). For more information contact national office.

Birdata is the Atlas of Australian Birds website, hosting online data entry and mapping facilities. The site can be found at: <http://www.birdata.com.au>, and was funded by the WildlifeLink Program of the Tony and Lisette Lewis Foundation.

Looking for your next birding destination - Kilcowera Station in far south-west Queensland may be the answer. Check out www.kilcowera.com.au for more details.



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Keith & Lindsay Fisher

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Web Page: www.birdwatchers.com.au

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Please send items for June 2007 Contact Call by mid May 2007 to: Helen McLaughlin, Newsletter Editor, PO Box 37, Belgian Gardens 4810 or Email helen_marty2000@hotmail.com