



Contact Call



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

June 2007

Issue: Australian Hobby



The year ahead ...

Firstly I would like to express my gratitude to the outgoing committee. In particular I would like to single out Helen McLaughlin, whose sterling efforts as secretary have kept us on track and overcome the problems of distance and communication breakdowns. We are very grateful that she will continue to edit and produce Contact Call. Ivor Preston has joined the committee as secretary and Karen Doyle as an ordinary member, welcome. Tony Grice, who was not able to attend the AGM, has agreed to continue as Convenor. To that end I intend to nominate him for the position at the next meeting of BANQ. Proxy votes may either be sent to me or our secretary.

Birding in north Queensland is very special with the diversity we have and the colourful nature of our birds. To enable more people to enjoy this hobby (obsession?) we intend to run another Birding for Beginners workshop this year. Members' outings are great times to socialise as well as bird watch. Please try to make it to the gatherings in your area. Not only is it possible that you will learn something but it is most likely that you can share some knowledge as well. So often I hear people share an observation which astounds others. There is so much going on out there in the private lives of birds! If you would like a particular outing organised please contact a committee member or regional contact. You may like to arrange it yourself.

Atlassing continues to be an activity directing the behaviour of members but in this area we would like to link this to the Important Bird Area (IBA) research. IBAs are identified areas of global importance for bird conservation and must meet the set criteria as far as migratory birds, threatened birds or proportion of a species' population.

While in winter we have lost many of the waders to their northern breeding grounds it is a time of year when other nomads and migrants arrive. The grey nomads are not the only ones escaping the southern winter. In my garden I have a pale Grey Fantail which comes in winter and larger flocks of Silvereyes. More raptors are seen on the tablelands and coast and some of the smaller dry country birds head east as well. Red-backed Kingfishers are on the Atherton Tablelands and of course this is the time for the cranes.

Whether it is watching the familiar garden birds or some rarity I wish you enjoyment and delight.

From the Desk of the Acting Convener, Alan Gillanders

BA North Queensland Group—Events Calendar June to Dec 2007

July 2007

Sunday 29th July—National Tree Day

Day trip around the south-western Atherton Tablelands. Meet at the Crater car park at 8am. Contact Alan Gillanders for details on 4095 3784

September 2007

Saturday 8th - Special General Meeting.

This meeting is to confirm the Convenors nomination. Meet at the Cardwell Reef and Rainforest Centre at 10am.

Sunday 9th - Birdwatching and Bird Atlas Survey, Cardwell. Details will be confirmed on the website.

October 2007

Saturday 6th - Annual Crane Count

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.

Saturday and Sunday 20-21st October

Birding for Beginners

We will be inviting the general public to attend a weekend course on birding identification. We are checking out suitable locations on the Atherton Tablelands, which offer a variety of accommodation, and the venue will be

announced later. Any members able to assist that weekend please contact Graham Harrington or Alan Gillanders.

Saturday 27th October - Yungaburra markets

Come and say hello at the very popular NQ markets.

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 (07) 4725 7201.

November 2007

Saturday 10th November - Pied Imperial-Pigeon excursion. Details yet to be confirmed.

Saturday 17 & Sunday 18th November—BANQ Christmas party

Organisation is under way for north and south (Cairns and Paluma) Christmas parties. Details still to be decided.

2008

26-28 January. Australia Day Weekend at Kingfisher Park, Julatten. Del Richards will take us out to the Mitchel River on Hurricane Road.

30 March—Wave the Waders Goodbye, Cairns Esplanade. Meet at 4:30pm. Leader: Alan Gillanders 4095 3784

Check the website soon for more details

Inside this issue:

- *New committee members*
- *Important Bird Area monitoring workshop*
- *Executive committee meeting, new RACC priorities, BA Council, 2007 AGM*
- *BANQG AGM Ingham, Tyto wetlands centre opening, dinner and The Orient birding*
- *Around the region: goodbye waders, finding the BBBQ, Capricornia Congress*
- *Interesting Sightings*

The **Australian Hobby** or **Little** is 30-35cm long with a wingspan of to the Nankeen Kestrel. The specific name dimensions. The adult has a black crown a n d helmet and cream forehead, throat and half collar. The **Australian Hobby** is most likely confused with the Peregrine Falcon because of this feature. It is a solitary and aggressive falcon of most open habitats. *Information sourced from "The Birds of Prey of Australia—A field guide" by Stephen Debus.*

Australian Hobby

Falcon (*Falco longipennis*) 66-87cm, its similar in size 'long feather' reflecting these cheeks, which form part of a



Australian Hobby
Robert Mancini
© Birds Australia 2003

2007-2008 BANQG Committee and Contacts

Executive Committee

Convener—Tony Grice (07) 4725 7201

Email: tony.grice@csiro.au

Deputy Convener—Alan Gillanders (07) 4095 3784

Email: spotlighting@cyberwizards.com.au

Secretary—Ivor Preston (07) 4723 2723

Email: birdsaus@birdsaustralianq.org

Treasurer—Harry Cassidy (07) 4057 5278

Email: harrycass40@hotmail.com

Committee members

Ian Montgomery (Townsville) Elinor Scambler (Atherton)

Karen Doyle (Townsville) Elna Kerswell (Townsville)

Committee-elected Positions

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

Newsletter Editor—Helen McLaughlin

IBA Coordinators—Graham Harrington & Alastair Freeman



Regional Contacts

Townsville: Jo Wieneke Ph: 4771 4707

Email: bowerbird14@bigpond.com

Cairns: Harry Cassidy Ph: 4057 5278

Email: harrycass40@hotmail.com

Atherton Tableland: Alan Gillanders Ph: 4095 3784

Email: spotlighting@cyberwizards.com.au

Mossman / Daintree: Del Richards Ph: 4094 1199

Email: info@finefeathertours.com.au

Cape York: Sue Gould Ph: 4069 7585

Email: susanfgould@yahoo.com

Mount Isa: Bob Forsyth Ph: 4743 3210

Email: Isabirds@bigpond.net.au

Project Contacts

Black-throated Finch Tony Grice 4725 7201

Crane Count Elinor Scambler 4095 3296

Email: dacelo@austarnet.com.au

Townsville Egret & Ibis Count Jo Wieneke 4771 4707

Cape York Atlas Graham Harrington 4096 5051

Email: riflebird@austarnet.com.au

Your new Committee members...

Welcome to: **Ian Montgomery:** I became a keen birdwatcher as a schoolboy in Ireland in the 1960's. Fond memories of that time include wildfowl and wader surveys in Dublin and Wicklow, sea-watches in Donegal and a spell as a volunteer warden at the RSPB Minsmere reserve in Suffold in eastern England. As a Zoology graduate of Trinity College Dublin, I came to Australia in 1971 and did a Ph.D. in animal behaviour at Sydney University. Then followed a career in computing until, in 1993, I got the opportunity to combine zoology and computing in fisheries modeling and stock assessment. I moved to Townsville in 2002 to work on a project at CRC Reef at JCU that involved modeling the line fishery for coral trout and other species on the Great Barrier Reef. In 2003, I took early retirement from that position to concentrate on bird photography. I now live at Bluewater, Townsville.

Ivor Preston and Karen Doyle: Karen comes to birding through a natural curiosity of the natural world. In our time together, she has brought her interest in photography to mine of birding and at the same time branched in to an interest in butterflies - if you think bird ID can be difficult, try the butterflies! As a team, we are both learning about each others interests. I have long been interested in birds (ornithology) and was on the founding committee of the Vicgroup of RAOU in the 80's. I was also a committee member of the Rotamah Island Bird Observatory - alas no longer part of the BA stable. On arrival in NQ in 1993, I soon became involved with local activities and was at the foundation meeting at Murray Falls of BANQ - previously known as BONQ for a very short time. Although absent from the local BA scene for the last 9 years, I am now able to direct my energies to the BANQ.

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

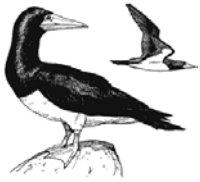
You can now join directly through our web site: www.birdsaustralia.com.au.

Check out the website for local and national events.



The first IBA Monitoring Workshop

On 22nd April the following 23 members of BANQ assembled in Cardwell to workshop the challenge of how to monitor the status of the IBAs in north Queensland into the future. Guy Dutson also attended. Guy is the national co-ordinating officer for Birds Australia IBAs. Guy provided a list of IBAs and the key bird species that provided the IBA status. A discussion paper by Graham



Brown Booby
Andrew Plant
© Birds Australia 2003

Harrington and Alistair Freeman entitled "Monitoring IBAs in NQ" was distributed which outlined the different monitoring strategies, which it was possible to adopt. The Workshop then considered each declared or proposed IBA one by one, discussed the most appropriate approach and noted volunteers who were prepared to undertake the responsibility for preliminary planning of the monitoring

strategy. BA is encouraging us to monitor IBAs using Atlassing methodology. One problem with Atlassing is that it does not involve counting numbers of birds and is thus an insensitive measure of population change. Furthermore the 20 minute method of Atlassing is unsuitable for rainforest unless one does many surveys (more than 10) in any one area. However, a large number of 20 minute surveys in one area does give some index of species density and is superior to one longer survey. The focus for monitoring IBAs should be on doing the monitoring job efficiently and effectively. Atlassing can be encouraged as an incidental activity but it seems unlikely that Atlas techniques will provide good monitoring data in all situations. It may be argued that the Atlas is designed

to monitor the state of Australian birds and this is true. The difficulty associated with Atlassing to monitor an IBA is one of scale. The Atlas is reasonably efficient at a national scale when huge amounts of data are generated by many observers. It is also able to cope with a large range in bird identification skills amongst the observers. However, it is not necessarily suitable for the smaller area of an IBA and with few surveys and surveyors in any one period of time.

BANQ needs to look at this situation critically. We are the first region to investigate this IBA monitoring business. Good monitoring should have priority over Atlassing in our decision making process. We should consult experts in making our decisions.

Negotiations between QPWS and Birds Australia have been conducted regarding the sharing of atlas data with the department in return for an in-kind contribution to IBA monitoring. For example, QPWS has already expressed a willingness to allocate some staff time to the project. Many departmental projects currently underway or under consideration will also assist in the IBA monitoring process. Below are a list of IBAs for north Queensland and the name of the person/s coordinating the monitoring effort. The List of bird species associated with each of these IBAs appeared in the March 2007 edition of Contact Call.

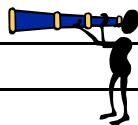


Southern Cassowary
Non Lapinath
© Birds Australia 2003

Graham Harrington, IBA coordinator

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

Important Bird Area	Responsible Person/s
Iron / McIlwraith Ranges	Alastair Freeman / Harry Cassidy / QPWS
Lilyvale	Harry Cassidy
Morehead River	QPWS
Boodjamulla	Graham Harrington
Staaten River	QPWS
Daintree	QPWS
Man-o-war and Rocky Islands	Mike Short / QPWS / Ian Northcott
Bountiful Island	Mike Short / QPWS / Ian Northcott
Great Barrier Reef islands and Coral Sea islands	Mike Short / QPWS / Ian Northcott
Lakefield grassland	Elinor Scambler (cranes) / Alastair Freeman and QPWS (finches)
Buckley River	Graham Harrington
Coastal Wet Tropics	Paul Franklin



Important Bird Area	Responsible Person/s
Paluma	Rosemary Payet / Elna Kerswell / QPWS
Wooroonooran National Park	Alastair and Amanda Freeman / Graham Harrington / QPWS
Fountain Springs	Graham Harrington
Atherton Tablelands	Elinor Scambler
North Brook Islands	Margaret Thorsbourne / John Winter / Ian Northcott
Night Island	Margaret Thorsbourne / John Winter / Ian Northcott
Gulf Plains	No volunteers
Deliverance Island	No volunteers
Lockerbie Scrub	Not a priority at this stage for monitoring
IBA's under nomination or in need of better data	
Ross River Dam	Tony Grice
Bowling Green Bay	Rosemary Payet / Ian Montgomery

~ Shorebirds 2020 ~

A major new project is underway at Birds Australia. Titled Shorebirds 2020, the project aims to develop and implement a protocol for monitoring shorebirds in Australia, building on the extensive ongoing efforts of the Australasian Wader Studies Group. The project is a collaborative enterprise between Birds Australia, the Australasian Wader Studies Group, WWF Australia and the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust. Birds Australia is currently recruiting for a project manager and project assistant - those interested are encouraged to keep a close eye on the BA website and/or register their contact details with James O'Connor by email: j.oconnor@birdsaustralia.com.au.

North Queensland Executive Committee met in Cardwell

The committee met again in Cardwell on 17 February 07. Here is a summary of issues discussed:

- ✦ Bird conservation issues BANQG were involved with included: 1. Assessing the future use and tenure of 10,000ha of land in the Bohle catchment of Townsville. We are currently awaiting a copy of the State government's report, but early indications are hopeful that habitat of the endangered Black-throated Finch will be protected; 2. Important Bird Areas project held the first monitoring workshop which proved a great success (there is a summary of the workshop in this edition); 3. Wildlife Friendly Fencing project has been kick started by WWF and BANQG are lending a hand.
- ✦ BANQG received an Envirofund grant to help print posters and brochures to raise awareness of our NQ birds. To date only half of those posters have been completed (ie Black-throated Finch and Crane Count) but those printed have been very well received. The committee are in the process of completing the others (ie beach disturbances, wetlands and birds on grazing lands / farms). Our other brochures are being updated (to include our new logo, address and website details) and are now available on our website. Copies of the most popular brochures will be printed shortly for distribution.
- ✦ Our website has been a great hit with Elinor Scambler taking over the updates while Ian Montgomery is overseas. We hope that our members, and non-members, have found the site useful. Please drop us an email to let us know.
- ✦ With the National Strategic Plan completed, BANQG need to outline our priorities for the coming 5-10 years. The committee had a good discussion on what they considered were the group's aims and priorities. A draft vision was written as a result -

'to be involved in native bird conservation and the protection of their habitat'

This can be achieved through facilitating the protection of land, raise awareness of threats, how people can protect birds and monitor change to gauge effectiveness.

If you want to raise an issue or question for the committee, please email birdsaus@birdsaustralianq.org for discussion at their next meeting.

Helen McLaughlin, Townsville



RACC Priorities revised

Birds Australia Research and Conservation Committee (RACC) recently began a review of its research and conservation priorities. The new draft priorities are:

- ✦ Loss, fragmentation and degradation of native vegetation in agricultural regions;
- ✦ Altered grazing and fire regimes
- ✦ Freshwater issues including reduced environmental flows
- ✦ Marine issues
- ✦ Coastal development
- ✦ Invasive exotic organisms
- ✦ Lack of monitoring
- ✦ Climate change
- ✦ Lack of understanding of the economic and social value of birds



A full description of the revised priorities will be available on RACC section of the Birds Australia website soon

National Office, taken from e-news April 2007

2007 AGM and Members Day

The 2007 Birds Australia Annual General Meeting and Member's Day was held in Mount Gambier, South Australia, on 26 May 2007, thanks to some of our local members, Birds South East, and Birds SA (the South Australian Ornithologists Association). The event was well attended. The new Constitution was voted in, and a new Council member, Kate Ravich, was elected.

BA Council meeting summary

May Council meeting

Council met at Mt Gambier on May 27 and resolved:

- ✦ To establish the Ethnoornithology Special Interest Group
- ✦ To review all sets of rules for Special Interest and Regional Groups for consistency
- ✦ To appoint Dr Mike Double to a second term as chair of the Emu Editorial Advisory Committee
- ✦ To accept the Research and Conservation Committee's recommendations on the process for reviewing and endorsing IBA nominations
- ✦ To make minor changes to the guidelines for awarding the J.N.Hobbs Medal
- ✦ To establish a mechanism for addressing future changes to avian taxonomy
- ✦ To authorise funding for the establishment of a new Sydney office at Newington Armoury
- ✦ To comment on a draft Birds Australia policy on Wind Farms
- ✦ To invite new Councillor Kate Ravich to sit on the Communications Committee
- ✦ To comment on an extensive draft review of Birds Australia's communications
- ✦ To assemble a youth forum to contribute to a blueprint for Birds Australia over the next ten years
- ✦ To explore a closer and more formal relationship with Birds SA



A call to update your details Birds Australia National Office's server overheated last week, causing some recent data from our member database to be lost. If you have contacted us since the 8th of May with any change of address or personal details, please contact Amy or Jen in Supporter Services on (03) 9347 0757 to confirm whether we have your current details on the database.

BANQG Annual General Meeting—The formalities...

At 1pm the troupes gathered to participate in this year's AGM. Thanks to QPWS Ingham for hosting the meeting in what are the most beautiful surrounds. The revegetation of melaleuca woodlands and wetland restoration is certainly advancing. And with a changing of the guards, members welcomed their new Secretary Ivor Preston from Townsville. A warm welcome to them, while members thanked the retiring Secretary Helen McLaughlin. Members, including the new committee, agreed that as the Important Bird Area (IBA) program was of high priority to the committee, the coordinators would be invited as committee members to all meetings. Members also thanked Amanda Freeman for her work on the **Beach Stone-curlew** database. The committee agreed that we shall still have this annual event and send our records into the Birds Australian Atlas. The minutes are available from the Secretary. *Helen McLaughlin, Townsville*

Tyto Wetland Centre's Grand Opening

Tyto Wetland Centre's was officially opened on Saturday 2nd June 2007. John Young and the Hinchinbrook Shire Council should be congratulated for a spectacular display of information on their local wildlife, especially the birds. The Centre features a giant copper grass owl at the entrance of the centre and loads of information on caring for our wetlands. The tunnel into the grass owls nest proved particularly popular with the kids, as did the game where the owl chases the rat through the paddock. There is even a life size wooden spoonbill to teach you how to use binoculars. Obviously being a tourism information centre, there is also plenty of tourist information on local and regional attractions and

accommodation. There was a great turnout for the official opening which were entertained by the local children's owl mask parade, a traditional welcome and congratulatory speeches from local, State and Commonwealth dignitaries. Thanks to Harry Cassidy, Elinor Scrambler and Alan Gillanders for setting up our display boards. Everyone was keen to see what activities BANQG were involved in. Our new Ingham District brochure, fresh off the press, was a hit, as were the wet tropics posters. Copies of the Ingham District brochure are available from our website www.birdsaustralianq.org. For further information on Ingham visit www.hinchinbrooknq.com.au.

Helen McLaughlin, Townsville



Annual General Meeting—Evening Dinner

I feel the whole weekend was very pleasant and useful in many ways; the group is still alive, with a working committee and hope those of you who have won extra jobs will disperse some when feeling pressed. As usual, a good time for getting to know each other, as nothing was very rushed. The dinner at Noorla (Heritage Resort, Ingham) when we all found our way there, was great. What a gorgeous place. Well, interesting, anyway. The food was very tasty, service and setting first class, and we were able to have a conversation with anyone else, seeing only 10 of us there, and cleverly set out. We enjoyed the white tablecloths and elegance rather than the usual barbecue set up. Some photos were taken to show other Birds' members that we can do it in style when we want to. *Elna Kerswell, Townsville*

Sunday was birding of course...

Tyto Wetlands was our meeting place, binoculars and scopes at the ready, proceeding very slowly along the track. It took a long time to reach the first lagoon as we had to keep stopping to inspect and enjoy so many birds that wanted to show off to us. Best sighting was the **Grey Goshawk** that flew across our path 30 metres ahead and then obligingly perched in a large tree where his whiteness stood out. He was harassed by other birds so soon left, but a good sighting. Other good birds for the morning were **Green Pygmy-Goose**, **Wandering Whistling-Duck**, **Shining** and **Little Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Rufous-throated Honeyeater** and **Clamorous Reed-Warbler**.

Back to our digs or to a Cafe for breakfast then off along Orient Road. Beth and I took nearly an hour to traverse the 20kms as we were stopped more often than moving. We did miss the **Australian Pratincoles** that the forward party (who obviously ate less than I did and packed up more speedily) had seen, but after learning of their presence, had an excellent sighting of one on the return along the wet, sandy/muddy, cow-pat strewn road. Yes, I had to really work hard this morning to clean all the plastered-on mud from under the mudguards. Had just had the underbody rustproofed last week, so hope it had dried and did its job properly under those stringent conditions. We easily found the large gathering of **Brolgas** decorating a lagoon towards



Calmorous Reed-Warbler
Andrew Silcocks
© Birds Australia 2003

the end of the road. Counted about 100 circling and another 100 still standing, or feeding around the lagoon. The rest of the party had already "done" the tracks near the mangroves by the time we arrived and we were told of their discoveries. Our main finds were a **Lemon-bellied Flycatcher**, **Red-backed Fairy-wrens**, and some bathing juvenile **Crimson Finches** and **Chestnut-breasted Mannikins**. There were dozens of each species in a grassy paradise. Water everywhere, but the little ones had found just the right puddle and spent 10 minutes entertaining me with their splashing and preening antics. We could hear another group of **brolgas** a good way further along that track, and occasionally some would fly overhead, croaking loudly. Made your day, didn't they Elinor!! Other species of note in this area included: **Black**, **Whistling** and **Brahminy Kite**, **Swamp Harrier**, **Brown Falcon**, **Australian Kestrel** and **White-bellied Sea-Eagle**, **Red-capped** and **Black-fronted Dotterel**, **Purple Swamphen**, **Scaly-breasted Lorrikeet**, **Grey Fantail**, **Crimson** and **Red-browed Finch**, **Chestnut-breasted** and **Nutmeg Mannikin**, **Tawny Grassbird**, **Black-faced** and **White-breasted Woodswallow**, **Drongo**, **Mistletoebird**, **Striated Pardalote** and **Richard's Pipit**. A total of 67 species were recorded.

Elna Kerswell, Townsville

Around the region...

Wave the Waders Goodbye, Cairns Esplanade

The wonderful Cairns mudflat attracts large numbers of waders, egrets, pelicans, terns and other species, and is one of the best places in Australia to view waders easily and comfortably. On Sunday 25th March BANQG celebrated the start of the migration of the waders back to the northern hemisphere, meeting at the wooden viewing platform near Muddies Playground on the Cairns Esplanade. A succession of around 30 visitors stopped by to use binoculars and telescopes and learn more about the birds. The birds present at that time were: **Great Egret, Australian White Ibis, Osprey, Bar-tailed Godwit, Little Curlew, Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Common Greenshank, Terek Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Great Knot, Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Lesser and Greater Sand Plover, Masked Lapwing, Silver Gull, Caspian Tern and Little Tern.**

On the Button-Quail Trail, Mareeba

The **Buff-breasted Button-quail** (*Turnix olivii*) is one of Australia's rarest and least known birds. It is listed as Endangered under the EPBC Act (1999) and the IUCN Red List (2004) and it is believed that the world population numbers no more than 500 adults, all residing in a 50km² area within the Mareeba Shire during the wet season. As yet very little is known about this bird including where they go in the dry season, and it has never been photographed in the wild.

With funding from the Federal Government's Envirofund programme and the Norman Wettenhall Foundation, the Wildlife Conservancy of Tropical Queensland recently undertook a preliminary study into determining the status, habitat requirements and distribution of this elusive bird. Local ornithologists Lloyd Nielsen and Del Richards, as well as EPA zoologist Dr Geoff Smith, were also an integral part of the project, contributing their knowledge and skills to the team.

The study was undertaken at the Mareeba Tropical

Savanna and Wetland Reserve and focused on extensively surveying potential habitat areas. Twenty three volunteers from around Australia and the world participated in last year's project and 1275 hours over three months were spent looking for these highly endangered birds. Of the approximately 200 'buttonquail' that were flushed during surveys, eight were identified as **Buffies**.

The project will continue over the next two seasons dependent on funding and it is hoped that it will be expanded to include surveying around Coen and Karumba as well as in the Mareeba area. Attempts will also be made to try and trap the birds for radio-tracking before the wet season starts this year with the project recommencing in December. All help is appreciated and potential funding sources or donations are welcomed. Anyone interested should contact Lisa Collins on (07) 4093 2514 or email info@wildlifequeensland.com.au



Buff-breasted Button-quail
Ian Hance
© Birds Australia 2003



Yellow Chat
Annie Rogers
© Birds Australia 2003

2007 Congress and Campout, Yeppoon

For 2007 this highlight of the Birds Australia Calendar will be held on the Capricorn Coast, Qld from 6th to 14th October and is hosted by Birds Australia Capricornia, our newest Regional Group. The Congress will be held at Rydges Capricorn Resort near Yeppoon on 6th and 7th October and the Campout will be held at Coolwaters Holiday Village also near Yeppoon on 8th - 11th October. In addition there is a post-congress and campout tour to Mackay and Eungella on 12th - 14th October. Field trips include Shoalwater Bay military area, Iwasaki Wetlands, Great Keppel Island, Kinka Wetlands, Twelve Mile to see the Capricornia Yellow Chat and Byfield rainforest. The theme for the Congress is **Connecting with the Community** and Don Henry, Executive Director of the Australian Conservation Foundation will make the keynote address. A preliminary Congress and Campout program can be downloaded <http://www.irock.com.au/~birdscapricornia/congress.htm> and you are invited to express your interest in presenting a paper by writing a 250 word abstract and sending it to Allan Briggs, Congress and Campout organiser at abriggs@irock.com.au. A registration form can also be downloaded from <http://www.irock.com.au/~birdscapricornia/congress.htm>, so get in early and plan your getaway holiday around the Congress and Campout on the Capricorn Coast where the weather is beautiful and the birds are outstanding.

Allan Biggs, Capricornia Group

Interesting Sightings from the region...

Most interesting and unusual sighting in the past few months has been the presence of Pictorella Mannikins in the Toonpan/Old Flinders Highway area, only 30 km from Townsville. The closest previous records were from the Charters Towers region, and they were seen there too this year. Reports come in of Metallic Starlings over-wintering in increasingly large numbers in Cairns.

Our observers for this edition are: AA - Alex Anderson; AF- Andrew Forsyth; AG - Alan Gillanders; BH- Bill Holmes; DA - David Anderson; DC - Dominic Chaplin; H&MMc - Helen & Marty McLaughlin; IP - Ivor Preston; JR - Janet Robino; JL - John Lowry; JS - John Seale; L&CE - Len and Chris Ezzy; MM - Marnie McCullough; TG- Tony Grice; JW- Jo Wieneke. *Thanks to observers for sending in their sightings and to John Seales website. We wish John a speedy recovery*

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@bigpond.com

Jo Wieneke, Townsville

Interesting sightings

Species	Date	Observer	Location	Comment
Spotted Nightjar	2.4.07	BH &MM	From Greenvale down to Bottom of Hervey Range Road – full moon	5 birds
Tawny Frogmouths				5 birds
Southern Boobook				3 birds
Owlet Nightjar				1 bird
Bush-hen	3.4.07	TG	Bush Garden, Townsville	Immature bird
Rufous Fantail				First arrival here
Crimson Finch				Female
Pictorella Mannikin	4.4.07	TG	WandoVale	74km WNW of Charters Towers
Plum-headed Finches				
Pictorella Mannikin	8.4.07	JW & BH	Toonpan	Flocks of Pictorellas with Black-throated Finch, Plum-headed Finch, Zebra Finch & Chestnut-Breasted Mannikins.
Brown Songlark				
Red-backed Kingfisher				
Diamond Dove				
Rufous Songlark				
Crimson Finch	10.4.07	IP	Louisa Creek, Townsville	Taking nest material to the White-bellied Sea-Eagle Nest near Bunnings
Lesser Frigatebird	10.4.07	DA	Ellis Beach, North Cairns	26 birds
Swinhoes Snipe	12.4.07	AG	Hasties Swamp, Atherton	One definite Swinhoes among at least a dozen or more snipe
Lathams Snipe				3 definite
Swamp Harrier	16.4.07	AG	Between Atherton & Kairi	2 or 3 young birds
Black Bittern	18.4.07	DC	Centenary Lakes, Cairns	1 by Freshwater Lake
White-browed Woodswallow	19.4.07	IP	White Mountains National Park	100+ near Telstra tower
Satin Flycatcher	19.4.07	AF	Red Mill House, Daintree	1 male
Black Bittern	24 4 07	DC	5 th Fairway Pond beside Mitre Rd Port Douglas	
Papuan Frogmouth	25.04.07	JS	Centenary Lakes, Cairns	
Hoary-headed Grebe	25.04.07	L&CE	Lake Toomba	1 bird
Red-chested Button-quail				4 including 2 chicks
Australasian Shoveler			Horse Lagoon	4 birds
Ground Cuckoo-shrike			Great Basalt Wall Road	3 birds
Grass Owl	“	L&CE&JR	Louisa Creek, Townsville	2 birds
Black Falcon	27.04.07	BH	51km NW Charters Towers	2 birds
Ground Cuckoo-shrike				4 birds
Cicadabird	29.4. 07	BH	Ross River, Townsville	female
Red-backed Kingfisher	9. 6. 07	AG	Sth of Lake Eacham, Yungaburra	
Red-backed Kingfisher	“	“	Near Hasties Swamp, Atherton	
Pale Yellow Robin	10.6.07	JW&JL	Big Crystal Creek, Paluma Range	Unusual at low altitude
Bridled Honeyeaters				Flocks of 20+ feeding in Mistletoe
Bridled Honeyeaters	11.6.07	AA	Palm Creek, Mt Elliot	Large flocks in mistletoe
Pied Currawong	11.6.07	H & M Mc	Belgian Gardens, Townsville	Flock of about 50 flying towards Castle Hill. First for season.



Pictorella Mannikin
Steve Paton
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Welcome to our new members...

- ✦ Mr Shane Bennett, ALLINGHAM;
- ✦ Dr Greg Bortolussi, TOWNSVILLE;
- ✦ Mr Malcolm & Lenore Calvert, TOWNSVILLE;
- ✦ Ms Susan Doherty, KURANDA;
- ✦ Mr David Milson, CAIRNS;
- ✦ Ms Patricia Robinson, TOWNSVILLE.

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 www.birdsaustraliang.org

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 containing 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.

The **Australasian Shorebird Conference 2007** is organised by the Australasian Wader Studies Group (a special interest group of Birds Australia) in association with the Hunter Bird Observers Club, NSW Wader Study Group and Avifauna Research & Services Pty Ltd. The conference will be held at Newcastle University on 6-8 July 2007. The conference is titled "Migratory Shorebirds in a Threatened Flyway". To download a conference program and registration form, visit <http://www.shorebirdnetwork.org/conferences/threatenedflyway.html>.

The **6th International Penguin Conference** will be held from 3rd to 7th September 2007 at the University of Tasmania in Hobart. If you have any queries, require assistance or wish to be placed on the email list for further information please email penguins2007@iprimus.com.au.

4th Biennial 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. Visit 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.

Changes at BOCA: The Bird Observers Club of Australia (BOCA) have changed their company and trading names to Bird Observation and Conservation Australia. The name change reflects the elevation of conservation in the organisation's priorities.



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