



Contact Call



Newsletter of the Birds Australia
North Queensland Group
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December 2007
Issue: Black Falcon

A visit to Kalinga Station...

I recently had the opportunity to visit the property called Kalinga, just west of Lakefield National Park on Cape York Peninsula. This property has recently been acquired by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service though the plan is not to incorporate the property into the national park. However, it is strategically located relative to Lakefield. One of the reasons that Kalinga is important to Lakefield is that it has infestations of two important grass weeds. One is the dryland species gamba grass (*Andropogon gayanus*), which was planted across large paddocks on the eastern side of the property. It now dominates large areas, especially in country that has been cleared, though it has also spread to adjacent uncleared woodlands. The problem with this introduced grass is that it produced a large amount of leaf and stem material that then provides fuel for very intense fires. The problem of gamba grass dominance and the destructive fires that result is well developed in the north of the Northern Territory and there is the risk that it will have similar effects on the Cape York Peninsula and other parts of north Queensland. The other weed species, and the one that John Clarkson and I travelled to Kalinga to find, is hymenachne (*Hymenachne amplexicaulis*). This is a wetland grass that was sown at Kalinga some time in the 1990s. While it has been promoted as a pasture grass for the cattle industry it is very invasive in wetlands and, as with gamba grass, is widespread in the Top End of the Northern Territory. Fortunately, there are only a few infestations on Kalinga and local eradication should be possible. We were keen to document where it is growing and so examine how much it has spread since sowing. The risk is that this species spread to Lakefield and other wetland areas. It would be very difficult to detect infestations in the large areas of inaccessible wetlands before control became impossible. Wetlands dominated by hymenachne are seriously degraded as bird habitat. It will be very important to control the populations of gamba and hymenachne on Kalinga to minimise the risk that they spread to adjacent parts of the region. Oh, and John and I saw a good few birds while we were there, at least 78 species, even though, of course, we had our eyes on the ground, looking for hymenachne. Some highlights: a family of jabirus, large flocks of double-barred finches, a single flock of black-throated finches, a pair of emus, bustard and one of the largest aggregations of diamond doves I have ever come across. Thanks John.



Let me take this opportunity to wish you all the best for the Christmas-New Year period and happy birding!

PS. I was down the Ross River at Aplin's Weir the other day and saw a very large water python delivering the coup de gras to a jacana!

Tony Grice, Convenor

BA North Queensland Group—Events Calendar Jan 2008 onwards

January 2008

Saturday 13th January - Mabi Forests

All welcome to join for some interesting birding at some Mabi forest fragments as part of a monitoring program. Meet at Quincan Gallery and Cafe at Yungaburra at 7:30am. Groups will break up into small teams and regroup at Quincan Gallery for a debrief around midday. Contact Alan Gillanders (07) 4095 3784.

Saturday and Sunday 19-20th January - National Painted Snipe Surveys

Organised by the Threatened Bird Network please contact Ian Hance (TBN volunteer) on (03) 9347 0757 or via email: tbn@birdsaustralia.com.au.

Saturday and Sunday 26-28 January Australia Day Weekend at Kingfisher Park, Julatten

Del Richards will take us out to the Mitchell River on Hurricane Road. Book accommodation with Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge directly. See contact details on back page.

February 2008

Friday 2nd February - World Wetlands Day

Saturday and Sunday 3-4th February - Shorebirds 2020: National Population Monitoring Program. Refer details on page 2.

March 2008

Saturday 30th March - Wave the Waders Goodbye, Cairns Esplanade. Come and join us on the Esplanade. Meet at 4:30pm. Contact Alan Gillanders on Ph (07) 4095 3784.

July 2008

Grasswren trip to Mount Isa. Contact Graham Harrington. Details on page 5.

October 2008

Saturday 4th - Annual Crane Count

Mark this one in your new diary.

Check the website for more details

Inside this issue:

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- Regional Groups meeting
- 2007 Pied Imperial Pigeon count
- Around the region: Yungaburra markets, Cairns esplanade
- Interesting Sightings

The Black Falcon (*Falco subniger*) is so plumage. It is 45-56cm long with a making it Australia's largest falcon. It is Falcon, however has longer, broader wings and is solitary, active and aggressive, characteristic of open plains and sparse woodland and shrubland of the Australian interior, sometimes appearing in open areas near the coast. It breeds usually July–September in a large stick nest of another raptor or corvid in the top of a living or dead tree. Information sourced from "The Birds of Prey of Australia—A field guide" by Stephen Debus.

Black Falcon

named because of its dark wingspan of 97-115cm, similar to the Peregrine longer tail. The Black Falcon



Black Falcon
© Birds in Backyards

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: alan@alanswildlifetours.com.au

Secretary—Ivor Preston (07) 4723 2723

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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

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Email: alan@alanswildlifetours.com.au

Mossman / Daintree: Del Richards Ph: 4094 1199

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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

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Crane Count Elinor Scambler 4095 3296

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Cape York Atlas Graham Harrington 4096 5051

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Shorebirds 2020 is underway and you're invited...

A major new program is underway at Birds Australia. Titled Shorebirds 2020, the program is designed to reinvigorate and coordinate national shorebird monitoring in Australia. Shorebirds 2020 is a collaborative enterprise between BA, the Australasian Wader Studies Group, WWF and the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust. The primary objectives of the program are to collect data on the numbers of shorebirds in a manner that can be utilised to aid their conservation and management, specifically long and short-term population trends, and explore what may be causing those changes. Further, this project will seek to understand the relationship between habitat, habitat quality, and threats to the distribution and abundance of shorebirds. A Project Manager (Jo Oldland), Technical Manager (Rob Clemens) and Project Officer (Angie Haslem) have been appointed to oversee the project. We would like to hear from anyone with an interest in

shorebirds and shorebird conservation, or who would like to learn more about these amazing birds. In particular we are also looking for volunteers to assist with biannual national population monitoring counts at sites throughout Australia. People with limited shorebird experience need not feel daunted as we aim to set up a regional 'mentoring' program, as well as run shorebird ID training workshops where feasible. The next round of national PMP counts will be the summer 2008 season on the weekend following World Wetlands Day on 2nd February. To register your interest please contact Joanne Oldland at BA on (03) 9347 0757, email j.oldland@birdsaustralia.com.au. Check out the Shorebird Conservation Toolkit at <http://shorebirds.org.au/> and join the Shorebirds Australia Yahoo Group at http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/Shorebirds_Australia/ to keep informed on the project and join the discussion on Australia's amazing shorebirds.

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, Suite 2-05, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053

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

Birding for Beginners on the Atherton Tablelands - 21st October

On the 21st of October 16 people gathered at Tinaroo Environmental Education Centre for Birding for Beginners. This included seven new members. It was a day of great learning and personal interactions.

Graham Harrington led the day with some instruction and lots of reassurance that most beginners know more about birds than they think they do. Graham did wonderfully in helping the participants feel at ease in eliminating those birds which did not fit. The beginners were asked to first concentrate on where they were, what the birds were doing and what they most resembled in behaviour and size. By having small groups of two or three backed up by an experienced birder, the beginners were able to test their new found skills in a non-threatening way and reach success in their identification. The students chose the birds and described them to their support person. A little judicious questioning helped focus their observations when necessary. It worked wonderfully. Because of the wind the day before and the rainy early morning, the dam was free of power craft. This meant that the water birds were not chased off. The clouds were just thick enough to stop it from becoming hot and not so dense as to stop the production of nectar in the Grevilleas and Callistemons in the grounds. Maria Gillanders and Jenny Nunan, a new member, did a top job in keeping us all well fuelled with delicious and wholesome food. During the break for morning tea, participants viewed Jack Leighton's excellent DVD, "Rainforest Birds of Australia's Wet Tropics" which has 100 species filmed with their calls. A display of optical equipment by Suncoast Optics also proved very popular with a number of purchases being made on the spot.



Afterwards we shuffled the individuals into new groupings and we began birding again. Confidence grew as the "newies" identified bird after bird with great accuracy. During one quiet time a Kookaburra flew to land near my group and I suggested it as a target. "But it's just a Kookaburra!" "How do you know it is a Kookaburra? What is it doing? How about you describe it?" Members of our group became quite excited as they looked carefully at features they had not noticed before: line through the eye, 'Mohawk haircut,' dark upper and light lower bill, how little blue there actually is on the wing. This led one participant to say at the end of the day, "At least now I know why a Kookaburra is a Kookaburra."

Lunch was an extended affair as people recounted birding stories, checked information and viewed the displays of Birds Australia materials. Some wandered off to continue birding around the immediate area, others drove to see particular birds while some were happy to just sit and watch Jack's DVD. For me one of the great lessons was that when we have an excursion those of us who are more experienced are not always doing others a favour by identifying all the birds as we see them. Some find it intimidating and others are annoyed not to get the chance to work them out for themselves. We may need to change the way we lead our excursions. It is not easy to be all things to all people but it should not be too hard for our experienced birders to take the back seat occasionally.

Alan Gillanders, Yungaburra

Christmas in Paluma - 17 November

This year, the 'southern' members of Birds Australia North Queensland Group (BANQG) held a Christmas Party at Hidden Valley* on 17th November. Some of us arrived mid-afternoon, but others were unable to get there much before the drinks were poured. Of course we early ones had inspected the surrounding gardens and bush for interesting sightings, and had been rewarded both there and in the Grandis forest en route, with a good variety. A **Pacific Baza** being harassed by a **Blue-faced Honeyeater** near the "Resort" was probably the best that offered, though Pat Charlton found other Honeyeaters down near the creek. The table for dinner was set up with some festive-type decorations, on the verandah near the pool, and the wearing of sparkling, coloured bowler hats added to the Christmas atmosphere. Though there were only nine of us, it was a pleasant gathering and all could join in the general conversation, which of course mainly centred on birds and birding trips. The roast meal was tasty and filling, while dessert - a most delicious apple crumble, custard and ice-cream had us all licking our lips in pleasure. Festivities came to a fairly early end as we succumbed to a very cool breeze that sent us seeking the warmth of our respective beds.

Sunday morning was relaxed as we consumed our individual breakfasts, before meeting in the Grandis Forest to enjoy the birdsong concert that surrounded us as soon as we exited our cars. Almost like being in Heaven with choirs of angels singing. Jo caused some excitement as she called for Roy to inspect her 'find', which was a **Potato Orchid or Cinnamon Bells** (*Gastrodia sesamoides*), which is an interesting single-stemmed, parasitic orchid, with no leaves, that lives on the roots of the *Eucalyptus grandis* trees. Roy

is the expert on them, it seems, and fearing for the demise from pigs, he led us all in a search for more. There we were, ears tuned to birdsong and eyes alternately searching the tree-tops and the ground around the biggest trees. Three more stems were found, and the best displayed opened blossoms - small but exquisitely lovely and almost invisible, hiding in the blady grass. Yes, we did find birds - a closeup **Scarlet Honeyeater**, **Golden Whistler**, **Shrike-thrush** (Bower's and Grey), **Eastern Yellow Robins** posing for us, **Grey Fantails** entertaining with their antics, **Brown Treecreepers** working their way up tree-trunks, and **Little Lorikeets** trying to pretend they were only **Scaly-breasted Lorikeets**, until one stayed still long enough to be clearly visible. Of course they were in the very tallest of the Grandis trees. The **Pied Monarch** Beth and I had seen the afternoon before, omitted to appear, but **Large-billed Scrubwrens** and **Brown Gerygones** chirped happily near the track. There were others, but time was rushing by and we had yet to see the **Golden Bowerbird** and his new bower on the road to Birthday Creek. He made his appearance several times and posed for some photos. Morning tea called, so five of us returned to Beth's place in Paluma where more discussion took place over coffee and cake, before everyone dispersed. Yes, a quiet but happy Christmas weekend, hopefully to be repeated in the future.

Elna Kerswell, Townsville

* Hidden Valley Cabins are Australia's first solar powered resort. Check it out at www.hiddenvalleycabins.com.au.



The Annual Nth Qld Crane Count - Saturday 6th October

Congratulations to BANQ members and friends who counted a record 4406 Brolgas at the annual Crane Count on October 6th. Sarus Cranes totalled over 1630, under the 10-year average, with numbers at key sites like Bromfield well down compared with the week before the Count - we missed the start of the annual Sarus migration by just a few days. But if "probable" Sarus Cranes from Lakeland Downs could be added, we would have at least equalled the 10-year average for Sarus which raises the interesting question, is Lakeland Downs a regular wintering, or stopover area for Sarus?

Thanks to all the teams, including pioneers at new sites; our landowners; and everyone who helped with pre-count research and publicity. Don't forget to let Coordinator Elinor Scambler know your email address if you'd like more detailed updates on crane count news, during 2008 (cranesnorth@austarnet.com.au).

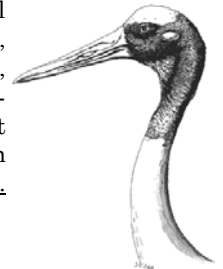
~ ~ NEXT crane count - 4th October 2008 ~ ~

New Brolga Book

Mitch Reardon's new book *Brolga Country: Travels in Wild Australia* includes excellent photos and good coverage of North Queensland Brolgas and BANQ crane counts. We received a review copy of the book and donated it to Atherton Library, with good publicity in *The Tablelander*. It's available from Andrew Isles Natural History Books, QBD and local bookshops, or the publisher Allen & Unwin. As well, Mitch's article was featured in the Oct-Nov issue of *Outback* magazine - the first part of the article is available free on their website, <http://www.outbackmag.com.au/stories/article-view?235>.

**Australian Crane Network
PO Box 59**

**Atherton Qld 4883
<http://ozcranes.net/>**



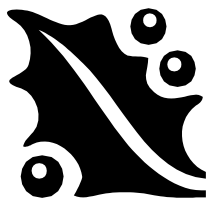
Sarus Crane
Kate Gorringer-Smith
© Birds Australia 2003



Regional Groups meeting in Melbourne - November

Convenors and representatives of the various regional groups of Birds Australia held their 2007 meeting in Melbourne on Friday November 23. This was my first opportunity to visit the new BA national headquarters in Carlton (Melbourne). Our new national office (along with a number of other organisations) is housed in a relatively old building that has been revamped to have a minimum environmental impact. It is largely open plan, uses a lot of natural light and is designed to be passively warmed or cooled as much as possible. A monitor on the ground floor indicates current energy usage by the building as a whole. Overall I was very impressed and I think it recognises Bird Australia's commitment to the environment. Oh, and the meeting... we discussed a wide range of issues including conservation priorities for Birds Australia, the policy and procedures manual designed to assist regional groups in their operations, and the new BA website. The website includes space for material from regional groups. The schedule of annual conference and members days over the next few years was discussed, including the prospect that the **BA Congress for 2010 be held in North Queensland**. I was impressed by the range of activities, including research, conservation actions and education, that are being undertaken by the various regional groups of BA. It was also apparent that some major challenges in bird conservation lie ahead. These include addressing threats posed by coastal development, loss of stock routes, landscape fragmentation and climate change. On the other hand some great things are happening. If you are in Melbourne, I recommend visit the new Birds Australia headquarters. Or, if you are passing through Sydney, check out the BA education centre, recently opened in the Olympic Park precinct.

Tony Grice, Townsville



Cairns Christmas Party - November

About 15 Cairns people (half of these members of Birds Australia) gathered for a morning at the Botanic Gardens to celebrate Christmas in the tropics. Because of the hot weather we decided to have lunch at morning tea, cooking up the traditional snags. However in 36°C heat, there was not much bird action. Best birds of the morning were **Oriental Cuckoos** and **Double-eyed Fig Parrots**.

Harry Cassidy, Cairns

Ed.: Thanks to Harry for setting up the display boards and bearing the heat until lunch time

* **Bird Survey Volunteers for Newhaven Sanctuary: March 2008** *
* In July and August 2007 the **Australian Wildlife Conservancy** organised a very successful *
* volunteer programme of bird surveys at Newhaven. It has been decided to repeat these surveys at a *
* different time of the year, when markedly different conditions will prevail. We are therefore seeking *
* the assistance of four experienced bird surveyors for the last two weeks of March 2008. Familiarity *
* with arid zone bird species and working with GPS is highly desirable. Willingness to bring your own 4WD vehicle for the *
* surveys would be welcomed. Reimbursement of food and fuel expenses whilst at Newhaven is available, and some *
* additional assistance may be possible. Limited accommodation is available. Please contact Richard Jordan at *
* richardandroz@wirefree.net.au for further details and an application form. *
* **Winter Volunteer Rangers at Newhaven Sanctuary: April to August 2008** *
* In 2008 we plan to have a resident volunteer Ranger /Campground Caretaker. Some of the Ranger's duties would involve *
* liaising with visitors, maintaining the small campground and participating in other projects on the Sanctuary. The *
* Ranger's would be offered accommodation in the self-contained two-bedroom unit and assistance would be given to reach *
* Newhaven from Alice Springs if required. We would prefer Ranger/s to stay for a minimum of two and a maximum of four *
* weeks, however alternative arrangements could be made. If you are interested please contact us by email *
* newhaven@australianwildlife.org or phone (08) 8964 6000. Kind regards, Josef Schofield and Danae Moore, Managers. *





Pied Imperial Pigeon
Ian Hance
© Birds Australia 2003

Pied Imperial Pigeon Survey at Mission Beach - November

We were extremely fortunate in having perfect weather for the survey on November 10th. An American visitor staying at the caravan park at Wongaling made numbers up to 16 so we were able to survey with four people at each site: South Mission Beach, Wongaling Beach, Clump Point and Garners Beach. Pigeons were counted as they left the coast 100-200m from the count site and the number and direction they headed were recorded.

Results Table:

Time	South Mission			Wongaling			Clump Point			Garners Beach			Total
	N	E	S	N	E	S	N	E	S	N	E	S	
Total		7	499	29	20		63	9	4	457		7	1095
Total	506			49			76			464			

As can be seen in the above chart, birds from South Mission headed southwards. From his compass reading Greg Bortolussi checked a map and showed that most of the birds were heading towards Timana Island. All birds from Garners Beach headed north towards the Barnard Islands. Clump Point and Wongaling recorded far fewer birds but the majority of them were heading north. As the Wongaling team had so few to count they also counted the ones they could see far out, that they had not observed crossing the coastline. Of these 41 were heading south, 11 north and 1 east. The ones heading south flew past Dunk Is and were lost to view heading for the Family Is. Harry Cassidy, a former resident of Mission Beach said that he had noticed that birds did not fly to Dunk. Lists were also kept for all other birds seen at the count sites. Prize for the most amazing sighting goes to the Clump Point team who had excellent views of a **Great-billed Heron** – a new bird for three of them. Counts ended when no birds had been recorded for 15 minutes and we returned to the Caravan Park enjoyed a buffet meal at the local hotel that evening. This year's survey was very much a try out and we discussed changes that could be made when we repeat the count next year.

Sunday morning brought rain but did not deter most of the group from a morning walk at Tam O'Shanter National Park (Licuala Fan Palm Walk) before heading home. Unfortunately the Cassowary eluded us but made a later appearance with chick for Ian Montgomery and his camera.

Thanks to everyone who helped, to John Winter for suggesting the exercise and to QPWS for providing the count sheets.

Jo Wieneke, Townsville

BOWERBIRDS: Nature, Art, History - A book review

Talented north Queensland ornithologists, photographers, authors and publishers, Clifford and Dawn Frith have done it again. They have produced a wonderful book jam packed with information, amazing photos and other illustration and very informative text in a manner not threatening to those with a casual interest in birds.

The book is a real page turner, not a common feature in non-fiction. In the week that I have owned this book I have picked it up on only three occasions but have read 80% of its 304 pages. It is well written though the sentence structures may be a trifle convoluted for younger readers. Divided into three parts, 'Bowerbirds' traces the origins of bowerbirds, their ecology and behaviour. The middle part examines their discovery, study and role of the birds in human culture. Each species is then given a more detailed treatment in the third section of the book.

These are fascinating birds with amazing cultural traits. Anyone who has spent any length of time watching an individual will know that they have intriguing personalities. Cliff and Dawn draw not only on their own extensive experience but on the breadth of published material, archives and personal contacts to paint vivid pictures of the behaviours. These are illustrated with fine photography and paintings. If a loved one has not yet purchased your Christmas present then this is my recommendation. It is a book you will read for pleasure and return to over and over for reference.

Alan Gillanders, Yungaburra

Available from:

Andrew Isles Natural History Books

www.andrewisles.com



Tooth-billed Bowerbird
Andrew Plant
© Birds Australia 2003

Volunteers for Grasswren Surveys Required...



Carpentarian Grasswren
Kevin Bartram
© Birds Australia 2003

Volunteers are needed to assist in surveying for **Kalkadoon** and **Carpentarian Grasswrens** in July 2008. You would have to find your own way to Mt. Isa. Accommodation would be under canvas at the survey sites. Be warned the nights are cold! The aim is to assess the population densities of grasswrens in Spinifex fire scars of different ages. This is part of the Birds Australia North Queensland Group's Important Bird Area Monitoring Program.

For more details and a project description contact Graham Harrington on phone (07) 4096 5051 or email riflebird@austarnet.com.au.

Around the region...

Yungaburra markets



B ANQG is one of several conservation groups that have kept a booking at the markets for all but four of the years that the Yungaburra Markets have been in existence. The October market has proved over the years to be a good market especially as it is combined with the now famous annual Folk Festival. But this year was the exception. A friend who owns a specialty shop in Cairns told me she can find no explanation for it but has always found that in the weeks leading up to an election people stop spending. Once the new government has settled in it gradually returns to normal patterns. Graham Harrington is the main supplier of our most successful merchandise, plants and I add what I can. This year Graham had a particularly large selection of plants, which compensated for the drop in demand so that we netted \$280 odd which was much the same as last year. Because Graham was incapacitated with his hand operation which took place a few days before the market (outcome very pleasing to the surgeons evidently) Terry Heidenreich collected Graham's plants and helped with the stall all morning. Alan Gillanders very kindly obtained the loan of the Tableland Frog Group's shade tent since ours has once again disappeared. Harry Cassidy brought up the display material and stayed to help and Graham put in an appearance with an impressively bound right hand and arm. Barbara Warren came from Mareeba to help which meant that all helpers had an opportunity to mooch around the market and see what else was going on.

Virginia Simmonds, Kairi

Cairns Esplanade Waders

Just before Christmas, I spent two afternoons, "doing" the Cairns Esplanade. What a treat! There was a particularly high tide, which caused the hundreds of waders to come so close inshore that they were nearly at the top of the beach; while at the Boardwalk end they were right in front of, and even under, the walkway, which is where an **Eastern Reef Egret** was busily searching for his tucker. The others there were mostly **Pelicans** and **Spoonbills**, with a few Egrets thrown in. However, north of the boardwalk, there were dozens and dozens of **Bar-tailed Godwits**, **Black-tailed Godwits**, **Pacific Golden Plovers**, **Lesser and Greater Sand Plovers**, numerous **Red-capped Plovers**, **Red-necked Stints** and **Great Knots**, and a few **Curlew Sandpipers** and **Marsh Sandpipers** also waiting patiently for the sea to retreat. We stayed at the Half Moon Bay Resort which is right opposite the Yorkey's Knob Golf course and lagoon, so could do a daily check on the 30 or so **Green Pygmy-Goose** that seemed to have made themselves quite at home there. One morning, we were delighted to see a **Collared Kingfisher** sitting on the power line just west of the lagoon, as well as a bunch of **Golden Plovers** foraging on the football field nearby. What a great spot that is and I don't know why it has taken me so long to take myself there. Obviously, I shall make further visits in the future. Sad to see **Hasties Swamp** so close to being dry, with only a large flock of noisy (as usual) **Masked Lapwings** guarding it. Two **Black-winged Stilts** pried and poked beside them, while across the road in the farmer's paddock, hundreds of **Magpie Geese** settled for the night. Sadly, not a single **Scarlet Honeyeater** did we find anywhere on the Tableland. Paluma afforded us with the usual **Chowchilla** Chorus on Christmas morning, and peering through the gloom at their "stage", I was greatly entertained by their rowdy challenges and racketing songs, just 2 to 3 metres in front of me. What a way to end a happy year of birding. Later, at Mt Zero, Len and Chris Ezzy even found a flock of **Varied Sitellas** for us to watch. First for the year!



Green Pygmy-Goose
Mike Bamford
© Birds Australia 2003

Elna Kerswell, Townsville

Interesting Sightings from the region...

Our observers this edition are: AF - Andy Frost; AG - Alan Gillanders; BH- Bill Holmes; BV - Brian Venables; DL - David Latham; DR - Del Richards; GB - George Baker; GBo - Greg Bortolussi; GS - Graham Snell; HC - Harry Cassidy; JS - John Seale; JWi - Jo Wieneke; JW - John Wren; KM - Kim Maute; L&CE - Len and Chris Ezzy; MA - Marlene Acton; M&LC - Malcolm and Lenore Calvert; P&WC - Pat and Warren Charlton; TRBOC - Townsville Region Bird Observers Club. Please check with observers before quoting any of these sightings. Please send any unusual or interesting sightings to Jo Wieneke at bowerbird07@bigpond.com.

~ Additional Notes from Alan Gillanders ~



Green Sandpiper Hasties Swamp 16/11/07 at about 10:30am. The dark underwing and broadly marked tail below a white rump were noted. The short eyebrow and white eye ring were observed and photographed a day later. The **Golden Bowerbird** Longlands Gap site has a new occupant and an active bower. **White-headed Pigeons** have been returning to Yungaburra in small numbers. **Square-tailed Kite** on the eastern edge of Atherton most of September and October. **Rufous Owl** with two young Thomas Road, Yungaburra, late November (observer unknown). An adult female was killed by a car at this spot about this time last year when they had two young.

~ Additional Sightings from Bill Holmes ~

White-headed Pigeon Ian Hance
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Jacky Winter appeared again on 08/09/07 9km NNW of Woodstock (29km south of Townsville). Firsts for the Oonoonba Vet Lab were a **Bush Hen** on 20/09/07 and an **Orange-footed Scrubfowl** on 11/09/07 in the mangroves. Both adult and juvenile **White-browed Scrubwrens** were at Oaky Creek (Laudham Park, 32km from Townsville). Laudham Park was also home to **White-throated Nightjar** (27/10/07) and **Red-kneed Dotterel** (28/10/07). **Yellow Oriole** were heard calling in Cranbrook and Riverside Gardens from 19/10/07 until 07/12/07. **Banded Lapwings** were also spotted 110km NNW of Charters Towers on 06/11/07 while a **Black Bittern** was seen on the Ross River at Cranbrook (01/12/07).

Interesting sightings

Species	Date	Observer	Location	Comment
Black-breasted Buzzard	06/09/07	L&CE	Lassie Creek, Mt Zero	
White-winged Chough	14/09/07	L&CE	Haughton River Bridge, Flinders Highway	Edge of range
Ground Cuckoo-shrike	15/09/07	L&CE	3km north of Burdekin Falls Dam	5 birds
Grey Falcon	15/09/07	M&LC	25km south of Hughenden	
Black Falcon	16/09/07	L&CE	Dalrymple National Park	
Black-tailed Godwit	19/09/07	TRBOC	Cleveland Bay PP	
Black-breasted Buzzard	20/09/07	AF	Magnetic Island	1 bird over Balding Bay
Diamond Dove	23/09/07	JWr	Merinda near Bowen	
Yellow Oriole	25/09/07	GB	Bush Garden, Townsville	
Painted Snipe	30/09/07	D&TT	Abattoir Swamp, Julatten	3 birds
Grey Falcon	09/10/07	AG	Rocky Creek Memorial Park, Atherton	
Topknot Pigeon	17/10/07	JWi	Saibai Island	Scarce north of Cooktown
Banded Honeyeater	17/10/07	DL	Cumberland Dam	Many hundreds Ad & immature
Varied Lorikeet	17/10/07	DL	Cumberland Dam	Edge of range
Black-breasted Buzzard	21/10/07	DL	Kennedy River	2 birds: one dark, one pale
Broad-billed Sandpiper	25/10/07	DR	Cairns Esplanade	
Blue-faced Parrot-Finch	26/10/07	HC	Gourka Road, Topaz	6 birds
Black-breasted Buzzard	03/11/07	GBo	Near Mowbray River Bridge	Cook Highway
Black-winged Monarch	04/11/07	GBo	Hasties Swamp, Atherton	
Great-billed Heron	10/11/07	BV <i>et al</i>	Clump Point Lookout, Mission Beach	
White-winged Triller	11/11/07	JWi	Tyto Wetlands, Ingham	
Variegated Fairy-wren	12/11/07	DR	Brooklyn Station, Julatten	4 birds. First record here
Little Eagle	12/11/07	JWi	Townsville Town Common	
Barn Swallow	15/11/07	DR	Newell Beach	8 birds
Green Sandpiper	16/11/07	AG <i>et al</i>	Hasties Swamp, Atherton	
Common Tern	20/11/07	JS	Cairns Esplanade	17 birds
Oriental Cuckoo	21/11/07	JS	Anderson St bush, Townsville	
Australian Pratincole	23/11/07	GS	France Road Turf Farm, Edmonton	3 birds
Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	26/11/07	JWi	Townsville Town Common	1 male near Tower Hide
Black Bittern	27/11/07	BV	Centenary Lakes, Cairns	Male and female
Oriental Cuckoo	27/11/07	BV	Near Cemetery Anderson St Cairns	5 grey and 2 brown morphs
Apostlebird	01/12/07	P&WC	JCU campus, Townsville	
Pink-eared Duck	01/12/07	KM <i>et al</i>	Centenary Lakes, Cairns	
Broad-billed Sandpiper	01/12/07	AG	Cairns Esplanade	
Northern Fantail	01/12/07	GBo	Rifle Creek, Mareeba	Feeding fledgling
Little Tern	01/12/07	L&CE	Cungulla Beach	260 –breeding on north sand spit, nests and unfledged chicks
Terek Sandpiper	01/12/07	L&CE	Cungulla	Approximately 85
White-browed Robin	01/12/07	L&CE	Serpentine Lagoon, Townsville	First record for here
Grey-crowned babbler	01/12/07	L&CE	Serpentine Lagoon, Townsville	5 birds
Pallid Cuckoo	01/12/07	L&CE	Serpentine Lagoon, Townsville	9 birds
Brolga	02/12/07	JWi	Townsville Town Common	50 approx
Wood Sandpiper	02/12/07	AG	Hasties Swamp	There since 20/11

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Welcome to our new members...

- ✦ Mr George Baker, TOWNSVILLE;
- ✦ Mr Neville Copley, INGHAM;
- ✦ Ms Daphne Leads, CUNGULLA;
- ✦ Ms Wai Awarau, ATHERTON;
- ✦ Mr Peter d'Abbs, MACHANS BEACH;
- ✦ Ms Barbara Hobson, FRESHWATER;
- ✦ Ms Elaine Kruck, KAIRI;
- ✦ Ms Helen Muther, YUNGABURRA;
- ✦ Ms Jenny Nunan, MALANDA;
- ✦ Ms Marilyn Porter, MAREEBA.

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.birdsaustralianq.org

Notice Board

Check out **Jo Wieneke's** new website <http://www.nqbirds.com/> and information on her very popular book "Where to Find Birds in North Queensland"

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.**

Birds Australia's OH&S committee recently held its second meeting. Thanks to a large amount of input from several Regional Groups the organisation now has a standard sign-on form for activities (including an insurance disclaimer), and the basis of a standard operating procedure (SOP) for 4WD and field work. Over the coming months a number of other regular activities will be developed into SOP's and have hazard assessments completed, and these will be rolled out across the organisation. We are trying to make the whole process as painless as possible, and look forward to working with all involved with Birds Australia to make our birding activities as safe as possible. For further information please contact Dean Ingwersen via email: d.ingwersen@birdsaustralia.com.au, or call (03) 9347 0757.

Broome Bird Observatory (BBO) Volunteer Rangers
BBO are seeking enthusiastic, highly motivated and hard working people for the 2008 season. Various positions are available: all involve living at the observatory and working in a small team environment. Flexibility, initiative and excellent people skills are essential. Duties include: guest management, conducting bird watching tours (coaching provided), office duties and facilities maintenance. Applicants must hold a C class drivers licence and be eligible for an F class endorsement. General terms and conditions include a weekly stipend, food allowance, furnished accommodation, annual leave and a contribution to relocation if applicable. The BBO has a Special Program status from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and can provide successful overseas applicants with the opportunity to apply for working visas. For more information please contact Andrea Spencer by email aspensbilby@bigpond.com or phone 0417 591 718.

Thanks

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



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Keith & Lindsay Fisher

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Please send items for March 2008 Contact Call by mid February 2008 to: Ivor Preston - Secretary, on birdsaus@birdsaustralianq.org.au