

# ConTact Call



## Quarterly Newsletter of Birds Australia North Queensland



December 2009

Issue: Bar-tailed Godwit



Bar-tailed Godwits are quite large waders, with females being bigger than males. It is mainly mottled brown above and lighter and more uniform buff below, with dull white underwings, and a long, slightly upturned bill. As the name suggests, the white tail is barred with brown. This is the non-breeding plumage of the Bar-tailed Godwit and is the main phase seen in Australia. The breeding plumage is darker and more rufous, with females duller than males. Young birds resemble non-breeding birds. The Bar-tailed Godwit is often difficult to distinguish from the similar Black-tailed Godwit, which lacks the barred rump.

Bar-tailed Godwits arrive in Australia each year in August from breeding grounds in the northern hemisphere. They are more numerous in northern Australia, where they inhabit estuarine mudflats, beaches and mangroves. They are common in coastal areas around Australia, being social birds often seen in large flocks and in the company of other waders.

Tens of thousands of birds land in Australia's north-west and move around the coast of Australia, rather than across the land. While most birds leave Australia in April and May to return to their breeding grounds, some birds (mostly young birds) remain all year round.

Bar-tailed Godwits feed on molluscs, worms and aquatic insects. Birds wade through the shallows or over exposed mud and probe their long bills rapidly into the bottom to find food. Feeding parties may number up to 30 or more birds, and include non-breeding migrants and young

birds that have overwintered. The Bar-tailed Godwit is a non-breeding migrant in Australia.



Photo courtesy of Ian Montgomery - birdway.com.au

Information sourced from *Birds in Backyard*—  
[www.birdsinbackyards.net](http://www.birdsinbackyards.net)

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### From the Convenor's Desk

Many festive greetings and wishes from the Gillanders to all our members and their families.

In my yard today there were young Scaly-breasted Lorikeets, Double-eyed Fig-Parrots, Buff-banded Rails and a young Brush Cuckoo moved through earlier in the week. Seeing young birds raises my sense of well being.

I recently travelled to Armidale in NSW to attend the groups meeting of Birds Australia, on behalf of BANQ. While there I also met with the Important Bird Areas (IBA) committee. It was pleasing to be able to report on the monitoring we are doing in North Queensland but daunting to see how much was still to be done even on a one off basis. By now you should have received your December Wingspan and with it the IBA publication. I recommend it to you if you have not read it already. One can read about the importance of these designated areas and the criteria they must meet for declaration. A round of revisions will be

undertaken in 2013. This gives you plenty of time to prepare a submission if you think your favourite area qualifies.

The 'Groups' meeting now includes special interest groups and the bird observatories as well as the regional groups. Much of the time is taken in the management of the business of our 8000 strong membership based organisation.

The 'Atlas of Living Australia' project which was recently launched by CSIRO sounds like it will have room for citizen science and may be of use for gathering more information about our birds.



Next year is the International Year of Biodiversity. What a shame if the Western Ground Parrot goes extinct in such a year! The way habitats continue

to be lost we cannot expect to maintain the biodiversity we have. How much are you prepared to say good-bye to? While it is impossible to keep everything we have, even in the short term of decades we need to be acting to keep as many birds and other living things in good numbers; to keep the common birds common. How easily we adapt to the new paradigm, 80 years ago in this district many people would be planning to kill the big bird in the chook pen for Christmas. Now just seeing a Cassowary causes great excitement and fortunately they are not on the menu.

From the Bird Life International, Preventing Extinctions webpage, "The natural rate of bird extinction is one bird per century. In the last thirty years alone, 21 bird species have become extinct. At present, 192 are classified as Critically Endangered."

Wishing you (good) birding surprises,

**ALAN GILLANDERS**

## Birds Australia Congress and Campout 2010 Townsville 13-20 August

A call for papers and posters that engage the theme of the Congress:

**"CONSERVATION OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS  
- APPROACHES, PROJECTS and OUTCOMES".**

With the exception of the war years a Congress and Campout has been held every year (bar one) since 1904. Since 2003 BA has hosted regular biennial ornithological conferences.

Birds Australia is the country's oldest national conservation organisation and can boast its oldest scientific journal. As Australia's only truly national organisation dedicated to the study, conservation and enjoyment of native birds and their habitats, it is justly proud of its motto: 'Conservation through Knowledge'.

In the light of Peter Garret's recent announcement we are keen to compare the single species approach with holistic ecosystem management in conservation of birds. We intend to focus on the

conservation activities of Birds Australia members and groups and how Important Bird Areas can enhance Birds Australia's performance in this field.

Topics for papers can embrace monitoring as a conservation tool, accounts of conservation projects, captive breeding, translocation of birds to vacant habitat, habitat restoration, data collection and publication and how to achieve conservation action by influencing agencies and landholders.

Enquiries regarding program to  
[graham.harrington@csiro.au](mailto:graham.harrington@csiro.au)

More details in the March edition of Wingspan, Contact Call newsletter and on the BA website.

## Project News

### Important Bird Areas Report

BANQ completed the second survey of Kalkadoon and Carpentarian Grasswrens this year. Twenty volunteers came from all over Australia to participate and every one of them got good views of Carpentarian Grasswrens. We did not survey in those areas where they are regularly seen because we were trying to find out the current extent of their range. It was gratifying to find them throughout the area in Queensland, which Peter Harris had found them back in 1990-95. However, we were unable to find them in the vicinity of Lawn Hill National Park and it seems as though the entire northern sub-population in Queensland may now be

extinct. Another now-extinct sub-population used to be found in the McArthur River area in the NT. However, we did find that the Wollgorang sub-population was more extensive than had been previously been supposed and it extends into Calvert Hills Station. Our IBA monitoring for this species, will henceforth be mainly a desk exercise. We propose to calculate the available habitat for Carpentarian Grasswrens from the annual fire maps. If fire reduces the habitat availability below a (yet to be calculated) certain minimum area we will be contacting Traditional Owners, landowners and Regional Authorities to

rectify the situation.

We also have two monitoring activities in the Wet Tropics IBA. The Annual Crane Count has just been completed using a statistically reduced sampling procedure. Tooth-billed and Golden Bowerbirds are now active and the task of recording precise locations of bowers has recommenced. We are recording across their full latitudinal and altitudinal range to enable us to assess whether global warming causes the loss of bowers and if so where.

**GRAHAM HARRINGTON**  
*IBA Coordinator for BANQ*

### Bird Watchers Count Cranes

After a decade of censusing the cranes in North Queensland we have moved to monitoring the Important Bird Area (IBA) triggered by the presence of the Sarus Cranes on the Atherton Tablelands. Please mark Saturday, September 4th 2010 in your diaries as the crane count date for next year. The counting of cranes in other areas is encouraged and can be recorded and reported to the Atlas Project using the forms on the national web site. Team Green counted 186 Brolgas at Allingham Swamp Ingham.

This year nearly 900 cranes were counted on the Tablelands by more than 30 volunteers from Birds Australia and other enthusiasts. The cranes, Brolgas and Sarus Cranes, were counted as they flew into roost for the evening. Cranes spend the evening near water to drink, bathe and avoid disturbance. Because most of Australia's Sarus Cranes spend the winter and dry season on the Tablelands, this area has been listed as an Important Bird Area. This puts the onus on Birds Australia to monitor the health of the population of these majestic and well loved birds.

Counters were at their stations before 5pm and counted the cranes as they arrived at their night roosts. Counting continued until after dark. The counters then moved to the Malanda Hotel for dinner and to tally their results. The counters were told about the strict requirements of the international process for listing as an Important Bird Area. You can read about this on pages six and seven of the 'Australia's Important Bird Areas' document which arrived early in the month with your Wingspan.

From next year the crane count will take place on the first Saturday in September. This is to avoid the early

migration of birds which happened this and a few other years. The numbers of cranes at Bromfield Swamp for instance dropped from at least 750 to only 64 during the week leading to the count. It may have been the early harvesting of the maze due to the lack of drizzle which led to some farmers planting an extra crop and the subsequent loss of feeding areas induced the birds to move on. " .. the knee bone's connected to the thigh bone, the thigh bone's connected ... ."



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and a local bird guide can be arranged.

**Keith & Lindsay Fisher**  
RN6, Mt. Kooyong Road, Julatten, QLD 4871  
Ph: (07) 4094 1263 or Fax: (07) 4094 1466  
Email: sootyowl@bigpond.com  
Web Page: www.birdwatchers.com.au

## Project News

### Carpentarian Grasswren

– the case for the species to be declared as nationally Vulnerable under the IUCN rules. This case has been developed from the data collected by the BANQ surveys in 2008 and 2009.

Historically the Carpentarian Grasswren is known from six sites south-west of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Recent surveys using playback at 2,400 sites suggest that the populations at Limmen Bight and Borroloola have been extirpated, almost certainly by wildfire, as repeated surveys have failed to find them since last seen in 1986. The population at Boodjamulla may have been extirpated by very large wildfires in 2003 and 2006 which burnt the habitat in all known sites there. The populations at

Wollogorang and Calvert Hills (both found in 2009) are very small and vulnerable to fire. The Mt Isa population is relatively numerous and appears to persisting under existing fire regimes. This is based on the range (approx. 20,000km<sup>2</sup>), of which approx. 30% is suitable habitat at any one time due to fire patterns and vegetation. Based on encounter rates during the surveys, a pair of grasswrens is estimated to occupy >1.0km<sup>2</sup>. Assuming a breeding territory of 1.5km<sup>2</sup>, this gives a breeding population of approx. 4,500 pairs (range 3,000 – 10,000). They are extremely sensitive to fire and are eliminated from burnt areas. The population moves spatially in response to fire patterns, and will increase or decrease annually

according to the amount of suitable habitat available. This population is highly vulnerable to a widespread fire in the future. Given the results of these surveys, the history of recent loss and the probability of future loss, it is proposed that the species fits the category of Vulnerable C1: Population size estimated to number fewer than 10,000 mature individuals and 1. An estimated continuing decline of at least 10% within 10 years or three generations, whichever is longer. The rate of decline is insufficient for criterion A, the Area of Occupancy too large for criterion B and the population too large for Criterion D.

**GRAHAM HARRINGTON**

### Pied Imperial-Pigeon Count 2009

For this our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual survey, we had early concerns we were in for a wet survey, but as luck has it, the rain cleared before we headed out to our sites. This year a Swedish couple, who had discovered the event on the internet, joined us, which made

Thanks  
Trish

numbers up to 18. We surveyed at South Mission Beach, Wongaling Beach, Clump Point, Bingal Bay 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.

This year we saw more birds than in the first 2 years combined. Also as

you can see from the summary table above, Garners Beach had almost half the total for all sites. The next most numerous site was at the southern end of South Mission Beach. Counts generally ended at 6 pm. The final count for the day was 4340 Pied Imperial-Pigeons heading out to an island to roost for the night.

Lists were also kept for all other birds seen at the count sites and this year, one team recorded a couple of Beach Stone-Curlew. Our modest total of 28 species shows that the intensity required to count PIPs doesn't allow for other activities.

Most of the group assembled for a celebratory dinner at the resort at Wongaling Beach, where we enjoyed a couple of hours socializing over dinner.

On Sunday morning, a dedicated



group of 8 people assembled at the Lacey Creek car park for a walk to the south along the track for an hour before returning to the cars. We didn't see a Cassowary, but there was plenty of scat evidence. The highlight was seeing a very quiet 3m Amethystine Python draped in the undergrowth about 2m from the track.

Thanks to Trish Pontynen for taking over the organization and leadership of this years count – well done Trish. Also thanks to everyone who attended and helped to make this weekend a success.



**IVOR PRESTON**

PIP Count 2009 Results Table :

	Sth Mission	Wongaling	Clump Pt	Bingal Bay	Garners	Total
2007	506	49	76	-	464	1095
2008	198	24	205	746	1154	2327
<b>2009</b>	<b>1472</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>2238</b>	<b>4340</b>



A virtual consensus has now been reached among scientists on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC: <http://www.ipcc.ch>) that greenhouse gases released into our atmosphere by human industry are causing the global climate to warm. Researchers at the Centre for Tropical Biodiversity and Climate Change have shown that many species face a drastic reduction in their range and some unique rainforest species like the Golden Bowerbird are at risk of extinction. As the climate warms over the next

**I decided to carry out my last expedition ... in the most carbon-neutral way possible.**

50 to 100 years, their ranges are predicted to shrink upwards to isolated mountaintops and may eventually disappear altogether. Our current understanding of human impacts on the global climate system is firmly based in scientific evidence, as is our understanding of the risk to biodiversity and ecosystems that is posed by climate change. The irony is that scientific research itself can be a highly carbon-intensive operation. During my PhD research about the role of climate in biodiversity processes in the rainforests of North Queensland I have encountered some of Australia's rarest and most vulnerable bird species and I see an urgent need to address not only the gaps in scientific knowledge, but also the need to address the issues of carbon emission-reduction on a community level... and what better way to do this than to start with our own backyard?

This is why I decided to carry out my last expedition to survey birds in the Eungella National Park near Mackay in the most carbon-neutral way possible. Whereas usually I would use a diesel 4WD vehicle and make a round trip of nearly 1000km, I decided to use a combination of carbon-offset public transport, cycling and walking in order to reduce the carbon footprint of my fieldwork as much as possible. I was helped in this endeavour by two scientists from the University of New South Wales: Dr Thomas Rayner, a freshwater ecologist studying the Macquarie Marshes and Tiffanie Nelson, a microbiologist specialised in Antarctic ecosystems. Both are also keenly aware of the potential impacts of climate change in their fields of expertise and so in addition to our research goals, we also wanted to raise awareness of these issues and their solutions in the wider community. To this end we visited Finch Hatton and Eungella State Schools during the trip, where we were greeted by enthusiastic staff and very keen and switched on students. The kids were all eager to learn about the rainforest birds of their local region, how climate change works and how it could affect their region, and ways to reduce their own carbon emissions. We were lucky to have perfect weather for the expedition and completed all our surveys across the altitudinal gradient from Finch Hatton gorge to Mt Dalrymple. Highlights included plenty of sightings of the endemic Eungella Honeyeater, the elusive Russet-tailed Thrush and the spectacular Regent Bowerbird. Data collected on the Eungella honeyeater will be combined with records collated by local expert Marion Crouther to improve our

understanding of this species' distribution and the potential risks they face due to climate change. By the end of ten days we had ridden 300km (including the grueling 4km, 12% climb up to Eungella!) walked a total of 15km and conducted 24 dawn surveys.

To round things off, Greyhound Australia kindly sponsored bus transport to Mackay through their carbon-offset "travel green" program, and the Daintree Rainforest Discovery Centre generously offered to offset the carbon emissions of all my research through tree planting in the Daintree World Heritage Area. The Carbon Neutral Ecology Project is also being supported by Birds Australia, The Skyrail Rainforest Foundation, the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility, James Cook University, and The Centre for Tropical Biodiversity and Climate Change. The Chaining Transit Authority Sydney, and BNG Sports Townsville helped us prepare our bikes and gear. When in Finch Hatton Gorge we stay with Wazza at the marvelous Platypus Bushcamp. For more information contact [alexander.anderson@jcu.edu.au](mailto:alexander.anderson@jcu.edu.au), or visit the Carbon-Neutral Ecology blog:

<http://carbonneutralecolology.wordpress.com>.

**ALEX ANDERSON**



## Bronze-Cuckoo ID Notes

*The Editor would like to thank Lloyd Nielsen for permission to reproduce the following email thread from birding-aus website -*

*www.birding-aus.org  
birding-aus.blogspot.com.*

Lloyd,

Thanks for your contribution on birding-aus re the Gould's Bronze-Cuckoo, I have attempted without success to find much info on the two "little" species/subspecies.

I am interested in your findings around your comment "Each are fairly easily identified in the field. In some areas, they occur side by side, in very different habitats," What are these identifying features and what are their preferred habitat's?

Particularly as my brother and I saw briefly a "little" that we assumed to be Gould's at Cape Tribulation.

Steve Potter

Steve,

In regard to Little and Gould's Bronze-Cuckoos, Little has white underparts without any rufous smudging on the breast. Gould's has varying amounts of rufous on the breast - from just a touch to quite rufous in odd birds. Breast of Little is always "clean", neat white - Gould's is not so "clean" and neat. Barring is slightly narrower in Little than in Gould's. Back and wings of Little are more green than the bronzy colour of Gould's (this is a good field character). Also Gould's has much more rufous in the tail than Little - obvious when the tail is spread, and probably best illustrated in the Slater guide. These differences are fairly obvious in the field but more obvious in the hand. A few years ago, I was looking at a tray of specimen's (Gould's) in the Qld museum - all specimens underparts up. There

were two Little in it and you could pick them from metres away. It was almost like Grey Butcherbirds amongst a tray of Pied Butcherbirds!

In my area local here in NE Qld (Mt-Molloy-Mareeba), Gould's inhabits the riparian forest/rainforest lined creeks and gullies that run west from the ranges (GDR) (as well as the coastal strip east of the range). Here they parasitise Fairy Gerygone which inhabits the same areas and habitat - also

Large-billed Gerygone though this species is rare along these mostly dry creeks. These streams run through open tropical woodland dominated by Eucalypt species. This drier open forest is occupied by Little which parasitises White-throated Gerygones. I have never seen either bronze-cuckoo in the others habitat.

On the coastal strip (Wet Tropics), Gould's is very common. I doubt if Little (breeding race minutillus) gets into to that area - it seems as

though its range coincides with White-throated Gerygone mostly to the west of the Great Dividing Range. Both seem to vacate all areas from about March and April and return about September - at least the majority of the population anyway. However, the southern race of Little (barnardi) (SE Qld-NE NSW) is also a migrant and we see the odd Little up here in NE Qld through the cooler months - even on the coast - which is probably that race. This helps to confuse things a bit.

I have seen the so-called hybrid (between ruscatus and minutillus) along the rainforest lined creeks which Gould's inhabits but have never seen it out in the open country which Little inhabits which makes one wonder if it is only an age-stage of Gould's.

I remember the late Mervyn Goddard saying some years ago that newly hatched young of Little had flesh-coloured skin whereas the newly hatched young of Gould's had black

skin. That is an interesting and pretty strong indicator of the extent of difference between the two forms.

At this time of year my bet is that the bird you had at Cape Tribulation on the coast would be Gould's. They are very common there through the

scrubby-rainforested areas and through the mangroves. Later in the season (up till about March) almost all Large-billed Gerygone's nests will be parasitised. The gerygones do seem to get a brood away before the cuckoos arrive.

Hope that helps,  
Lloyd



**Thank you to**

**LLOYD NIELSEN**

and

[www.birding-aus.org](http://www.birding-aus.org)

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## Bits 'n' Pieces

### Funding

The BANQ committee agreed to assist in funding taxidermy work on 2 Cassowaries and a Wedge-tailed Eagle for the Museum of Tropical Queensland.

The museum estimates it will take approximately 4 days to skin and 'stuff' the three birds. The museum has limited funding to continue this work, which is mostly done by volunteers.

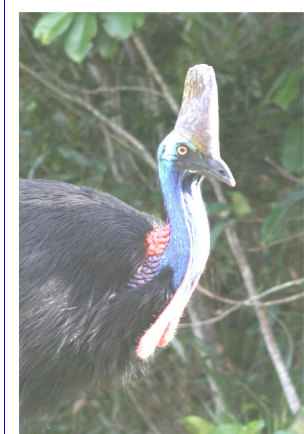


Photo courtesy of Karen Doyle

The birds will have a tag saying that their mounting was made possible through the assistance of BANQ. The stuffed birds will be used in displays to increase the education of the public about Cassowaries and Wedge-tailed Eagles as part of a long term conservation strategy.

### Birding for Beginners

This year the Birding for Beginners course was held at Emerald

Creek. It resulted in two new memberships but only one beginner and a visitor attended along with the presenter and John Seale. Other helpers were asked to stay away as we did not want to swamp the expected two beginners.



At Emerald Creek Falls beginning birders were shown how to eliminate most of the 750 Australian birds from their calculations when trying to identify a bird in front of them. By considering location, habitat and what the bird most resembled, they were able to narrow the possibilities down to one or two groups and ignore many within those groups. Only after they had observed behaviour, shape and size were the beginners encouraged to observe colour patterns. Of the many exciting birds identified, White-browed Robin, Lovely Fairywren and Rufous Owl were highlights.

**ALAN GILLANDERS**

### Something Different

A Buff-banded Rail is always an interesting sighting, and an unusual one during the dry.

The one I saw late the other afternoon was interesting for another reason.

I was in pig shooting mode, watching the remains of what was formerly a cow. I was waiting for a pig to arrive for his last supper. The cow had fallen into a hole in a tight gully and was partly obscured by vegetation. My position was above the action, about 20 metres back, and upwind.

As I watched, I saw a flash of something dark through the screen of veg. The binos revealed not a pig but a buff-banded rail, carefully picking around the carcass for maggots.

I had previously seen cattle egrets, ibis, scrub turkeys, wood ducks, and willy wagtails working carcasses for insects, but this was a new one.

And yes, the pig did arrive just on dark, and it was his last supper.

**BILL HOLMES**

## New Service for BANQ Members

### BANQ is offering a new borrowing service to members.

You may borrow the following books or equipment free of charge for a specified period and purpose. You will only pay the costs of postage.

**Bird callback** - we have several sets of MP3 players and 3 watt portable speaker, which have proved ideal for calling birds in during bird surveys. Using callback is a controversial technique, which is only justified under restricted circumstances and subject to approval.

**Megaphone** - we have a megaphone, which can be connected to an MP3 player to broadcast bird calls at high volume.

For a full list of books available for borrowing, please check the website: [www.birdsaustralianq.org](http://www.birdsaustralianq.org)

**GPS** - there are several Garmin Etrex GPS Units for loan. These units will give an accurate reading under rainforest canopy.

**Inverter 12V- 220V** - this unit will allow you to run 240V equipment from your car battery.

**2-way radios** - ideal if you are travelling in convoy or are working a few km apart from your partner in the bush.

**Binoculars** - Bushnell 7X40 binoculars.

**Photocopy service** - photocopies of information on specified birds from HANZAB and the Handbook of Birds of the World will be supplied for 10c per page plus postage.

**Field Guides** - various overseas field guides may be borrowed for a limited time for the cost of the postage.

### Keki Lodge, Madang, Papua New Guinea

#### 'The search for the Fire-maned Bowerbird'

The Fire-maned Bowerbird has a somewhat restricted range of hill forest in the Adelbert Mountains in Northern New Guinea, near Madang. In August we mounted a small expedition to look for this exciting bird. Luckily it can be very easily seen at the wonderful Keki Lodge. Keki Lodge is conveniently reached by driving about 90km West from Madang, then turning inland at the sign for about 30km. The famous 'road' up to the lodge is pretty good for most of the way and for the last part can be enjoyed by the adventurous 4 wheel drive enthusiast. It is situated at about 800m and is offers cool relief from the hot lowlands around Madang.

Keki Lodge comprises some basic but comfortable wooden huts, set in a large clearing in the forest. Moyang, your host, will go well out of his way to make sure you have a good stay. A feature of the clearing is a giant fig tree where birds come and go all day. You have the option of just lying back and watching the fig tree or strolling the trails set up in the forest.

The first day got off to a very good start. We awoke just as daylight was starting to break. Looking up into the fig tree the silhouette of a Vulturine Parrot was apparent. As the light improved we could admire this hulking great red & black parrot. Next up, a Grey-headed Goshawk, another New Guinea endemic, flew into the clearing. Then while we were looking at the Goshawk, the call went out, and yes a fantastic male Fire-maned Bowerbird flew round the clearing and came in to feed on the fig tree. Our search was over, but we decided to stay another four days for good measure.

Luckily we didn't go home straight

away as the next sighting was a party of four Blyth's Hornbills swishing past. The noise from their wings beating has to be heard to be believed and has been likened to a steam engine going past.

Birding from the clearing is much easier than going into the forest and we also enjoyed seeing various birds including Ochre-collared Monarch, Grey Crow, Dwarf Kingfisher, Eclectus & Red-cheeked Parrots, Western Black-capped & Dusky Lorys, Great Cuckoo-Dove along with a good selection of other colourful Fruit-Doves. Also seen were a good number of Honeyeaters with the least interesting being the very well named Plain Honeyeater. The Hornbills and

**Overall we saw about 53 species during our stay.**

Vulturine Parrots were around on and off all day and the Fire-maned Bowerbirds were regular visitor to the clearing.

All morning we enjoyed this to the background sound of Lesser Birds of Paradise calling and after a short walk in the forest we could look up to see these birds flying away with great haste. Moyang had built two very good hides next to display grounds of Magnificent Birds of Paradise. It was somewhat difficult to actually sit in the hides on a steep slope on a muddy hill side, without sliding out of the bottom of the hide. But at first light, once you had a good grip, it was possible to watch the Magnificent BOPs displaying at point blank range.

A different set of species can be

encountered inside the forest but great patience is required. New Guinea's forest birds are legendary for being almost painfully shy and difficult to see. Still we had a bit of success here with birds including Chestnut-bellied & Sooty Thicket-fantails, Banded Yellow Robin, Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Crinkle-collared Manucode and Palm Cockatoos. A couple of the super skulkers, Brown-collared Brush-turkey and Brown-headed Jewel-babbler, remained conveniently invisible, giving an excuse for another visit in future years.

We had a great time for four days and on the last day started to wonder about the owner of a strange call we had been hearing all the time right next to our hut. A study of the bird call player revealed that it was actually a Red-bellied Pitta. Some effort was required to actually see this bird but we were finally rewarded by a very good look as he hopped across the entrance road.

Overall we saw about 53 species during our stay. The only drawback would have to be that we all experienced a mild attack by chiggers and were still very itchy for a good week after. I would recommend more care than we took, via the use of chemical applications to try and dissuade these insects, that could be described as being like invisible mosquitos on steroids.

Keki Lodge suffers from being very difficult to contact as they have no phone/fax/electricity/email. To make a booking it is best to write about 2-3 months before you come to: Moyang Okira, Keki Lodge, c/o Madang Visitors Bureau, PO Box 1071, Madang, PNG. Tel: 675 8523 303 Fax: 675 852 3540

**DOMINIC CHAPLIN**

## Members Corner

**Imagine this....** I am working away in the little Taxidermy room at the Museum of Tropical Qld in Townsville with Roy McLean giving advice and have the Shrike Thrush nearly completely skinned. Body in one hand as I work the skin (inside out) over the skull.... A group of school children - I'd say about year 4 - rush to peer in the window and amid cries of "Gross" and "Cool" comes the question ....wait for it

### IS IT DEAD ?

I debated what to answer but decided that children are quite literal so agreed it was.

"Did you kill it" ?

"No - it was hit by a car" ...says I.

After more discussions on what I was doing , a bit difficult through

the glass fire wall....and more excited pushing for better views and more "Gross" and "Cool" type comments....came the next pearly....



Are **all** those birds in there dead?

I thought of telling them the birds were well trained to sit still without blinking while concentrating on communicating with people looking in the window..... but agreed they were in fact dead.

" Hey you guys, come and look at all the dead birds" was the excited cry. Who said children aren't interested in wildlife?

My little grebe waiting for his diorama...note his foot, it's drying flat so everyone can see the lobes on his feet.

## Interesting Sightings

Laughing Gull, 21/08 Alva Beach, near Ayr  
Square Tailed Kite, 22/08 East Palmerston  
Brown Cuckoo Dove, 23/08/200 Kelso,  
Townsville  
Pied-Imperial Pigeon, 05/09, West End,  
Townsville  
Common Greenshank, Latham's Snipe,  
06/09, Townsville Town Common  
Yellow Oriole, 12/09, Anderson Park,  
Townsville  
White-winged Triller, 12/09, Currajong,  
Townsville  
King Quail (Female), 14/09, Woree, Cairns  
Asian Dowitcher, 18/09, Cairns Esplanade  
Mangrove Robin, 19/09, Kingfisher Park,  
Julatten  
Wedge-tailed Eagle, 19/09, Cooya Beach,  
FNQ  
Asian Dowitcher, 21/09, Cairns Esplanade  
King Quail, 23/09 Tyto Wetlands, Ingham  
White-throated Nightjar, 24/09, Webb Drive,  
Garbutt:  
Southern Cassowary, 25/09, Daintree NP,  
Golden-shouldered Parrot, Red Goshawk,  
27/09, Musgrave Station  
Red-necked Avocet, 28/09, Cheatham  
Saltworks, Bowen  
Little Bittern, 29/09, Tyto Wetlands, Ingham  
Little Curlew, 29/09, West of Port Douglas  
Channel-billed Cuckoo, 29/09, Bowen  
Swinhoe's Snipe, 01/10, Lockhart River  
Treatment Plant  
Red Goshawk, 01/10, Iron Range National

Park  
Oriental Plover, 03/10, Pentland, Town Dam  
Broad-billed Sandpiper, 03/10, Cairns  
Esplanade  
Large-tailed Nightjar, 03/10, Redden Island,  
Cairns  
Dollarbird, 04/10, Townsville Town Common  
Plum-headed Finch, 04/10, Mt Low,  
Townsville  
Long-toed Stint, 12/10, Mount Isa Sewage  
Works  
Oriental Plover, Star Finch, Great-billed  
Heron, 15/10, Karumba,  
Carpentarian Grasswren, 16/10, McNamara  
Rd, west of Mount Isa  
Rufous-crowned Emu-wren, 16/10, Dajarra-  
Duchess Rd, Mount Isa  
Glossy Ibis, 18/10, Townsville Town Common  
Wood Sandpiper, 18/10, Weary Bay Tea tree  
swamp, Bloomfield  
Australian Pratincole, 24/10/2009, Townsville  
Town Common  
Buff-banded Rail, 27/10, The Strand,  
Townsville  
Pacific Golden Plover, 28/10 Tyto Wetlands,  
Ingham  
Eastern Yellow Wagtail, 02/11, Torrens Creek  
- Aramac Road  
White-throated Needletail, 03/11, Bayview  
Heights, Cairns  
White-throated Nightjar, 05/11, Anderson  
Gardens, Townsville  
Painted Button-quail, 08/11, Paluma

Township  
Eastern Yellow Wagtail, 16/11, Townsville  
Town Common  
Little Bittern, 17/11, Tyto Wetland, Ingham  
Oriental Cuckoo, 19/11, Atherton Township  
Oriental Cuckoo, 21/11, Townsville Town  
Common  
Oriental Pratincole, 21/11, Lake Moondarra,  
Mount Isa  
Blue-faced Parrot-Finch, 22/11, Butchers  
Creek  
Oriental Cuckoo, 26/11, Tyto Wetlands,  
Ingham  
Little Bittern, 28/11, Tyto Wetlands, Ingham  
Black-winged Monarch, 29/11, Finch's Bay,  
Cooktown  
Wood Sandpiper, 29/11, Masters Road,  
Toobanna

Observers: Andy Anderson, Adam Arnold,  
Tony Ashton, Greg Bortolussi, Niel Bruce,  
John & Carole Carpenter, Harry Cassidy,  
Alexandra Canton, Ian Davies, Paul Dodd,  
Tim Dolby, Tim Edgerton, Len and Chris  
Ezzy, Keith Fisher, Bob Forsyth, Dave  
Houghton, Matthew & Vanessa Hollow, Laurie  
& Hazel Jones, John Lowry, John Maddy,  
David Mitford, Matthew Morris, Greg Oakley,  
Jim O'Shea, Stuart Pickering, Ed Pierce, Del  
Richards, John Seale, Kath Shurcliff, Ray &  
Annette Sutton, TRBOC per Marleen Acton,  
Peter Valentine, Edwin Vella, Ruth Woodrow,  
Jon Wren



# NOTICE BOARD



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## NEW MEMBERS

### January 2010

- 9th ~ Cairns. **Shorebirds 2020 Summer Count.** Meet near the northern car park on The Esplanade at 3.15pm. Contact: Alan Gillanders 4095 3784 or 0408 953 786
- **Australia Day weekend birding** at Kingfisher Park, Julatten. Contact: Keith & Lindsay 4094 1263.

### February 2010

- 10th ~ Cairns. **Shorebirds 2020 Summer Count.** Meet on The Esplanade opposite the RSL at 4.30pm. Contact: Alan Gillanders 4095 3784 or 0408 953 786
- 20th ~ Cardwell. **BANQ Committee meeting**
- 21st ~ Lucinda. **Shorebirds 2020 Summer Count.** Meet in the car park at the jetty at 9am. Contact Ivor Preston [banq@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:banq@birdsaustralia.com.au) or 0439 062 640

### March 2010

- Date to be advised. Cairns. **Wave the Waders Goodbye**

### April 2010

- Easter ~ **Yorka Station campout** (provisional)

### May 2010

- May Day weekend ~ Pajingo Station (south of Charters Towers), **BANQ AGM and campout**

### August 2010

- 13th, 14th, 15th ~ Townsville, **Birds Australia Congress.**
- 16th-20th ~ Townsville, **campout at Crystal Creek** - see BA website for details.

### September

- 4th ~ Tablelands, **Crane Count.**

### November

Date to be advised. Mission Beach. **PIP Count.**  
Check the regional website for local information and events  
[www.birdsaustralianq.org](http://www.birdsaustralianq.org)

#### Southern Gulf Catchments Award to BANQ

Birds Australia North Queensland was awarded the prestigious Sarus Crane Award for environmental improvements in the Southern Gulf Catchments region in recognition of 'their continued volunteer engagement in recording population sightings for the Carpentarian and Kalkadoon Grasswrens in the Southern Gulf Catchment'. Regular readers of Contact Call will remember the call for volunteers to participate in these surveys to locate and document the occurrence of these species around Mount Isa. A well-deserved award, especially Graham Harrington for his efforts in organizing and running the surveys.



Rose Bouwens, Andrew Picone, Beth Cookson, Balgal Beach Holiday Units, Bronwen Scott, Linda Scott, Richard Pearson, Crater Lakes Rainforest Cottages, Hidden Valley Cabins, Sabastian Madarak

### FROM THE EDITOR:

**Thank you** for your valued contributions, happy birding and as always, I look forward to receiving your contribution to the next edition of **Contact Call**.

#### March newsletter deadline ~ 22 February 2010

Please send articles, advertisements, updates etc to:  
The Editor — [banq@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:banq@birdsaustralia.com.au)  
or c/- The Secretary, PO Box 37, Belgian Gardens Q 4810

## Birds Australia Membership

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

### Birds Australia North Queensland

Subscriptions:

\$75 Single \$55 Single Concession

\$119 Family \$96 Family Concession \$55 Library

Members receive four issues of the full-colour bird magazine **Wingspan** and four issues of the BANQ newsletter **Contact Call**.

Membership forms are available from the Secretary or send subscriptions directly to:

Birds Australia, Suite 2-05, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton, VIC 3053

You can also join directly through our web site:  
[www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au)

Check the regional website for local information and events  
[www.birdsaustralianq.org](http://www.birdsaustralianq.org)



## Birds Australia

CONSERVATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

*Thank you ...*

Birds Australia North Queensland is very grateful for the support of the **Honourable Lindy Nelson-Carr MP** the Minister for Communities, Disability Services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Youth, for printing *Contact Call*.