

Superb Fruit-Dove

Ptilinopus superbus

The Superb Fruit-Dove is a small colourful pigeon of the tree canopy. It is a compact bird, with short rounded wings and a short tail. The male has a purple crown, an orange hind-neck, a blue-black breast band that separates a grey upper breast from white under parts. These are partly barred green and the rest of the body is green. The green tail has grey tips. The female is green, with a grey breast and white under parts. There is a smallish purple patch on the crown. Young birds resemble females but lack the purple crown patch. The Superb Fruit-Dove is often difficult to distinguish from the Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove, *P. regina*, when high in the forest canopy. The Superb Fruit-Dove is found along the coast and nearby ranges of Queensland and New South Wales, south to Moruya. It is found in rainforests, rainforest margins, mangroves and wooded stream margins. They are thought to migrate to New Guinea in winter, but little is known of its movements, or the reasons for its southerly flights, sometimes as far south as Tasmania. Superb Fruit-Doves are arboreal (living entirely in trees) and feed almost exclusively on fruit, mainly in large trees. They have a large gape, which allows them to swallow bulky items. They build a flimsy platform nest of twigs in bushy trees from 5-30m above the ground. The female incubates the eggs at night while the male incubates by day. As they often move at night, many young birds fly into windows of buildings during their north-south movements. In the weeks after Cyclone Yasi, many of these birds were displaced from the rainforest and appeared in Townsville gardens, along with Wompoo Fruit-Doves, feeding on palm fruits.

Photo pages 1, 6 and 12 courtesy of Peter Valentine.
Information sourced from Birds in Backyard—
www.birdsinbackyards.net

Superb Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus superbus*



Distribution map for *Ptilinopus superbus*



Did you know?

Fruit-Doves are among the most important seed dispersers in Australian tropical and sub-tropical forests.

From the Convenor's Desk

Barring exceptional circumstances this will be my last column under this title. Thank you for the privilege of leading the Birds Australia community in north Queensland over the last three years. I have worked with a most enthusiastic and supportive committee and wish to acknowledge their efforts. Ivor Preston has been a great support as Secretary and deputy. We are very lucky that he has agreed to accepting nomination to the Convenor's post. Harry Cassidy has kept firm control of our finances as Treasurer for many years but is now heading south. This leaves the positions of Secretary and Treasurer vacant. The committee meets four times a year, mostly in Cardwell, as this lies in the middle of our east coast members. If you feel able to contribute to the organisation in this way please contact one of the committee members to gain further information. I am sure any of us will be willing to nominate you if you put your hand up.

We have had a little extreme weather here recently and to those of you who have had their lives disrupted by it I send my condolences. If there is something we can do to help I hope you feel free to ask. It has even impacted on committee meetings. We conducted the March one very successfully by using Skype from Dominic's office in Cairns and Karen and Ivor's home in Townsville.

The talk of the BA / BOCA merger has been occupying a lot of time and thought at and between committee meetings. It is our aim to make the merger, if it happens, as smooth as possible.

The Annual General Meeting this year will be held in Yungaburra with a program of workshops, bird watching and presentations. We'll have a shared evening meal on the Saturday. I hope to see you there.

Wishing you happy birding surprises,

Alan Gillanders



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS • 2011



Bird lists and brochures

for North Queensland birds
can be found on our BANQ website
www.birdsaustralianq.org



Eremaea Birds

A free birding atlas to which anyone can contribute.

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BANQ Annual General Meeting

The **Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Birds Australia North Queensland** will take place at Yungaburra on the Atherton Tableland on the long weekend of Saturday 30 April to Monday 2 May 2011.

The AGM is important as it takes place just before the Annual General Meetings of Birds Australia and BOCA (Bird Observers and Conservation Australia) when the proposed merger of the two organisations will be put to the vote.

A varied and interesting program is planned and several local businesses are making us welcome in Yungaburra by special offers for accommodation, food and other services (see the website for more details www.birdsaustralianq.org).

The Community Hall, Cedar Street, Yungaburra, has been booked on Saturday 30 April and Sunday 1 May as the venue for the AGM, any social activities and the



starting point for expeditions. The map on the left shows the location of the Community Hall in Yungaburra. Yungaburra is located on the Gillies Highway which connects Gordonvale on the Bruce Highway with Atherton on the Kennedy Highway.

The photo above shows the Community Hall in Cedar Street.

[See you there for all the fun!!](#)

The Weekend Program (as always—check the website for last minute changes)

Saturday 30 April 2011

- 7:00 am** birding at Lake Barrine
- 10:30 am** morning tea Community Hall, Yungaburra
- 11:00 am** presentation in the Community Hall by Sandy Gilmore, ecologist with Bush Heritage, on the survey methodology being used at Yourka Station
- 12:30 pm** lunch at the Community Hall - BYO lunch supplies - or purchase locally
- 1:00 pm** workshop exercise on survey methodology at Petersen Creek, Wallaby Track and Cemetery, Yungaburra
- 3:00 pm** free time
- 4:00 pm** AGM at Community Hall
- 6:00 pm** shared meal and presentation at Community Hall by [Dominic Chaplain](#) on Birds of India

Sunday 1 May 2011

- 6:30 am** birding around Mt Hypipamee/Wondecla area - BYO morning tea and lunch
- 4:30 pm** analysis of Saturday's data by Sandy Gilmore, Community Hall
- 6:00 pm** dinner - community hall available for cooking
- 7:30 pm** presentation at Community Hall by [Ian Montgomery](#) on Costa Rican birds

Monday 2 May 2011

- 7:00am** excursion to Emerald Creek Falls

Project News

Mapoon Wader and Sea-bird Training

Because of the efforts of the Shorebirds 2020 leaders in north Queensland I was lucky enough to be invited to Mapoon on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula to conduct workshops there for the Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers. These people are funded through both State and Federal schemes to undertake monitoring work of endangered species including turtles and the removal of the dangerous rubbish that washes ashore from the clockwise currents of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Some of these items are a threat to our biodiversity and agriculture so are burnt to destroy hitch-hikers, while others like nets are removed so they can not be washed out to sea again, entangling turtle and other life.

Like many inexperienced wader watchers there was the temptation to say all the waders were the same and all the terns were different. With

classroom and field work the rangers lifted their skills. Now, not only do they differentiate between Knots and Sandplovers, they can spot the two Sandplover species. The various plumages of Little Tern no longer look like three or four species. It is expected that I'll return in October with someone from the Queensland Wader Study Group to reinforce their skills and confidence and gather more data.

While there I managed to get in a bit of recreational birding and racked up a total of 72 species in the four days. The Laughing and Blue-winged Kookaburras

woke me each morning in time to hear the Palm Cockatoo call before moving into the Terminalia tree by my bedroom. A Peregrine Falcon chasing Great Knot was a wonderful sight.

Alan Gillanders



 **Birds Australia**
CONSERVATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

 **The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.)**

 **JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA**

Australasian Ornithological Conference

29th September – 1st October, 2011
James Cook University, Cairns

The next AOC conference will be held at the Cairns Campus of James Cook University in Tropical North Queensland from 28 September – 1 October 2011 with the opening reception and registration beginning on 28 September. The 2011 AOC will comprise 3 days of oral presentations with a pre-conference mixer and registration on Wednesday 28 September at 5.00 pm.

Symposia and contributed papers on any topic are encouraged. However, in keeping with the Far North Queensland location presentations aligning with the theme of Ornithology in the Tropics are particularly welcomed.

We are now calling for abstracts for both spoken and poster presentations.

Registration: All registrations are being handled by JCU. Online registration is available.

Contact: Dr Brad Congdon, Organising Committee Chairman

Tel: 07 4042 1086 Email: aoc@jcu.edu.au

Web: <http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/whats-on/australasian-ornithological-conference.html>

Project News

Ruddy marvellous! turnstone flies 27,000 km – twice!!

Researchers from the Victorian Wader Study Group have just recaptured a Ruddy Turnstone which has completed a **27,000 km** round trip migration for the second time.

This is the first time a wader has been tracked with a geolocator on its complete migration in successive years. The bird had a one gram light sensor data logger (geolocator) attached to its leg. This device recorded where the bird was each morning and evening. In each year the device was attached to the bird in mid April on a beach at Flinders, Victoria, in southeast Australia.

Ruddy Turnstones are a small wader weighing less than 100 grams and spend the (austral) summer months on many of the beaches around Australia. They are one of the family of waders that migrate huge distances to Siberia in Russia to breed.

Researchers have used these data logging devices over the last two years to find out the key stopover locations which are so important for the birds to refuel on their long journey.

Members of the study group include Dr Clive Minton, Ken Gosbell, Penny Johns and Prof Marcel Klaassen (of Deakin University).

“The data retrieved so far shows that the birds generally start their northward

migration with an initial nonstop flight of around 7,600km in six days to Taiwan or adjacent regions” Dr Minton said.

“There they refuel on the tidal flats before moving north to the Yellow Sea and northern China. They then make a flight of over 5,000kms to the breeding grounds in northern Siberia, arriving in the first week of June.

“One of the interesting findings is that after breeding, the return journey shows considerable variation, no two birds following the same route. Some return through Asia while an amazing alternate route has been demonstrated by these new results.

This is a trans-Pacific route where the bird moves east to the Aleutian Islands off southwest Alaska before making the huge journey across the Pacific, stopping only once or twice before reaching Australia in early December.” The first record of this flight was in 2009 when the bird spent nearly two months in the Aleutians before setting off southward over the Pacific Ocean and making a nonstop flight of 7,800kms to Kirabati before making the 5,000km trip back to Flinders, Victoria. In 2010 the same bird undertook a similar incredible journey, this time

stopping off in the Marshall Islands and Vanuatu in the Pacific before returning to Australia.

Turnstones live up to 20 years and such a bird following this 27,000 km trans-Pacific route would have flown over 500,000 kilometres in its lifetime. Scientists from the Australasian Wader Studies Group of Birds Australia and Deakin University are still puzzling over why individual Ruddy Turnstones use such widely differing routes for their annual migrations. The study highlights the importance of key regions within the flyway. Scientists are concerned about the ability of these and similar birds to cope with the massive habitat changes occurring as a result of large reclamation and urban development projects. For us at Birds Australia’s Shorebirds 2020 programme these discoveries are big news as such a journey is big evidence of how critically important Australian wetlands are for healthy bird populations all around the Pacific.”

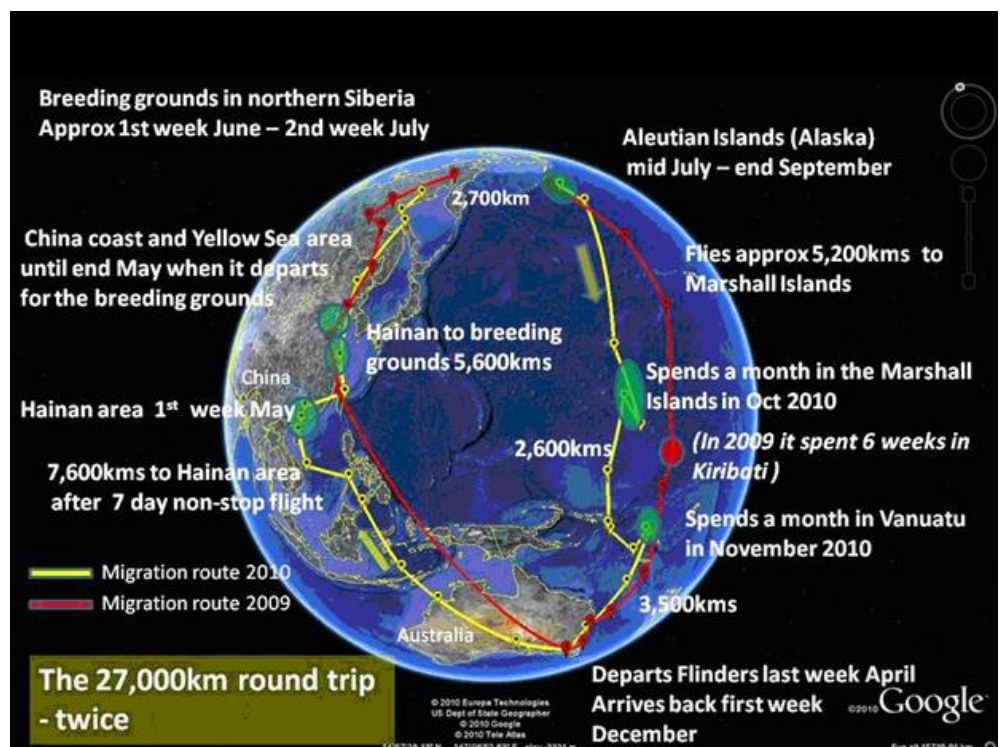
“Keeping these birds and their wetlands going is a task that Australia has taken on by signing the Ramsar Convention 40 years ago, and we are working hard to remind and help the government to fulfil this task.”

Shorebirds 2020 counters and volunteer survey.

We need the feedback from volunteers and counters contributing to Birds Australia’s Shorebirds 2020 project to further improve our work and secure a future for the program.

You could win a DVD just by completing the survey.

www.shorebirds.org.au



Project News

Important Bird Area ~ Pied Imperial-Pigeon Count Report

This year we had 15 counters, three less than last year, but we did welcome four locals to the team. The weather, once again was surprisingly favourable, as it had rained all morning but cleared just for us in the late afternoon! We all agreed that there could be much less enjoyable things to be doing on a Saturday afternoon than sitting on the beach on the Cassowary Coast.

This year we made the decision not to count at Clump Point due to low count numbers and the possibility that birds from other locations may be counted at Clump a second time.

The 2010 bird total was 1764, which was significantly lower than the 2009 total of 4340 birds. The number of other bird species was also down, with only 20 recorded.

As has become our custom, we celebrated the year with a get-together for dinner that night at a local Wongaling Beach restaurant.



PIP count results

	South	Wongaling	Clump Point	Bingal Bay	Garners	Total
2007	506	49	76	-	464	1095
2008	198	24	205	746	1154	2327
2009	1472	503	32	95	2238	4340
2010	831	146	DNC	105	682	1764

As a postscript, we extend our thoughts and best wishes to the locals who have suffered from the ravages of Cyclone Yasi, as the eye of this monster passed over this section of the coast, causing severe damage.

Thanks to Trish Pontynen for again organising this weekend and also to the counters who turned out to make the weekend a success. Put a note in your diaries to join us for the count in November 2011 and we look forward to seeing you there.

Ivor Preston

Australia Day Honours

On Australia Day 26 January 2011, **Margaret Thorsborne**, was named an Officer of the Order of Australia. She was one of only two Queenslanders and 16 Australians nationally to receive this level of award in the General (non-military) Division.

Margaret is a constant inspiration, through her energy, commitment and well grounded approach to tackling the big environmental issues of our time. She has had an active role in numerous organisations that have focused on the protection of the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics World Heritage Areas in north Queensland. Her selfless efforts are internationally recognised in working to preserve the unique and outstanding world heritage values of Hinchinbrook Island and its immediate environs.

Improving knowledge is a key aspect of Margaret's passion. Her love of the Brook Islands and the Pied Imperial Pigeon that annually migrate there to breed has been long in the making and well recognised. A long-term project initiated by Margaret and her late husband Arthur in the 1970's, travelling from the Gold Coast, monitored the recovery of the southern-most large colony of Pied Imperial Pigeons formerly known as Torresian Imperial Pigeons since their critical decline from illegal shooting in the 1960's. She has done everything, and more, that could be done: studied, reported, fought, gifted money, encouraged and educated. It is fitting that the inspirational efforts of this remarkable and amazing woman be recognised by the broad community.



Margaret Thorsborne

Trip Report

Australia Day Weekend Campout Report

The traditional BANQ Australia Day weekend campout was held the weekend before the actual Australia Day date of 26th January which was mid-week and so no long weekend this year. This shortened the normally three day event but some people managed to arrive a day or two before whilst others got caught out in some monsoonal flash flooding which stranded them overnight in Mt Molloy, we had 108mm in the rain gauge Saturday morning. Anyway by Saturday morning everyone had arrived and several of us managed a morning walk around the lodge grounds and surrounding area in between the rain showers. After breakfast we headed out to Wessel Road near Abattoir Swamp on the way to Mt Molloy, crossing the flooded causeway at Bushy Creek which was 0.35m over the road. The open woodland area amongst the Melaleuca swamps provided many good birds, including seven species of Honeyeater - Yellow-spotted, Yellow-faced, Yellow, Brown-backed, Dusky, White-throated and Macleay's. Some of the other birds seen were; A Channel-billed Cuckoo flying over, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Grey Whistler,



Grey Whistler

Leaden Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Eastern Yellow Robin and Mistletoebird. Several dragonflies were around the grassy swamps including, Sapphire Flutterer, Palemouth, Painted Grasshawk and Chalky Percher.



Chalky Percher – male

Full bird list from Wessel Road can be found - <http://www.ereмаea.com/Lists.aspx?List=75896>

We then thought we would go into Mt Molloy and take the back road into Julatten rather than go through the Bushy Creek causeway. This was also flooded in places and totally over the road at Wetherby Station with at least 0.6m deep water. This stopped us from continuing but not birding as there were many birds taking advantage of the displaced insects. Amongst the hawkers was Australian Swiftlet, White-breasted Woodswallow, Rainbow Bee-eater along with Brown-backed Honeyeater, Magpie-lark, Willie Wagtail and some very smart Golden-headed Cisticola in full breeding plumage. Also swimming around in the ponding over the road was Pacific Black Duck and Wandering Whistling-Duck. The afternoon was a time to relax before the evening communal dinner which as always was excellent, thanks to all the cooks.

After the evening meal we had a quick spotlighting trip around the lodge grounds finding Northern Long-nosed Bandicoot, Giant White-tailed Rat, Spectacled Flying-fox, Coggers Frog, Jungguy Frog, Northern Sedge Frog and Red Frog.

Early Sunday morning the weather had cleared and the sun had come out so we went for a morning bird walk, highlights included a Royal Spoonbill flying over, which was a rare sighting of a waterbird at the moment, 3 Papuan Frogmouth roosting together and a Green Tree Snake in the orchard. After breakfast we drove up to Mt Lewis and managed to get to the 10km clearing without any problems, here we found several Blue-faced Parrot-Finch feeding on the grass seed.

Trip Report continued

Australia Day



Other good sightings were Fernwren, Atherton Scrubwren, Mountain Thornbill, Bridled Honeyeater, Bower's Shrike-thrush, Rufous Fantail, a male Victoria's Riflebird and Grey-headed Robin. An Azure Kingfisher flew past at the clearing into an area of ponding, this was unexpected at this altitude of 950m. It was great weather sunny, no wind and clear, not often Mt. Lewis has these conditions. A large dragonfly was of interest and photographed posing on a dead grass stem and also perched on Darlene's cap!



After lunch some members left to go home whilst others just relaxed. Late afternoon a Noisy Pitta was seen with a juvenile foraging in the remains of a dead tree which had fallen down across the road into the Lodge. The juvenile was making a single note call whilst the adult sat up on a log watching a Black Butcherbird which was hanging around.

In the evening we went over to Geraghty Park to see the Eastern Barn Owl. One bird emerged from the usual daytime roost whilst another bird was seen entering their nest tree hollow which may mean they are breeding. This rounded off a great few days despite the wet start we managed to get out and about. There is some suggestion that the weekend should be moved to later in the year as we have had two wet years running but the ten years before that were relatively dry.

Full list of species from Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge for the weekend can be found – <http://www.ereamae.com/Lists.aspx?List=75898>

The total bird list for the weekend was 86 species seen and 8 heard which was pretty good seeing as we had to contend with the monsoonal weather.

This story (and others) more photos too, can be found - <http://kingfisherparkbirdwatchers.blogspot.com/2011/01/birds-australia-north-queensland.html>



Situated 1½ hours north of Cairns in Far North Queensland we offer a variety of accommodation options:- Self-contained units-single or two bedroom, bunkhouse, camping and powered caravan sites.

The property is a rainforest wildlife sanctuary catering for birdwatchers and naturalists.

We are central to a variety of habitats and provide bird species lists, area maps and library. Morning walks and evening spotlighting by arrangement.

Special group packages 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

Cyclone Yasi Stories

Just before lunch, four days after their remote 60,000ha wildlife sanctuary was trashed by Cyclone Yasi, Pam Hensler, was sitting disconsolately at her desk when she heard voices. She literally didn't believe her ears and continued tapping away at the computer. Pam's husband, Peter, manages the Australian Wildlife Conservancy's Mt ZeroTaravale Sanctuary, next door to the Army's Townsville Field Training Area at High Range. They sat out the cyclone in their house, 16kms off the Paluma-Ewan road. On Thursday morning, after the worst of the storm had passed, they managed to make contact with neighbours to ensure they were okay and, importantly, with their children and families in Weipa and Cairns. Then the phone and the internet cut out and they were isolated. "There was no damage to the house, but the trees took a pounding," Peter said. They lost two old sheds -

one was blown down and another was flooded when the creek came up. Their "driveway" with four crossings of the same creek was obliterated by fallen trees - big trees. The tractor was useless - a broken hydraulic line and not enough oil to replenish the machine, meant it was forlornly standing in the middle of the fallen trees on the driveway. And the satellite phone didn't work. Pam said she had shed a few tears on the Saturday following the cyclone when isolation and the sight of the devastated vegetation in every direction overwhelmed her. The heaviest rain they had experienced in eight years on the mountain brought floodwaters to within 50m of the house, something they never imagined would happen. More than 500mm fell in 24 hours but Peter wasn't sure of an exact figure because the guage overflowed a couple of times before he could get to it. "We pushed an empty tank from the edge of the creek up to the house to keep it out of the way when the creek broke its banks," Pam said. "We didn't even think about shifting a tractor there. "About three hours later, I looked out the window and the water was up over the seat of the tractor." Pam was "right as rain" again on Sunday... except for hearing voices. "I heard them again and realised I wasn't imagining it," she said. She and Peter went outside and saw two soldiers less than 30m away walking in over the rise. "I was just so happy to see them, I could have kissed them," she said. "I told my friend later, I was proud to be an Australian. "We weren't just numbers - we mattered enough for these fellows to come all that way to make sure we were alright." WO2 Chris Renall and CPL Luke Gullison 4Regt RAA, headed a team of 10, including recovery mechanics, fitters and craftsmen. They had already helped to clear the main supply routes through Townsville and were sent north of the city to clear roads and check on remote properties. WO2 Renall said the area between Paluma and Hidden Valley had been particularly hard hit. They had a heavy recovery vehicle, two Unimogs and chainsaws and even then, the going was incredibly slow. "The vegetation across the road was so



GOOD TO SEE YOU... Peter Hensler and CPL Luke

thick, we were only able to make 500m headway an hour at one stage," he said. The 4Regt team cleared access to the reservoir at Paluma, allowing a repair team to get in to fix a major leak. There were lighter moments, too, as the team cut, dragged and sweated their way up the mountain. "At one stage, when all our saws had stopped, I suddenly heard chainsaws coming from the scrub in front of us," WO2 Renall said. That was about 9am on Saturday and an hour later, he was able to shake hands with a farmer, who with a gang of men, was cutting his way down the range at the same time the Army was working its way up. "It was very rewarding," WO2 Renall said. "They were happy to see us and we felt like we were really doing some good." The team was made welcome and Paluma local Warren Ryle and his family threw open their house for half the team on the Saturday

night while the remainder drove back to Townsville for supplies. "They fed us and gave us a bed and that meant we could get started at first light the next day," WO2 Renall said. When they reached the entrance to Mt Zero-Taravale, they thought they had a 10km trek to check on the inhabitants. WO2 Renall and CPL Gullison set off while the rest of the team continued along the Paluma-

Ewan Road. "After 10kms according to the GPS, there was no sign of life," WO2 Renall said. Having plenty of daylight left, they decided to press on and after another 6kms struggling over and through fallen trees, they found the house. "We were a bit worried about what we might find," WO2 Renall said. "We passed the tractor with the hydraulics blown out and we couldn't raise them on the phone, so we were relieved to find they were okay." Pam rustled up corned beef sandwiches and a cup of coffee before the duo walked back out and sent word back to Paluma that the Henslers were okay. Peter was able to get out the next day by chopper to buy hydraulic oil in Ingham and repair the tractor. "Even then, it was hit and miss with the sat phone," he said. But eventually, he made contact with the chopper pilot who said he would be there on Monday. "That was good enough for me," Peter said. With the tractor repaired, and the help of a timber cutter, the road has been cleared and the Henslers are back on their feet. Pam said they were well used to dealing with the Army, because their property borders Star Valley Station, part of the TFTA at High Range. "Peter liaises about burnoffs and land management with the environment officers at 3Bde," she said. "And, of course, we hear the noise when they hold exercises there." The couple's house is about 8kms as the crow flies from the live fire range.

Article and photo courtesy Northern Services Courier

What happened after Cyclone Yasi to our Townsville Backyard Birds

We have been keeping a weekly record for Birds in Backyards since October 2006 and over that time have seen 58 species to date using our garden (flyovers are not counted). Our block is small (900 m²) but bushy, with only 4 larger trees in the back garden.

In mid January we returned to a very wet Townsville after an absence of 10 weeks and just in time to prepare for **two** cyclones. The bird activity in the garden was normal for this time of year with on average 15 active species. The first cyclone had no effect on Townsville, passing well south of us. However, Cyclone Yasi on 2/3 February was something else altogether. The wind build up during the day seemed slow and insidious, with the occasional gust to remind you of why you were doing all the preparation work. As the afternoon wore on, it was evident the birds were also aware of something big about to happen. Their numbers started to drop away, but where did they go? The exotics like Sparrow and Common Mynah could be seen sheltering under eaves, but no sign of any native birds.

The cyclone peak was reached around midnight, with winds gusting in the vicinity of 200kph and dumping 205mm of rain in our gauge. Conditions as you can imagine, were not ideal for small roosting birds. At daybreak, the winds were still gusting around 90kph, but that seemed manageable. We looked out into the backyard and saw that all the tops of the trees had been torn off and littered the garden. Then we noticed a lone White-gaped Honeyeater low down in the outer branches of a bush hanging on until the gust dropped and then hovered and fed at a nearby flower as though this was all a normal day. The Common Mynahs were also back on the driveway swaggering around. Their take off in 90kph gusts were interesting; a little jump up and then they shot off backwards, out of control! They are such larrikins, we swore they were doing the takeoff just for the thrill of the ride.

The winds in Townsville were strong enough to up root an estimated 68,000 mature trees not to mention the stripping of leaves, flowers and fruit from those remaining. The feeding routine of many birds was severely disturbed. In our garden we were lucky enough to have flowering callistemon and calliandra as well as fruiting euodia and palms still intact. Over the next 10 days we had 30 species visit the garden. These included Wompoo Fruit-Dove and Superb Fruit-Dove looking for fruit: a Red-backed Fairy-Wren, blown from who knows where; seven species of honeyeater and Rainbow and Scaly-breasted Lorrikeets on the flowers; Dollarbirds, Rainbow Bee-eaters and White Breasted Woodswallows, all using the bare tops of our trees to rest. A Barking Owl also

visited to sound out the new environment, but sadly only stayed one night.

The response of the flowering shrubs has been amazing, with all the callistemons flowering within two weeks and then our Golden Penda flowered and this has attracted all the nectar lovers. There is no science in our observations, but we did observe birds doing whatever it takes to survive and we are glad to be able to provide some sanctuary for the 30 species that turned up.

Ivor Preston & Karen Doyle



Wompoo Fruit-Dove

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There's something for everyone—it's definitely worth a look around the site. And remember to tell your friends about the Birds In Back Yards Program. Here the novice birder can find a wealth of information and make identification of many of our more common species.

www.birdsinbackyards.net

Cyclone Yasi Bird News

As we all know, large areas of cassowary habitat between Cardwell and Innisfail and at Mission Beach were severely damaged by Cyclone Yasi on 2 and 3 February 2011 making the rainforest fruits that cassowaries feed on in short supply. To supplement their diet without making them dependent on handouts, DERM has set up feeding stations to support cassowaries in the forest environment. Feed stations are supplied with food on a regular basis and amounts of food provided are varied to ensure natural foraging continues. BANQ is contributing \$10,000 and seeking a grant for further funding towards the cassowary feeding program. To date:

- ~ DERM had established 98 feed stations from the Cardwell Range north to Flying Fish Point, and
- ~ 7000kg of fruit had been dropped by helicopter and placed at feeding stations.
- ~ Despite the wet weather, crews have been able to access most feed stations from their work bases at Innisfail, Cardwell and Garners Beach.
- ~ Regrettably, one cassowary was hit by a vehicle and killed on the Mission Beach -Tully Road. This is a timely reminder to drive with care in cassowary habitat.
- ~ Over 200 hours of volunteer time has been committed to the program and over 30 landholders are supporting feed stations.

Volunteers are still needed at Garner's Beach and Innisfail QPWS to help cut-up fruit. Please register your interest with



Ms Jodie Eden,
Community Education Ranger,
Email jodie.eden@derm.qld.gov.au
Telephone 4091 8102
Mobile 0427117854

You are reminded **not to feed** these birds, for your own safety. Cassowaries that come to expect food from humans can become **aggressive and dangerous**.

Hold on to me

During the hours leading up to the arrival of Cyclone Yasi a resident of Cardwell noticed a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets take up a perching station adjacent to a window. In the process of time they perched together in preening position and "locked" their bills together. From that time they appeared to go into a trance-like situation in readiness for the big blow. After an hour the resident photographed them at which time she disturbed them and they flushed. This would appear to be a safety strategy in a cyclone situation not recorded before.



Del. Richards

Regurgitating Koels

With the passing of Cyclone Yasi, some birds have been easier to see because of the reduction in leaf density on many trees. One such bird is the Eastern Koel, which is very common in Townsville gardens. While sitting in my garden, I noticed a male Koel (a tail feather break indicated the same individual) over a few days going through a sequence of behaviour that caught my attention. The bird would fly to one of the birdbaths, take 6 – 8 gulps of water and then fly up to perch in a tree. After a few minutes he would start to shimmer his feathers, with the throat hackles coming out, accompanied by a low murmuring sound and then it would regurgitate a palm fruit seed. This regurgitation would be quickly repeated up to about 5 times. The bird would then fly off to a neighbour's fruiting palm and start feeding again. Then the sequence would start over again. I saw this same behaviour a few times over the next couple of weeks. I assumed when it stopped that the palm fruits had finished and the bird moved on. I had seen a female Eastern Koel do this regurgitating last year, but not with the drinking. The photographs show the male in the act.



An Australian First in a Member's Garden

On the morning of February 9, my friend Terry Heidenreich rang to ask if I was interested in a strange bird in his garden. Now, Terry is a very good birder so my system went to high alert.

He said it is a thrush or that type of bird, hops quickly across the ground and will sit still for some length of time. It appeared to be hunting for worms. He gave me a description going on what he had seen and was confident it was not in his Australian or PNG field guides. Despite not having eaten breakfast I jumped into the car and headed straight round. Terry showed me where he had seen the bird a couple of times and I settled down to wait. I later went for a walk around his property and along the road checking out areas of similar length grass. Eventually I left bird-less. Well not really but without having seen the target.

Terry rang a little later to say he had seen the bird in the same area again and that the bill sometimes looked yellow and sometimes yellow with a dark tip. Michelle, his wife told me the sides of the breast were yellow-brown. He saw the bird again in the afternoon so round I went yet again. Going on Terry's description the best we could do was to consider ***Eyebrowed Thrush***. This time I got glimpses of the bird as it hopped through ankle length grass on the edge of longer grass. It did look like a small thrush. Although my views were really poor and my attempts to photograph the bird equally so I was able to confirm many of the field marks. Having looked at pictures on the

web I thought there was a good chance that this was a first year male Eyebrowed Thrush and put out an alert to birders locally and interstate. From the next morning the pilgrimage began as twitchers and enthusiasts came from around the country to view this Australian first. Some were incredibly lucky and saw the bird almost as soon as they got out of their car but others had to make a number of trips before they saw it. Yet others went home disappointed.



Photo courtesy of Martin Cachard

After it was thought to have gone I took guests to the garden to see the breeding Bushhens. I was relating the story of one lucky birder and pointed in the direction of its most frequent sighting. My guest put up his binoculars and said, "Oh yes." As he had been kidding around most of the day, I waited for him to stop so I could show him the Bushhens. After a longer time than was funny I put my glasses to my eyes and there was the thrush sitting quietly in the grass.

How lucky that this little bird

should turn up in the garden of a birdwatcher who had the confidence to raise the alarm that this was something unusual. Many thanks to Michelle and Terry for welcoming so many birders into their yard and even providing refreshments.

Alan Gillanders

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BIRDLINE

for details of interesting sightings, go to Birdline North Queensland at www.eremaea.com and search archives.

Coming Events

Birds Australia Annual General Meeting and Conservation Forum

Hosted by BA Western Australia

Saturday 21st May 2011

At the University of Western Australia

Woolnough Lecture Theatre

AGM 8:30 – 10:30am

This year's AGM will take a vote on the proposed merger between Birds Australia and BOCA. Have your say on our future, and make sure you vote. More details on the voting process will be posted to members in late March 2011. The AGM runs from 8:30 - 10:30am

Conservation Forum 11:00am – 5:00pm

The Keynote address for the Conservation Forum will be presented by Professor Lyn Beazley, Professor of the School of Animal Biology at UWA, and Chief Scientist of Western Australia.

The Conservation Forum program is divided into three sessions:

- ***Establishment and management of IBAs in south west Western Australia***
- ***IBAs and community actions for conservation***, Includes launch and viewing of *Steps to Recovery*, a BAWA sponsored film on Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo
- ***IBAs facing multiple threats***

Each session features presentations by distinguished Australian scientists and researchers. There are 36 IBAs in the south west of Western Australia. Our challenge is to find the way forward to conserve these IBAs and help save our threatened species. For details: <http://birdsaustralia.com.au/whats-on/conservationforum.html>

The 2010 **Serventy Medal** will be presented to Professor David Lindenmayer.

Afterwards a Dinner will be hosted at Hackett Hall. A choice of birding outings will also be offered on Sunday 22 May.

THE PROPOSED MERGER OF BA AND BOCA

Dealing with the proposed merger of Birds Australia and Bird Observation and Conservation Australia is high on the list of priorities for both of these organisations. Both the BA Council and the BOCA Board are fully supportive of this move. From the Birds Australia February e-News:

Dial M for Merger

At our Annual General Meetings on 21 May all Birds Australia and Bird Observation & Conservation Australia members will be asked to vote on the proposed merger. In late March 2011 we will send all members a Voting Pack with details about the proposed merger and how to vote, supplementing the information already sent out to members over the last year. Once members have made their decision there are two ways to vote - either in person at the AGM in Perth or through a proxy by filling out and returning a proxy form.

On the proxy form members can indicate whether they wish to vote For or Against the proposed merger. They then nominate a proxy to deliver that vote on their behalf at the meeting.

As we approach the AGMs in May, more information will be posted on our website at www.birdsaustralia.com.au/merger. The Birds Australia AGM is on Saturday from 8:30am-10:30am and will be followed by the Conservation Forum





NOTICE BOARD



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Contact

email: banq@birdsaustralia.com.au

PO Box 37

Belgian Gardens Q 4810

New Members

Lesley & Ross Clark, Kerry Kelly,

Kelvin Turner, Mark Spagnolo,

Welcome to BANQ. Check out our Calendar of Events and come along and take part in all our activities. Keep yourself up to date go to the BANQ website .

Calendar of Events

April

- **30 April-1 May ~ Weekend Activities & AGM at Yungaburra. See P3 for more details.** There will be lots of discussion about the BA / BOCA Merger. Local businesses are offering discounts. See the website for more details.

May

- **7 May ~ Birding for Beginners workshop, Georgetown.** Contact Alan Gillanders mobile 0408 953 786 or alan@alanswildlifetours.com.au

September

- **Annual Crane Count**—date tba.
- **30 Sept-1 Oct ~ Australian Ornithological Conference, JCU, Cairns.** See P2 for more details and website.

November

- **PIP Count**—date tba.

The BANQ website is regularly updated ~ please check the website for the latest information, bird lists and events

www.birdsaustralianq.org

THANK YOU

from the editor

It's always exciting to receive your contribution to Contact Call and such a privilege to be able to share your birding stories with our readers I wish you successful birding.

June newsletter deadline

~ 22 May 2011

