

# ConTact Call

*Birds Australia North Queensland  
Quarterly Newsletter*



Issue: Palm Cockatoo

June 2011

The **Palm Cockatoo** (*Probosciger artemimus*) is a large black parrot of the cockatoo family. It is the only member in subfamily Microglossinae and the only member of monotypicgenus, *Probosciger*. Its unique position within the cockatoo family has been confirmed by molecular studies. It was originally described by German naturalist Gmelin in 1788. Its specific name *artemimus* is the Latin superlative adjective for *arter* "black", hence "very black" or "blackest". It is the earliest offshoot from the ancestors of what has become the cockatoo family.

The Palm Cockatoo is 56-64cm in length and weighs 910-1,00g. It is one of the largest cockatoo species in Australia. It is a distinctive bird with a large crest and has one of the largest bills of any parrots. This powerful bill enables them to not only eat very hard nuts and seeds, but it also enables males to break off thick sticks from live trees to use for a drumming display. The bill is unusual, as the lower and upper mandibles do not meet for much of its length, allowing the tongue to hold a nut against the top mandible while the lower mandible works to open it. It has a distinctive red cheek patch that changes colour when the bird is alarmed or excited.

The Palm Cockatoo is distributed in lowland rainforests and woodlands of northern Cape York, Queensland and is also found in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.



The bird has a large and complex vocal repertoire, including many whistles and even a 'hello' call that sounds surprisingly human-like. It has a unique territorial display where the bird (typically the male) drums with a large (ie up to 3cm diameter, 15cm long) stick or seed pod against a



*Palm Cockatoo (Probosciger artemimus)*

Mungkan Kandja, Cape York Peninsula, Northern Queensland, 4 June 2010

104776 © Ian Montgomery birdway.com.au

dead bough or tree, creating a loud noise that can be heard up to 100m away. After drumming, the male occasionally strips the drum-tool into small pieces to line the nest. They only lay one egg every second year and have one of the lowest breeding success rates reported for any species of parrot. Off-setting this is their very long life-span. Breeding takes place inside tree hollows that look like standing pipes. The Palm Cockatoo is still relatively common in Cape York, but is threatened by habitat loss. It is currently evaluated as Least Concern on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species <http://www.iucn.org/>.

*Photos courtesy of*

*Ian Montgomery - [www.birdway.com.au](http://www.birdway.com.au)*

*and Christina Zdenek - [www.fennerschool.anu.edu.au](http://www.fennerschool.anu.edu.au)*

*Information for this article sourced from Wikipedia  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palm\\_Cockatoo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palm_Cockatoo)*

## From the Convenor's Desk

As the new Convenor, I would like to thank Alan Gillanders for his leadership of the group over the last three years as well as continuing on in the role of Deputy Convenor. I also wish to thank Harry Cassidy for his long service as Treasurer for the group and wish him all the best for his future endeavours in Southern Queensland. The 2011/12 committee includes two new members Ian Nortcott as the Treasurer and Murray Hunt as the Secretary. I welcome them both on board and thank them for taking up the positions. Elsewhere in this edition they have introduced themselves. You will see that Sandi Oswald is our Activities Coordinator. Sandi is working with the committee to develop an interesting program for you and when we get some details finalised you will be advised by e-News and as usual, you should check the BANQ website at regular intervals for any updated events.

The big challenge for the group in the next six months is to implement the merger between BA and BOCA at the regional level. If you have any thoughts or suggestions on how we should organise ourselves in North Queensland, the committee would welcome your contact. Please e-mail or write to the secretary at the addresses provided in this edition.

We recently travelled to Baradine in New South Wales where we were part of the BA Northern NSW group's Easter Campout and AGM. It was a valuable experience to learn first hand how another BA group operates and the things they do as a group. Like all coastal based areas, the pressures of development cause great concern over habitat loss. We also enjoyed the bird watching in the Pilliga Scrub. One of the local BA members has devoted a lifetime to promoting birding in the area. As a result the locals have produced a very useful brochure called "Bird Routes of Baradine and the Pilliga".

Remember to get out and enjoy the birds.

**Ivor Preston**



Check the  
BANQ website for updated  
calendar events

[www.birdsaustralianq.org](http://www.birdsaustralianq.org)

## It's Yes !

Birds Australia and Bird Observation & Conservation Australia merger – it's YES!

At the AGMs on 21 May, members of Birds Australia and Bird Observation & Conservation Australia (BOCA) voted on whether our two organisations should merge. For the merger to go ahead, at least 75% of all Birds Australia members who voted and at least 75% of all BOCA members who voted needed to vote for the merger.

Members of both organisations voted for the merger of Birds Australia and BOCA to create BirdLife Australia. Over 93% of those who voted from BOCA voted for the merger and over 95% of those who voted from Birds Australia voted for the merger.

A combined total of 4517 Birds Australia and BOCA members voted on the resolution, with 35% of Birds Australia members voting and over 50% of BOCA members voting. This is the biggest response to a proposed resolution that either organisation has ever received. A huge thank you to you all for being part of this process – and welcome to your new organisation - BirdLife Australia!

Over the next six months we will be keeping you updated through monthly bulletins on the Birds Australia and BOCA merger web pages. These updates will be summarised in the September and December issues of Wingspan and the August and November issues of the The Bird Observer and via Birds Australia's monthly e-News.

## Inside this issue

- From the Convenor's Desk
- BANQ Committee
- **Project News**
  - ~ Black-throated Finch Report
  - ~ Black-throated Finch count
  - ~ Cassowary news
  - ~ Fawn-breasted Bowerbird
- **Other News**
  - ~ Endangered bird uncovered
- **Members Corner**
  - ~ Paluma luck
- **Bit 'n' Pieces**
  - ~ Technology
  - ~ Be alert to the grasses
- **Notice Board**
  - ~ Calendar of Events
  - ~ New Members

# BA Comings and Goings

## BANQ Committee

### Secretary—Murray Hunt

Murray has been involved in the tourism industry for more than a decade, working at some of the premier locations around Australia including Kakadu, Uluru, Cape York, Kangaroo Island, and O'Reilly's Guesthouse. He has a passion for bird conservation and has been involved with an eclectic range of birds including Kakapo and Black Robin in NZ. He now owns and operates Daintree Boatman Nature Tours, formerly known as Chris Dahlberg's Daintree River Cruise. In his spare time he is most often found watching AFL, playing poker, listening to Pink Floyd, reading a best-seller or walking on Four Mile Beach.

### Treasurer—Ian Northcott

I have always been an avid admirer of birds. I completed formal studies in ecology and ornithology at James Cook University and subsequently scratch a living as a consultant ornithologist and occasional tutor. In a previous existence I was an accountant, which may still provide some residual benefits in my role as BANQ Treasurer. My appreciation of native birds extends to all taxa and my interests encompass all ornithological disciplines.

#### Convenor

Ivor Preston

#### Deputy Convenor

Alan Gillanders

#### Secretary

Murray Hunt

#### Treasurer

Ian Northcott

#### Conservation Officer

Greg Bortolussi

#### IBA Coordinators

Graham Harrington

#### Website Administrator

Ian Montgomery

#### Birdlists & Brochures

Dominic Chaplin

#### Newsletter Editor

Karen Doyle

#### Activities Coordinator

Sandi Oswald

#### Members

Beth Snewin

Elna Kerswell

#### Contact the BANQ Committee

email: [banq@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:banq@birdsaustralia.com.au)

PO Box 37, Belgian Gardens Q 4810

## Thanks and farewell from Alison



"We are now one week after the historic vote by BA and BOCA members to merge the two organisations and it is really good to know that of those BA members who voted for the merger it was very much their clear wish for this to happen. My thanks to all who did vote as this was very much a membership matter and essential to know the wishes of the members on the future direction for Birds Australia.

I would also like to take the opportunity to extend my thanks to the Regional Groups, Observatories and to the Gluepot Management Committee for the support I have received over the years as President of BA and as Council Member. I have really enjoyed my 13 years on the BA Council and feel that the new directions we face will be both challenging and provide an opportunity for us to do a lot more for the conservation and enjoyment of our birds.

I look forward to keeping in touch with many of you and with BLA as it evolves.

Best wishes to all, Alison"

Alison Russell-French

PO Box 1045

Canberra ACT 2601

[alisonrf@iinet.net.au](mailto:alisonrf@iinet.net.au)



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](mailto:sootyowl@bigpond.com)

Web Page: [www.birdwatchers.com.au](http://www.birdwatchers.com.au)

# Project News

## An update from the Black-throated Finch Recovery Team

The Birds Australia Congress held in Townsville in 2010 included a series of papers on the ecology and conservation issues of *Poephila cincta cincta* (BTF) and the efforts of the Black-throated Finch Recovery Team (BTFRT) continue to focus on the Townsville region. While other populations of BTF are obviously important, the population on the Townsville coastal plain is the one that is best known, most accessible and, probably most at risk in the short to medium term.

The BTFRT held its annual waterhole count in October 2010. That count yielded very low numbers of birds even though coverage of waterholes was similar to that of preceding years. The explanation lies in the fact that there were very early rains (in September and October) disrupting the usual pattern in which birds are concentrated around relatively few watering points. The 2010-2011 wet season was a big one and included Cyclone Yasi. The BTFRT is yet to consider the effect of that major weather event.

The Townsville population of the black-throated finch continues to come under the pressures of urbanisation. Significant areas of habitat are threatened by the expanding urban footprint of northern Australia's largest city. This includes extensive areas of new suburbs as well as rural residential developments. Habitat-modelling currently being undertaken is attempting to identify critical habitat and hopefully better inform decision-makers. The BTFRT attempts to respond constructively to relevant development proposals and engages with local, state and commonwealth authorities where appropriate. Better knowledge of where birds are and how they use the increasingly fragmented landscape is critical and a strategic approach to habitat retention rather than piecemeal responses to development proposals is the ideal.

Approval of a major urban development on

Townsville's northern outskirts was accompanied by the formation of a Trust fund negotiated with the then Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. The BTFRT is represented on a committee whose task is to decide how funds are to be expended, the North Queensland Dry Tropics NRM being the Trustee. In late 2010, the Trust committee negotiated to fund several important projects. These

include projects to:

- ◇ develop management guidelines to maintain and restore BTF habitat;
- ◇ estimate the population of BTF on the Townsville coastal plain;
- ◇ devise a plan sympathetic to the conservation of BTF on the Lake Ross storage area in collaboration with the authorities responsible for that land;
- ◇ conduct critical research on BTF through a PhD and other projects supervised and co-funded jointly by James Cook



Photo courtesy of Ian Boyd

University and CSIRO;

- ◇ promote the management of BTF habitat on private land;
- ◇ educate stakeholders and the general public about BTF, its habitat and conservation needs.

These projects will be underway in early 2011.

The BTFRT seeks to increase its effectiveness in contributing to the conservation of the BTF. Better knowledge of populations away from the Townsville region is very important. Current indications are that *Poephila cincta cincta* has been lost in New South Wales and is probably extinct in Queensland south of Rockhampton. It would be tragic if the loss of remaining populations took the BTF the way of the southern race of the Star Finch (*Neochmia ruficauda ruficauda*).

Dr. A.C. Grice  
Chair

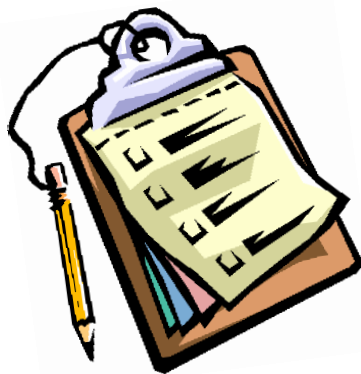
Black-throated Finch Recovery Team  
PO Box 756, Townsville 4810  
[www.blackthroatedfinch.com](http://www.blackthroatedfinch.com)

## Project News



This year's black-throated finch (BTF) waterhole count will be held on Saturday the 22<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2011 at various locations in the Townsville region. Once again the Black-throated Finch Recovery Team (BTFRT) is seeking volunteers for these two days to watch waterholes and count finches coming into drink. The count covers a three hour period of each morning. Volunteers may also record the other species they record at these waterholes. The list is often impressive.

We are currently finalising the detailed arrangements for the count including start times and waterhole allocation, so please complete your registration and contact details for this year's count on the Black-throated Finch website, [www.blackthroatedfinch.com](http://www.blackthroatedfinch.com).



The first BTF waterhole count was conducted in 2003, when six sites were monitored. Since then we have built up an impressive database of BTF sightings in the Townsville region for use in our research and conservation projects. Last year we mobilised 34 counters to monitor 20 different waterholes in the Townsville region however we encountered Black-throated Finches at only 3 waterholes. This provided us with valuable information for use in the Black-throated Finch recovery programme. Further details of the waterhole count activities are explained in various documents on the website.

The BTFRT recognises and greatly appreciates the ongoing commitment made by our regular observers.

The BTF waterhole count is a great opportunity for new volunteer observers to support the BTF recovery programme and hopefully to see the endangered BTF at close quarters. If you are interested in joining one of the teams for the waterhole count then please register your interest on the BTFRT website, [www.blackthroatedfinch.com](http://www.blackthroatedfinch.com)

and a member of the BTFRT will contact you.

**George Baker**  
Secretary, BTFRT

**RED MILL HOUSE**



DAINTREE  
FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND  
AAA 4 STAR  
**Birdwatching B&B**  
Conveniently located to Daintree River, specialist bird and wildlife tours and Daintree National Park.  
Tasteful, ensuite rooms overlooking tropical rainforest garden and swimming pool.  
Fabulous full cooked breakfast included.  
Extensive nature library.  
Bird lists and "mud maps" provided.

**eco**  
CERTIFIED  
Advanced  
Ecotourism

[www.redmillhouse.com.au](http://www.redmillhouse.com.au)  
[www.daintreebirdwatching.com.au](http://www.daintreebirdwatching.com.au)  
[info@redmillhouse.com.au](mailto:info@redmillhouse.com.au)  
07 4098 6233



**BIRDS in BACKYARDS**

- Home
- Bird finder
- Featured bird groups
- Bird-friendly spaces
- Surveys
- Resources
- News
- Join
- About
- Contact us
- Members
- Birds forum

**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](http://www.birdsinbackyards.net)

# Cassowary News

## Silent Cassowary Family

Birds Australia North Queensland generously allocated some funds to allow for expert help to assist volunteers to mount a Juvenile Cassowary – ‘Camilla’ to join ‘Claude’ (a sub adult) and ‘Cassie’ (a chick). These three are destined to form a new exhibit in the Museum of Tropical North Queensland dedicated to explaining the interdependence and importance of Cassowaries to their rainforest habitat.

Camilla, like the others was sent to the museum from Mission Beach after her death on the road. The Museum has a permit to accept dead specimens of native species while for others, the keeping of native species, dead, stuffed or alive can attract heavy fines.

When the bird arrives data is recorded about where and when it was collected, what had happened, who collected it, sex, age, condition etc. This data is kept in the records and also attached to the specimen.



Removing the second layer of fat

The first task with Camilla was to **skin** her. This task was not undertaken lightly as Claude had presented great difficulty due to the surprising amount of fat – in separate layers, that needed to be carefully removed before his stuffing could commence. Camilla was the same - although as a juvenile she seemed to have less fat layers and her skin was thankfully smaller. An interesting difference with Cassowaries is that unlike all other birds, the feather butts extend through the skin, making the fat removal very fiddly. All the fat must be removed or the skin will rot – but damage the feather butts and the feathers will fall out! Tweezers, scalpels and slow patient work finally saw a clean skin and a resolution to avoid further Cassowaries!



The empty skin and the body

**Remaking the muscles of the legs** and inserting strong wire through the foot, up the sinew channel and into this ‘new’ muscle made it ready to allow the bird to stand.

The **new body** was made from a mould of the original, using taxidermy form. This process allows for an exact copy of the original and also allows for the correct positioning of the legs into the foam. The head wire- to replace the neck is inserted into the foam and some padding wound tightly to imitate the shape of the neck. The body is carefully slid into the empty skin and the head wire forced through the skull. Padding in the form of cotton wool or coir is inserted where necessary to ensure a well proportioned mount.



The body fitted and head wire positioned

**Sewing** begins – adjusting the padding and aiming to have the seam unseen. Normally feathers hide the stitching but with birds like Cassowaries, with thinner feathers, stitching needs to be even neater!

**Positioning** of the body into a lifelike pose and attaching the mount to a board is next. The wattles were positioned between cards so they when dry they will stand out a little from the neck and allowed them to be seen. ‘Camilla’ was then left supported until the skin dried and the mount was set. After three weeks, the head wire was cut level with the skull and the final touches made so that ‘Camilla’ is ready, waiting for the display to be created.

The three birds, along with a scat, which we still need to mount somehow, will then be placed together, behind a perspex screen in the ‘Rainforest’ exhibit. Information telling about the role they play in seed distribution and a little on their family structure will hopefully help to educate visitors about this unique species and the need to protect both the bird and its habitat.

In this way their deaths, though tragic, will not have been in vain and through BANQ’s support and the skill of the taxidermists they will stand in silent testimony for many years.

**Beth Snewin**



# Project News

## Cassowary feeding update

The forest is showing the early signs of recovery, with shoots, leaves and some flowering developing. Despite this, the cyclone severely reduced the supply of rainforest fruits, and recovery will take some months yet. To supplement the cassowaries' diet during this low food period without making them dependent on handouts, DERM has set up feeding stations to support cassowaries in the forest environment.

Feed stations are supplied with fruit approximately every three days, and amounts are varied to ensure the birds keep up their natural foraging. Cassowary scats are being collected as part of monitoring and research, and these droppings show that many of the birds are continuing to forage for native fruits.

At 24 May 2011, DERM had 106 active feed stations from the Cardwell Range north to Flying Fish Point. In the early days of the program, helicopter drops were used, but the focus is now on the feeding stations. A total of more than 23,100 kg of fruit has been distributed. Ten cameras monitoring the feed stations are showing cassowaries using those sites, even adults feeding their chicks—watch the video footage on YouTube.

BANQ has supported the Cassowary recovery by donating \$10,000 towards an assessment of the impact of the feeding

program to gain a better understanding of the Cassowaries' population dynamics. The Thorsborne Trust has kindly donated \$3,000. The Norman Wettinhal Foundation and Melliodora Fund have donated \$5,000 each. Thanks to the three organisations and to Graham Harrington for doing the submission. Also, retailers Coles, Woolworths and Bi-Lo have provided fruit, and



conservation organisation Rainforest Rescue has donated \$10,000 to the program.

The community is helping the DERM Cassowary Response Team's coordinated response. Volunteers have given more than 930 hours to cut up the donated fruit, while 49 private landholders have feeding stations on their properties, with permission from DERM. Residents are reporting cassowary sightings so DERM can alert motorists.

To report a cassowary sighting, please email [cassowary.sighting@derm.qld.gov.au](mailto:cassowary.sighting@derm.qld.gov.au).

[Click here to Watch the video](#)



## Cranes ~ where are they?

They are massing on the borders, they have been heard at night coming into the Mareeba airport in the last weeks of last month. They have recently been heard arriving in the Machilba area in the early evening. A small group of 15 were seen on the morning of the 1st May touching down at a site near Kaban on the Evelyn Tableland and staying put, taking it easy as if exhausted after a long flight. Is this early for the annual crane migration to the Tablelands to start or is it just that we have not in the past noted the date of the first arrivals on the outer reaches of the Tablelands? The middle of May has always been the time that I have noted the early birds trumpeting their arrival in the Atherton Kairi area. Furthermore the birds seen at Kaban are not likely to progress to the inner Tablelands as they were all Brolgas bringing with them 8 juveniles and as we have noted in our records Brolgas are very seldom seen on the inner Tablelands.



Photo courtesy Ivor Preston

I wonder where and when the first Sarus Cranes will be seen and by whom? If you are one of the lucky people would you please contact me on **40958302** as I would like to start to build up a picture of their favourite feeding grounds and roosting sights for the season. Also we would like to once again extend the counting to the sites on the outer Tablelands that were previously monitored to keep an eye on any possible changes to Sarus Crane behaviour that may be taking place in those areas. So if you live in the Kaban, Ravenshoe, Mt Garnet or Mareeba Wetland areas and have in past years taken part in the Annual



Crane Count at sites there, or would like to join a counting group in one of those areas please contact me on the above number. I would like to get an early start on who would like to count.

The Annual Crane Count is on the first Saturday in September. I hope to see you then.

**Virginia Simmonds**

# Project News

## Fawn-Breasted Bowerbird

### Have you seen this bird?



This is the Fawn-breasted Bowerbird. In Australia it is found only on the Cape York Peninsula. It's habitat is mainly eucalypt and paperbark woodlands and adjacent mangroves; occasionally in or at the edge of rainforest. It is often in dense thickets of shrubs within woodland and also dense coastal and riparian shrubland.

Last year we started a study into recent sightings of this bird following anecdotal information that it was getting harder to find in traditional areas on the Cape York Peninsula.

We are trying to determine if the population is decreasing, steady or even increasing. There are so few actual sightings of the bird that we have been unable to determine any clear trend other than to say it is certainly scarce.

In the draft revised Action Plan for Australian Birds there is consideration to change its status from Least Concern to Near Threatened (population may be <10,000 individuals, in a single sub-population and may be declining based on recent anecdotal reports).

A study of Atlas Reports, Eremaea Reports and a request for details of any other sightings has indicated less than 25 records since the start of 2009.

Iron Range National Park	6 Records
Iron Range Ranger Station	5 Records
Lockhardt River	4 Records
Portland Roads	3 Records
Heathlands	4 Records
Bamaga	1 Record
Weipa	1 Record

Birders have searched Seisa, Umagico, Jardine River, The Tip, New Mapoon and Somerset without success.

On the bright side we have received the first ever record on the western side of the Cape at Weipa and discovered a new stronghold for them at Heathlands. Also rangers at Iron Range have reported that some Bowerbirds have returned to previously disused Bowers. Hopefully a good wet season has helped them to bounce back.

Please let us know if, this year you find any Fawn-breasted Bowerbirds ~ email [banq@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:banq@birdsaustralia.com.au)

Photos courtesy of Dominic Chaplin  
[www.pinecreekpictures.com.au](http://www.pinecreekpictures.com.au)



## DNA uncovers an endangered bird

### **This Australian parrot is believed to be one of the world's rarest birds.**

The critically endangered species of ground parrot in Western Australia has been identified by a team of Australian researchers including ancient DNA experts at the University of Adelaide.

The team, led by Australian Wildlife Conservancy's Dr Stephen Murphy, used DNA from museum specimens up to 160 years old to reveal that populations of ground parrots in eastern and western Australia are highly distinct from each other and that the western populations should be recognised as a new species, *Pezoporus flaviventris*.

"The discovery has major conservation implications," said Dr Murphy. "The Western Ground parrot has declined rapidly in the last 20 years, there are now only about 110 birds surviving in the wild and most of these are confined to a single national park. It is now one of the world's rarest birds." WA Department of Environment and Conservation's Dr Allan Burbidge said: "A single wildfire through the national park or an influx of introduced predators, such



as cats, could rapidly push the species to extinction. There is now an urgent need to prevent further population declines and to establish insurance populations into parts of the former range."

"Our findings demonstrate that museum collections, some going back more than 150 years, continue to be relevant and can provide critical information for understanding and conserving the world's biodiversity into the future," said team member Dr Jeremy Austin, Deputy Director of the Australian Centre for Ancient DNA at the University of Adelaide. Director of CSIRO's Australian National Wildlife Collection Dr Leo Joseph said: "Even after 200 years of study, we are still recognising new species of birds in Australia. This finding highlights the need for further research on Australia's unique, and sometimes cryptic, biodiversity." The team's findings have been published in the international conservation research journal *Conservation Genetics*.

Story and photo courtesy of **The University of Adelaide** [www.adelaide.edu.au/adelaidean/issues/42481/news42503.html](http://www.adelaide.edu.au/adelaidean/issues/42481/news42503.html)



**INTERNATIONAL YEAR  
OF FORESTS • 2011**



## Without birdsong, a forest just isn't the same

The United Nations has declared 2011 the International Year of Forests to raise awareness on sustainable management and conservation of all types of forests—the forests that also support an incredible diversity and abundance of birds. In this special year, will you help Birds Australia to support our forest-dwelling birds? The ways you can donate are:

- ⇒ **Online directly or download a form to post** [www.birdsaustralia.com.au/support-ba/donate](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/support-ba/donate)
- ⇒ **by Phone** 1300 730 075 or (03) 9347 0757

# Members Corner

## Paluma Luck

The 15th & 16th of May provided fantastic birding – on Sunday morning a Golden Bowerbird was seen in our yard at Smith Crescent Paluma! – Sadly not by me, although the male GBB was seen and identified by the neighbours with their binoculars and bird books and also by the new owners in Andre's house. Roy reported hearing it as did Elna on the Sunday. It has never been recorded in Paluma before. This was the start of a great few days birding with many unexpected sightings.

On Sunday afternoon Elna and I set off to Puzzle Creek. On the way we had to stop for a Bassian Thrush which wandered slowly across the road much to our delight...a little further on, a small Quail was seen, necessitating another sudden stop. It seemed smaller than the pair of Brown Quail that Elna had seen earlier in the village and we wondered if it was a Button Quail but could not get close enough to determine this. On arrival at Puzzle Creek, we wandered down to the bridge and even commented that the birds were quiet. It was a perfect afternoon, clear skies and no wind then a wave began – Yellow-faced Honeyeaters



chasing each other over the creek while Grey Fantails bathed below. Eastern Yellow Robins and a Pale Yellow Robin performed in the trees as well as a few other birds we couldn't get good views of. Then to our delight two White-browed Scrubwrens were spied working the debris at the side of the bridge allowing us great views. Rainbow Bee-eaters and

Golden Whistlers were seen as we went back to the car for a cuppa. On the way home the Grey-headed Robins dashed back and forth across the road and then we again had to stop to allow the Bassian Thrush to move off the road at his leisure.

On Monday morning we saw at least two Yellow-breasted Boatbills on the Ivy Cottage track (one previous record) just as David Stewart and his wife Sheena came along hoping to see a Bower's Shrike-thrush which I was able to point out. David Stewart is the 'owner' of the sounds attached to the Morcombe Bird Book application on the iPod etc.

We all watched the Yellow-breasted Boatbills and Bower's Shrike-thrush for a few minutes getting great views. The bird wave continued with the Grey-headed Robin and Chowchillers, also on Sheena's list, soon spotted by Elna and as the others watched them I spied two Fernwrens which we all watched in delight for several minutes! A Pied Monarch and a Spectacled Monarch appeared as a Eastern Whipbird called nearby. Never have we had such good sightings on

the Ivy Cottage Track – I wonder if it is because of the cyclone, or the opened canopy or are they usually there and because of the tree cover we don't see them?

David and Sheena joined us for a morning tea and while Sheena enjoyed the Victoria's Riflebirds, Spotted Catbirds and Satin Bowerbirds, David talked of returning to do some sound recording in the peace of Paluma.

Another interesting thing was the near absence of honeyeaters. All weekend we had only one Macleay's Honeyeater on the verandah with none of the usual

Lewin's or White-cheeked Honeyeaters. We did see two Lewin's Honeyeaters on the Ivy Cottage Track and a few White-cheeked Honeyeaters in the trees next door and David said he heard Bridled Honeyeaters - but nothing like the usual concentrations.



Roy and the neighbours also commented on the lack of them – was it something flowering in the forest, the cold weather (6 degrees each night) causing them to move down closer to the coast or have they succumbed to hunger? The one who did come to the feeder didn't seem to be overly hungry and just had a few tastes of frozen banana and was off.

I wonder what delights await us next visit...I can hardly wait.

**Beth Snewin**



### Be alert to grasses

Recently, I visited Lake Mitchell between Mareeba and Mt Molloy. As the group drove through the wooden gates just to the north of Big Mitchell Creek to the white gate I noticed what appears to be a large infestation of Giant Rat's Tail grass (or at least a form of weedy Sporobolus) along most of the track. The group was oblivious to the identity of the grass or the ease with which it spread. I asked all to wash down their vehicles and not go to national parks etc. before they had done so. Given that national parks and rural land battles weed problems should we be alerting our members to the existence of this species at a popular birding area and the need to practice a level of hygiene to prevent this species spreading further a field, although I suspect that other visitors to the site are not as aware of weed threats such as this species. Grader grass also exists within the area.

The military generally have full vehicle wash downs and clean outs as well as clothing being turned out (pockets particularly) to remove possible seed contamination. Let's try to follow this process as closely as possible. Some information resources that may be of interest.

[www.nqccs.com.au/library/weeds/giant\\_rats\\_tail\\_grass.pdf](http://www.nqccs.com.au/library/weeds/giant_rats_tail_grass.pdf)

[www.landmanager.org.au/downloads/burd12.pdf](http://www.landmanager.org.au/downloads/burd12.pdf)

[www.weeds.org.au/cgi-bin/weedident.cgi?tpl=plant.tpl&state=&s=&ibra=all&card=G03](http://www.weeds.org.au/cgi-bin/weedident.cgi?tpl=plant.tpl&state=&s=&ibra=all&card=G03)

[www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790\\_7288.htm](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790_7288.htm)



---

### Technology ~ a new gadget for shorebird enthusiasts

An iPhone web app which provides the modern birder with a user-friendly key to assist with recognising those hard-to-identify shorebirds was released recently to coincide with World Migratory Bird Day. Suitable for use in the field, the Oz Shorebirds app is a boon to wader-watchers, allowing you to identify the birds using various different features. It features a photo of each of 47 species of migratory and resident shorebirds, together with a description and an image painted by Jeff Davies, making identification easy. It is based on the successful shorebird identification booklet produced by Shorebirds 2020 with WWF-Australia, thanks to funding from the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country Program. The app and directions on how to access it are on the Birds Australia website.

### Check out these websites & blogs



[www.eremaea.com](http://www.eremaea.com) ~ for your birdlists and much more, maybe your next trip planner?

[www.kingfisherparkbirdwatchers.blogspot.com](http://www.kingfisherparkbirdwatchers.blogspot.com) ~ Keith & Lindsay Fisher write a weekly blog including great photos and birding stories.

[www.birdshootaustralia.blogspot.com](http://www.birdshootaustralia.blogspot.com) ~ retirees, Glenda & Gary Oliver are devoted to caravanning, birding and photography. Great birding stories and photographs.



*I'd like to share your favourite websites or blogs—email me, so that I can feature your favourites here.*



# NOTICE BOARD



## Volunteers Wanted

The Important Bird Areas (IBA) project is looking for people who would like to volunteer some time to help with small mapping tasks. Australia has 314 IBAs in all states and territories, including external territories; one of our most important roles is to work with stakeholders to help conserve critical habitat for key bird species. Having good maps of sites and regions makes a difference to the work we can do.

If you have GIS skills and access to a computer and GIS software and you would like to volunteer some time to help make a difference to Australia's IBAs, we'd like to hear from you. For more information email the Project Manager Cheryl Gole, or call her on (08) 9293 4958 or 0428 934 958 (WA time).



## Bird lists and brochures

for North Queensland bird lists

go to our BANQ website

[www.birdsaustralianq.org](http://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.

Stories welcome .. [banq@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:banq@birdsaustralia.com.au)

I wish you successful birding.

**September newsletter deadline**

**~ 22 August 2011**

## Calendar of Events

### June

- **18 ~ Committee Meeting.** Tully.

### August

- **8-12 ~ Mungkan Kandju Surveys.**  
Contact Alan Gillanders mobile 0408 953 786
- **Date tba ~ Daintree River Cruise & walks.**  
Contact Murray Hunt mobile 0417 651 929
- **27 ~ Committee Meeting.** Venue tba.

### September

- **3 ~ Annual Crane Count and dinner afterwards.**  
Contact Virginia Simmonds (see p7)
- **30 Sept-1 Oct ~ Australian Ornithological Conference, JCU, Cairns.**

### October

- **1-3 ~ Mt Surprise/Georgetown trip.** Contact Dominic Chaplin 0419 028 077
- **17-21 ~ Yourka Station Survey Bush Heritage.**  
Contact Graham Harrington 0437 794 836
- **22-23 ~ Black-throated Finch waterhole count.**  
See p5 for details and to register as a counter.

### November

- **26-27 ~ Mission Beach PIP Count, Committee meeting & Christmas dinner.**

### December

- **3-4 ~ Mt Mulligan/Tryconnell Mine.**  
Contact Dominic Chaplin

*The BANQ website is regularly updated  
~ please check the website for the latest  
information, bird lists and events  
[www.birdsaustralianq.org](http://www.birdsaustralianq.org)*

