

ConTact Call

Birds Australia North Queensland
Quarterly Newsletter



Issue: Great-billed Heron

September 2011

The Great-billed Heron, *Ardea sumatrana* is a wading bird of the heron family, Ardeidae, resident from southeast Asia to Papua New Guinea and Australia. Its habitats are largely coastal such as islands, coral reefs, mangroves, large rivers. However, occasionally, it can be found inland in shallow ponds. It feeds in shallow water, spearing fish with its long, sharp bill and will wait motionless for prey, or slowly stalk its victim. The shy, elusive bird is rarely in the open and retreats into cover while the observer is still distant.

The Great-billed Heron is Australia's largest heron, standing 115cm tall. It is larger and darker than the Purple Heron, which it resembles in appearance.

The call is a loud, slow 'croaking' and a deep rumbling 'roar'.

The plumage is largely dark grey and in breeding plumage it has grey facial skin, silvery on the lower neck, back and crest.

In flight, it has a uniform dark grey upper wing. The flight is slow, with its neck retracted and long trailing legs. This is characteristic of herons and bitterns and distinguishes them from storks, cranes and spoonbills, which extend their necks.

The Australian range has probably contracted northwards up the east coast and there are no recent records south of Rockhampton (Marchant and Higgins, 1990), but the population is probably stable through the rest of its range.

Widespread throughout its range, the Great-billed Heron is evaluated as Least Concern.



Great-billed Heron (*Ardea sumatrana*)

Photo taken at Daintree River, August 2011

courtesy of Ian Montgomery - www.birdway.com.au

Inside this issue

- **Birds Australia**
 - ~ now on facebook
 - ~ photographic competition
- **Project News**
 - ~ Cassowary Report
 - ~ Crane Count preliminary report
 - ~ Black-throated Finch Report
- **Research News**
 - ~ Rare birds go high tech
 - ~ Roads can be barriers to birds
- **Trip Report**
 - ~ Daintree River Cruise
- **Members Corner**
 - ~ Cold Climate Birding—Iceland
 - ~ Merger Update
- **Notice Board**
 - ~ Calendar of Events



Join us on facebook

facebook

Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life.



Birds Australia Best Photo of 2011 Competition

Are you Australia's best amateur bird photographer? Enter the Birds Australia Best Photo of 2011 Competition to find out and go in the running to win

fabulous prizes, including a O'Reilly's Retreat, a backpack,

course, Binoculars beautiful courtesy of Publishing.



prizes, trip to Rainforest Lowepro a Gluepot photography Beretta and a swag of bird books, CSIRO

<http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/homepage-news/birds-australia-best-photo-of-2011-competition.html>

Birds Australia North Queensland Committee

Convenor
Ivor Preston

Secretary
Murray Hunt

IBA Coordinator
Graham Harrington

Website Administrator
Ian Montgomery

Members
Beth Snewin
Elna Kerswell
Kath Shurcliff

Deputy Convenor
Alan Gillanders

Treasurer
Ian Northcott

Birdlists & Brochures
Dominic Chaplin

Activities Coordinator
Sandi Oswald

Newsletter Editor
Karen Doyle

To contact the BANQ Committee
email: banq@birdsaustralia.com.au
PO Box 37, Belgian Gardens Q 4810

Check the
BANQ website for updated
information and calendar events
www.birdsaustralianq.org

Bird lists and brochures

Contact Call newsletter
All past issues are
now on the website

Project News

Cassowary Report

Although there was a lot of money collected to feed the Cassowaries affected by Cyclone Yasi there was nothing available for checking the effectiveness of that interjection into the natural event. BANQ combined with the Dept of the Environment (DERM) and CSIRO Atherton in a project to rectify that situation.

The project is based on DNA analysis of Cassowary droppings. The droppings are collected by regularly walking certain tracks and also collected around a selection of the feeding stations operated by DERM. Some of the tracks are where there are no feeding stations, to serve as a comparative control. The DNA can identify individual birds and also indicate their sex. This will provide information on where individual birds are located and how far they are moving.

Forty four samples from Mission Beach have been screened so far but the results not yet analysed. There is another batch of droppings ready for analysis.



There is an unexpected problem (there always is in research!), there is a distinct lack of droppings. Also the droppings that are near the feeding stations are often not much more than a smear on the ground. Supermarket fruit is not big on large seeds and fibrous flesh.

I went to Mission Beach last week to collect droppings along the tracks. We got zero recent droppings. We saw 7 Cassowaries in the area with no feeding stations and zero birds in the feeding station area. Perhaps this reflects that the unfed birds were out on the tracks looking for food and the fed birds were lying sated in the bush out of sight. Perhaps not!

The fact that there are plenty of birds about but few droppings raises the question of whether pigs are eating the droppings. Another unforeseen question! Science was ever thus.



Graham Harrington

Crane Count Preliminary Report

A determined team braved cold, wet and windy conditions to carry out the annual BANQ crane count, organised by Virginia Simmonds this year. An earlier date was set compared to previous years, fearing that some of these migratory birds might leave early. A new simplified record form was tested for the first time.

Around 2000 Cranes/Brolgas were recorded at about 6 different sites. A full report is being prepared.

Afterwards the team enjoyed a fine evening meal in Yungaburra. Alan Gillanders presented an excellent slide show on his experiences visiting Papua New Guinea last year.

Photo courtesy of Dominic Chaplin
www.pinecreekpictures.com.au



Project News

Black-throated Finch Report

The past twelve months have been busy ones for the southern Black-throated Finch (*Poephila cincta cincta*) (BTF) and the BTF Recovery Team (BTFRT). The early start to the 2010-2011 wet season meant that very few birds were reported during the 2010 waterhole count in the Townsville region. That wet season turned out to

be a very wet one with vigorous grass growth and good seeding. Even in early September 2011, there is still a great deal of surface water in the landscape but it remains to be seen how these climatic and consequent biotic events have influenced the BTF population. The 2011 waterhole count (to be held on 22-23 October) should be very telling.

Pressure continues on the important BTF

population on the Townsville coastal plain. The BTFRT has given serious consideration to the likely impacts of proposed developments. Habitat is under threat from proposed extensive urban and peri-urban expansions around Townsville and a major rock quarry is proposed for a very important BTF site. In addition, the less well-known populations of BTF in the region between Charters Towers and Emerald are now threatened by the proposed massive expansion of coal mining operations. The BTFRT continues to provide comment on the likely impacts on BTF of these developments in the Townsville region and central Queensland and to engage with those responsible for decision-making at Commonwealth,

State and local levels.

Several projects funded by the Black-throated Finch Trust are now well underway. One of these projects has recently produced guidelines for the management of BTF habitat. The guidelines should provide up-to-date and practical information for a wide



Photo courtesy of Ian Boyd

range of land managers and will be made available through the website operated by the BTFRT.

A second project that is underway will provide an estimate of the population of BTF on the Townsville Local Government Area, important quantitative that has not previously been available.

Interested in joining a team for the waterhole count? Please register on the BTFRT website, www.blackthroatedfinch.com and a member of the BTFRT will contact you.

It will supplement that provided by the annual waterhole count.

The BTF Trust is also funding a research project being conducted principally by PhD students enrolled at James Cook University. This project will provide vital information on how BTF use their temporally and spatially

variable environments and resources. Other elements of this work will describe the genetic patterns of BTF and use genetic tools to ascertain the degree of fragmentation of their populations. Other Trust-funded projects will develop management plans for the Lake Ross storage area and test the effects of their implementation. At the same time a communication plan will work to improve awareness of the BTF and its conservation needs. In recent months members of the BTFRT have made presentations about the BTF to Townsville City Council,

the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management and the Queensland Finch Society.

The BTFRT encourages the reporting of any sightings of BTF through its website (http://www.blackthroatedfinch.com/about_us.dyn). Records are added to the comprehensive database used to help understand patterns of distribution and abundance as a foundation for decisions important for the conservation of this small granivore.

Dr. A.C. Grice
Chair
Black-throated Finch Recovery Team
www.blackthroatedfinch.com

Research News

Rare birds go high-tech to get tweets followed, cheap

A Queensland University of Technology (QUT) research team is helping ecologists dramatically slash the time and cost of following the twitter of native birds in order to monitor the effects of climate change.

Until recently, Australian ecologists wanting to identify the presence or absence of wildlife to take the temperature of the changing environment have had to spend days in isolated regions, watching and listening for species in all kinds of weather.

The QUT team, working with the QUT Institute for Sustainable Resources (ISR), gave them a helping hand by developing automated acoustic sensors, placed in the bush to record environmental sounds which are then transmitted to an online digital library.

But ecologists still faced the prospect of sifting through many hours of recordings and isolating bird calls from other sounds like wind and rain - until now.



QUT PhD student Jason Wimmer, with one of his acoustic recording devices

The QUT team has taken the inspired approach of developing high-tech software and combining it with 'people power' to quickly run over the data and determine the number and type of birds on the recording.

"The software filters through the audio and isolates the parts where it can identify potential species amid the cacophony," said QUT PhD researcher Jason Wimmer.

"People are much better at identifying species than computers, so we leave the final analysis up to the human brain. We post the audio segments our software has identified as containing potential species online and ask the birdwatching community to have a go at telling us what they are."

Early trials have had fantastic results. Roughly twice as many species have been detected using this approach than traditional surveys with people in the field.

In one recent experiment, while trained observers were able to detect 35 bird species using traditional bird survey methods, the acoustic sensors and software employed by Wimmer picked up 61 birds in the same area.

"We can record the data using inexpensive MP3 recorders or we can upload it via the 3G network," Wimmer said.

"The most expensive part was analysing the data. But we can reduce this cost by using a 'citizen science' approach and harnessing the enormous resource of birdwatchers - which I'm told is one of the fastest growing hobbies in the world."

Wimmer and his team verify the expertise of the 'citizen scientists' analysing the data by asking them to sit a test. They then select five people to analyse the audio and accept the majority view.

"We hope to eventually have these acoustic sensors placed all over Australia continuously streaming live data. By speeding up the analysis of that data, ecologists will get a deeper and more current snapshot of climate change," said Wimmer.

"Birds are indicator species which are sensitive to changes in the environment. If we can find out if there are changes going on in the composition of species, we can respond quickly to ecological alarm bells."

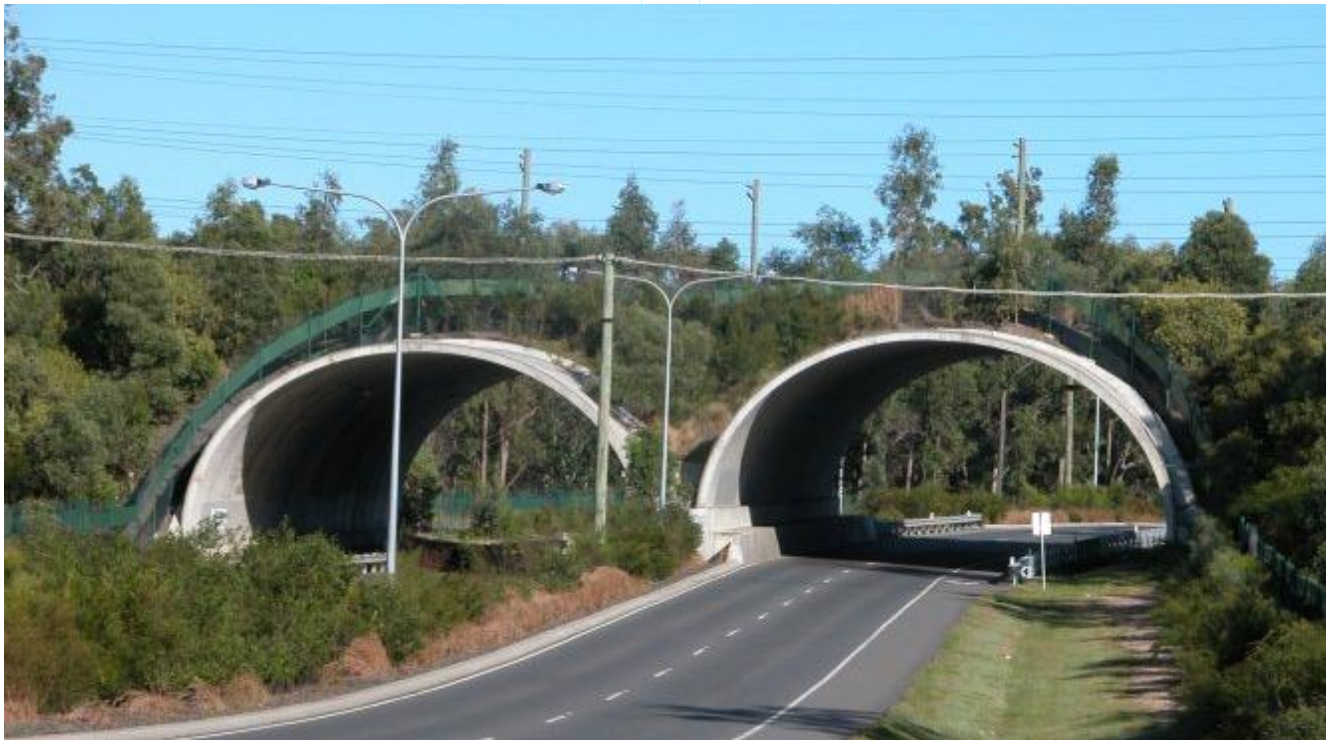
Story and photo courtesy of **QUT Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane**

<http://www.qut.edu.au/>

Roads can be barriers to the birds

Although roads present an obvious and dangerous obstacle to the movements of land animals, the well-known 'barrier effect' of roads on wildlife has largely ignored the impact on birds. While most larger species obviously fly over such infrastructure, it is now appreciated that many smaller forest birds are reluctant to cross even modest gaps, let alone a wide noisy highway. One possible solution is to construct vegetated overpasses but most such structures are

involved in the evaluation of a vegetated overpass built over Compton Road to the south of Brisbane. This trial has been underway for some years, and the overpass is being used by many species that otherwise find Compton Road a total barrier. Fairywrens, robins, treecreepers and honeyeaters are amongst the birds regularly using the landbridge.



designed with large mammals in mind and are usually devoid of vegetation. Australian overpasses, in contrast, are well vegetated and may allow birds to cross. In one of the first detailed studies of bird use of an overpass we assessed the Compton Road structure in southern Brisbane and found unexpectedly high numbers of individuals and species within the planted vegetation, including numerous forest-interior species.

Darryl Jones gave a very interesting talk on roads as barriers to bird movements, particularly for woodland/forest birds inhabiting the lower story. He spoke of road building in Europe, where new roads are required to have a mandated level of permeability for wildlife. This is achieved by a variety of tunnels, viaducts (similar to bridges, but with an extremely low footprint) and vegetated landbridges. He gave an example of a 19km stretch of new highway in Spain, that had nearly 50% permeability. He has been

The talk has been posted on the TREAT website where it can be downloaded: http://www.treat.net.au/projects/permeable_roads.html Links are there to some other articles which might be of interest.



Darryl Jones is a behavioural ecologist working in the fields of urban ecology and wildlife management.

Research News

Starlings

European Starling
(*Sturnus vulgaris*)



courtesy of Ian Montgomery -
www.birdway.com.au

The European Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*, is one of the most successful invasive species in the world. Starlings originated from Europe but are now found all over, from the US to Australia, this species occupies a large and varied geographical range. During my PhD I would like to explore the success of the European Starling in Australia, with particular interest in understanding how our landscape has shaped individuals and populations. Starlings provide a model system to explore this relationship because they have only been in Australia for about 160 years and should possess characteristics that allow them to adapt to novel environments. I plan to sample starling populations from Tasmania to Queensland, examining the genetic and physical characteristics that may differ across their range.

This project relies on my ability to get samples of starlings from as many places as possible. To this end, I would ask for help from anyone willing and able to provide it. If anybody is or knows of someone controlling starlings at their home or on their farm I would love to collect the carcasses (adult and/or chicks; ie removing chicks from nest boxes). Every sample would be of great help to the project and to gain a better understanding of this invasive pest species. Any information regarding Starlings in your area would be great. If you know where a large flock lives or have any other information you think would be useful please contact me. Thank you for your time and help.

Adam Cardilini
apcar@deakin.edu.au
0431 566 340
School of Life and Environmental Sciences,
75 Pigdons Rd, Waurin Ponds, Victoria 3126

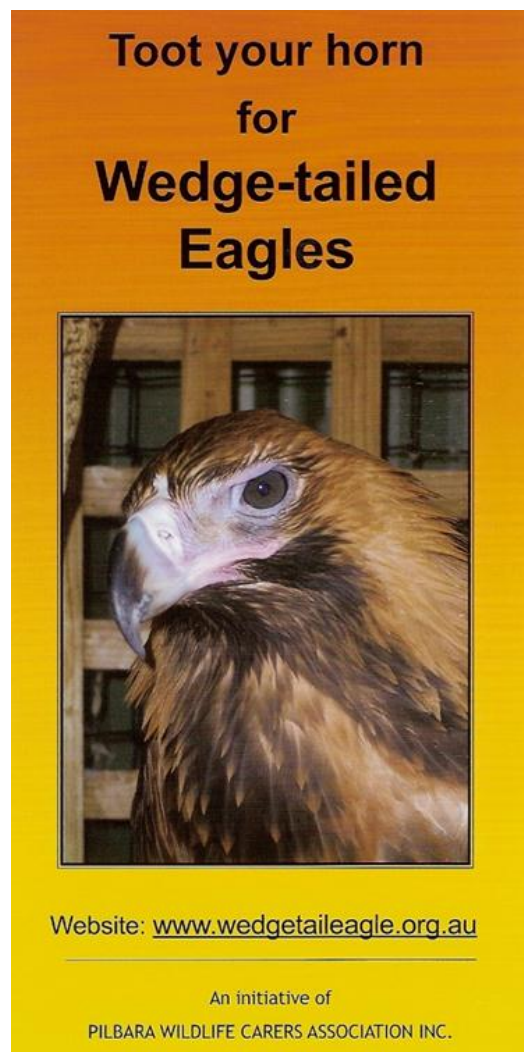
Wedge-tailed Eagle

Rose Best is the chairperson for the Pilbara Wildlife Carers Association Inc. in the Pilbara Region of Western Australian and is passionate about Wedge-tailed Eagles. She is organising a national campaign to protect them while feeding on road kills.

The committee of BANQ has agreed to support the campaign and has a quantity of bumper stickers and brochures.

The brochure and a bumper sticker which states "Toot your horn for Wedge tailed eagles". It has been quite successful educational campaign. The website has a national database of contact details for people to contact a carer anywhere in Australia if they should come across an injured Wedge-tailed Eagle.

The whole point of the website is to inform, educate and assist in the rescue of Wedge-tailed Eagles around Australia. Any photos sent in will acknowledge the photographer and links to related web pages welcomed.

A brochure with a yellow background. At the top, the text reads "Toot your horn for Wedge-tailed Eagles" in bold black font. Below the text is a photograph of a Wedge-tailed Eagle's head and neck, showing its brown feathers and sharp beak. At the bottom, the website address "www.wedgetaileagle.org.au" is listed, followed by "An initiative of PILBARA WILDLIFE CARERS ASSOCIATION INC." in smaller text.

Website: www.wedgetaileagle.org.au

An initiative of
PILBARA WILDLIFE CARERS ASSOCIATION INC.

Trip Report

Daintree River Cruise and Wild Wings & Swampy Things Walk

Get up early and get the birds!! Most birdwatchers are happy to be up early and out there with the birds, but for some of us who prefer a later-start (and a warm, cosy bed), this is a difficult concept to understand.

However, dangle a name that could be a 'lifer' eg Great-billed Heron and well, we can certainly muster the required enthusiasm.

On what had to be the coldest morning ever, with fog and mist

everywhere, we huddled in the boat to cruise down a misty Daintree River with the Daintree Boatman - Murray Hunt. The word freezing springs to mind, but we were warmed by blood-pumping motivation to seek and find the Great-billed Heron. Of course, one must remember to enjoy the journey and admire the beauty during the search, such as Osprey, Shining Flycatcher, Azure Kingfisher and several Papuan Frogmouth. Murray really had his eye in for finding the Papuan Frogmouth (NB this was a lifer that we hadn't anticipated) - mind you, they were all sleeping!! ... Another highlight was Little Kingfisher observed at close range diving repeatedly from riverine Mangrove Lily to catch and eat tiny shrimp.

But unfortunately, time escaped us and we dipped on our target bird, not a Great-billed Heron in sight. Our determined skipper, Murray was determined to please the group and offered to finish the day with another hunt. This time, spectacular views were obtained of Great-billed Heron standing at close range as well as flying at close proximity to the boat. How lucky. I wonder if getting out of bed early doesn't appeal to him either, especially on a cold and misty morning?

Thank you Murray Hunt, owner and operator of Daintree Boatman Nature Tours.
www.daintreerivertours.com.au

Earlier in the afternoon, we enjoyed a walk through a 40ha (nature reserve) local property 'Wild Wings and Swampy Things'. It's the home of Barbara Maslen and Allen Sheather and situated on Barratt Creek.



The early-birds warmed and ready

Photo courtesy of Ivor Preston

Over the last 25 years considerable effort has taken place to revegetate this once cleared property to return it to its former rainforest majesty. Rufous Fantail, Little Shrike-thrush, Grey Whistler and a family of Lovely Fairy-wren were the avian highlights.

*Thank you Barbara and Allan
www.wildwings.com.au*

In other news from the river, migrant species have started to return from their winter sojourn to PNG. Brown-backed Honeyeaters were first observed in mid

July. Sightings of Channel-billed Cuckoos and flocks of Metallic Starling are increasing. Small flocks of Pied Imperial Pigeon have also started to appear in the last week.

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.



www.redmillhouse.com.au
www.daintreebirdwatching.com.au
info@redmillhouse.com.au
07 4098 6233

Photographs from Daintree River cruise



Great-Billed Heron

Photo courtesy of Ian Montgomery - www.birdway.com.au



Papuan Frogmouth

Photo courtesy of Ian Northcott



Little Kingfisher Photo courtesy of Ian Northcott

Azure Kingfisher

Photo courtesy of Ian Northcott



Barrett the smiling crocodile

Photo courtesy of Ian Montgomery

Members Corner

Cold climate birding—two weeks in Iceland

As part of my work at Museum of Tropical Queensland, I had a research visit to Iceland, about as far as you can travel from Townsville without starting to head back. The contrasts between Queensland and Iceland are great, not just the extremes of climate, but the physical landscape of Iceland is largely treeless, at times appearing to be one great lava field. In June another stark difference is that Iceland is very cold but the 24-hour daylight allowed good daylight for birding both before and after work.

Iceland is a spectacular place for birding but the experience is quite different to that in Australia. The resident and non-vagrant species list is small, about 73 breeding species, but 351–370 species have been recorded with a huge number of vagrants. There are few passerines (10 breeding species) with the greatest bird diversity to be seen in the ducks and geese, and the seabirds. Trying to focus binoculars with frozen fingers was a challenge as was holding onto the spotting scope in the gale-strength winds.

Sea birds (as well as marine mammals and fish) have long been an essential part of the traditional Icelandic diet, and indeed it was these rich marine resources that allowed successful settlement to take

is also the chance to see bird groups that we never see in Australia such as Divers, Auks and 'sea ducks' including the fish-eating Mergansers. To see familiar waders in full breeding colour was a bonus.



Redwing

On arrival I briefly stopped at the Sandgerði Marine Centre, and immediately saw European Golden Plover in full breeding plumage. Later that day (about 9 pm) I was down on the Reykjavik shore and saw the familiar Ruddy Turnstone, correctly identified Purple Sandpiper, but was mystified by a small wader with distinctly orange and black streaked head and breast with a sharp cut-off line on the breast—the first time I had seen Sanderling in breeding colour. There were Common Redshank, Common Ringed Plover; on the water there were Red-breasted Merganser and the ubiquitous Eider Duck. The next morning I walked from the University of Iceland grounds to the city area where there is the small Lake Tjörnin, and was surprised to see Common Snipe everywhere (including the University car park) and drumming; Greylag Geese were breeding on the University reserve and Whooper



Rock Ptarmigan photo by Jörundur Svavarsson

place in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries. It was curious, if unsurprising perhaps, to see on a restaurant menu Minke Whale, smoked Puffin, Guillemot and also Ptarmigan (for the record I had skate wings).

The great visitor experience in Icelandic birding is to see the Boreal high-latitude species and to see some of these in great numbers and close proximity. There



Whooper Swan

Members Corner

Cold climate birding—two weeks in Iceland

Swan were on the lake, along with numerous Arctic Terns; Golden Plover were feeding on huge worms in the garden beds and Dunlin were on the paths.

Part of my visit was spent near Alftafjörður ('Swan Fjord') at the northeastern part of the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, and here it was evident that breeding Golden Plover, Common Snipe and Whimbrel and Raven were everywhere. 'Hawking' over these grasslands were Arctic Skua. In the many small lakes in the surrounding area were breeding Red-throated Diver and in one lake a pair of Great Northern Diver. In the fjord there were about 200 Whooper Swan, and I was lucky enough to see one windy afternoon a mass of about 700 or more Brent Goose. Also in the region are the spectacular White-

further offshore a pair of Long-tailed Duck; in a small adjacent lake were Great Scaup, European Wigeon, Tufted Duck and Red-throated Diver. I didn't aspire to spotting the handsome but uncommon Goosander, so on one of my last days, when driving alongside a river it was a real thrill to see a pair of Goosander and another flock Harlequin Duck, and later the same day another pair of Goosander up-country from the town of Borganes. In all a truly rewarding experience.

Dr Niel L. Bruce

Museum of Tropical Queensland | Queensland Museum
Townsville

www.mtq.qm.qld.gov.au

www.qm.qld.gov.au



Snæfellsjökull view

tailed Eagles. Nearby Alftafjörður is a small birch forest (the trees don't much exceed 3 metres in height) and I was really pleased to see close by one male Rock Ptarmigan, a species with fully feathered feet, and then a bit further down the road a pair dust bathing in the road. Curiously some of the common species were hard to locate—it took me 10 days before I had a clear sighting of Mealy Redpoll, and I never saw Snow Bunting.

Highlights were many, including Auks (Guillemots, Razorbill and Puffin), White-tailed Eagles and Divers, but it was the ducks that were most pleasing. Driving along the southern side of Snæfellsnes, we turned down a short track that came to a beach with a couple of small rocky reefs running out into the sea, and right in front of us was a flock of Harlequin Duck, a remarkably beautiful species, and a bit



Common Eider

Members Corner

Pilliga Scrub IBA under threat

Stretching across 3,000 square kilometres of country west of the Great Divide in New South Wales, the Pilliga Forest is the largest remnant semi-arid woodland in the state. Despite a history of disturbance, the rich and diverse ecosystems of the Pilliga support an astonishing diversity of plants and animals, including more than 200 species of birds. Birds Australia has designated the Pilliga an Important Bird Area for supporting populations of threatened and near-threatened bird species.

However, Cheryl Gole, Birds Australia's IBA Project Manager, reports that the Pilliga is now threatened by the proposed development of one of Australia's largest onshore natural gas reserves. The proposal would involve clearance of over 2,400 hectares of native vegetation in the Pilliga forest, a significant loss in a region that has already been so heavily cleared for agriculture in the past. Worse still, this clearing would include piecemeal fragmentation of the forest around pipelines and other infrastructure.

Birds Australia and BOCA are jointly calling on the NSW State Government to permanently protect the conservation values of this critically important remnant temperate woodland.

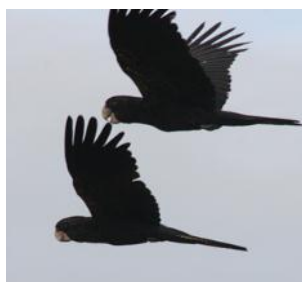
Sulphur-crested and Red-tailed Black Cockatoos in Cairns

A few weeks after cyclone Yasi a large flock (ca. 75) of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos were spotted flying northwards across the southern suburbs of Cairns. Flocks have been reported at the northern beach suburbs working over the beach almonds in particular. I suspect a few waves came in from the south over the weeks after the cyclone.

Now every afternoon not long before the afternoon fly past of the flocks Sulphur-crested Cockatoos heading north back to their rather plucked bare roosting trees near Raintrees shopping centre, the Red-tailed Black Cockatoos are seen heading south out of town in a flock of sometimes 40 or more. This reminds me of a situation in Rockhampton where the crows seemed to leave town to roost in favorite trees on the flood plain of an evening and would return to town by mid-morning.

Given the available food sources it will be interesting to see if these Red-tailed Black Cockatoos stay permanently around Cairns.

Greg Bortolussi



Dial M for Merger: an update

Over the last month much progress has been made in making the merger a reality.

In August, the BirdLife Australia Board decided that BirdLife's National Office will be located in the Green Building, at 60 Leicester Street in Carlton, the current National Office of Birds Australia. This decision has been communicated to members through our member magazines and through a letter to all BOCA members. The BOCA building in Nunawading will be retained by BirdLife, but will be leased to commercial tenants.

The BirdLife Board has also approved a visual identity for the new organisation. This begins the major project to develop BirdLife's brand, including publications, website and materials ready for a launch in early 2012.

BirdLife will commence operation in January. Over the coming months we will be moving staff to combine them together in one National Office and aligning our processes and systems. This is a busy time for both Birds Australia and BOCA, but our staff and volunteers will, as far as possible, continue to deliver normal services to members, volunteers and supporters over this time.



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

Members Corner

From Birding-Aus. A photographer caught this special moment, what a privilege to see. It's a stunning shot of a pigeon with a squab under each wing. Enjoy the pic.



For those people who missed this pic on Birdline, or who don't look at the website, here is a shot by Kevin Bartram in Victoria of a White-necked Heron. Someone said it was preparing for the "Royal Spoonbill Wedding"



A couple of laughs:

from Ruth Woodrow;

I work at Serendip Sanctuary, a bird and wildlife sanctuary near Geelong. The local primary school leases a classroom in our park and each grade gets to spend a full week with us, where they learn about the environment, our birds and animals, and are allocated jobs to help look after the park. Us rangers get to deliver sessions on all sorts of relevant topics, mine being birdwatching and how to identify and record birds.

Today the school teacher was compiling the day's list of birds the students had seen and identified in the park. She called out to the kids, "What's that little blue bird we saw today, what's it called?", and one of the kids (Grade 3) immediately called out "Oh, I know, it was the Superb Hairy Friend!". This was not a joke and I haven't stopped laughing about it since.

The kids are really learning, in their own cute way.

from Karen Doyle;

Has anyone seen a 'Giant Rainbow Ibis'? My 5yo nephew has. Otherwise known as a Peacock.

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



NOTICE BOARD



2012 Congress & Campout

The Congress and Campout date back to the early 20th century, forming some of Birds Australia's earliest activities and the tradition is set to continue after we become BirdLife Australia. The 2012 Congress will be held on 15–16 September (all day Saturday and Sunday morning) at Bishop Druitt College, Coffs Harbour, NSW. There will be a call for papers later, but if you are keen to participate in the Congress, you can contact Andrew Ley or Peter Higgins who will supply you with the necessary information. The Campout will be held on 16–19 September (Sunday afternoon to Wednesday); further details coming soon.

Calling all students

2012 Student Research Awards Now Open

As part of Birds Australia's commitment to fostering ornithological research and conservation, we manage both the annual Stuart Leslie Bird Research Award and the Professor Allen Keast Research Award. These postgraduate prizes are conferred on the most promising students working on ornithology at Australian universities. The Stuart Leslie Award also has a component dedicated to meeting the costs of attending ornithological and ecological conferences, enabling students to present their research both in Australia and overseas. Applications are open to Honours, Masters and PhD students alike and close on 31 March of each year. For more information, head to the Birds Australia website.

Calendar of Events

September

- **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 riflebird@activ8.net.au or 4096 5051
- **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.** Venue will be advised via the website.

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



Remember to check the Townsville Regional Bird Observers activities ~ www.trboc.org.au



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 .. bang@birdsaustralia.com.au
I wish you successful birding.

**December newsletter deadline
~ 22 November 2011**

