



THE NEW FROGMOUTH

All correspondence to: cairnsbirders@yahoo.com.au
or connect with us on [Facebook](#).

As we take our next step, let us remember the first people to walk this land.

Cairns Birders is a group of people who share common interests. We are not a club. There is no leader. Those joining in any outings/activities are expected to follow the 'common space' expectations and do so at their own risk. NO trespassing on habitat or private property.

EVENTS:

Sunday	11th January	7:00am	Yorkeys Knob Golf Course
			Changed due to wet weather - after the golf course area we may check the local shore line for seabird blow-ins. Meet at the car park, bottom of Wattle St, Yorkeys Knob.
Sunday	18th January	7am	Racecourse area TBA

ONLINE SHOP

Cairns Birders merchandise

Look out for sales

All designs are available as car stickers, caps, T-shirts, cushions, aprons, telephone covers and many many other options.

All profits from sales of images displaying "Cairns Birders"

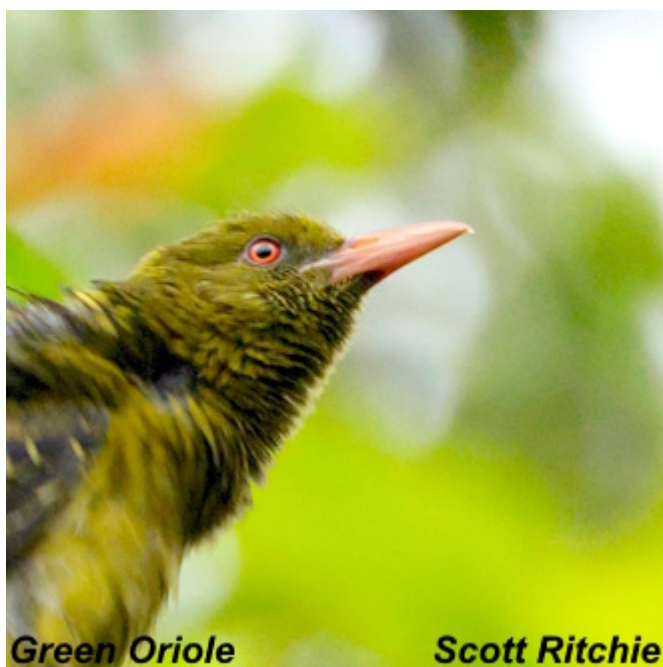
go to Cairns Birders for miscellaneous expenses. [Redbubble Store](#) Or log into [redbubble.com](https://www.redbubble.com) and search for "Cairns Birders"

Art by Yorz Trooley



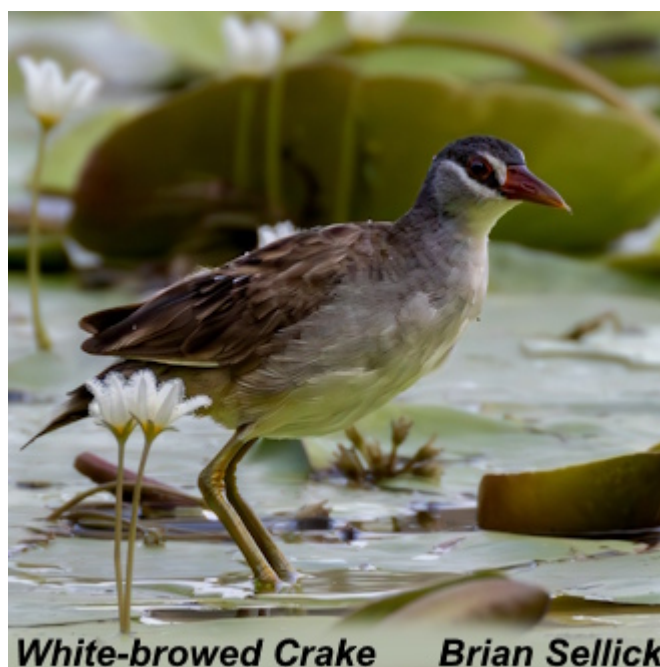
An early start for the 25 who joined us at Cattana Wetlands. If you've not been here before, put it on your list. It's a great example of how hard work and dedication can transform a mined site into a rich and diverse nature reserve. This is one of our regular Sunday destinations, with a visit about every two months.

We began birding in the car park and quickly racked up a good list, including **Radjah Shelduck**, **Orange-footed Scrubfowl**, and **Great** and **Little Egrets**. Flying overhead were a pair of **Channel-billed Cuckoos**—only three of us saw them initially, though more were seen later. It turned out to be something of a cuckoo morning, with **Sahul Brush Cuckoo**, **Little Bronze-cuckoo**, **Eastern Koel**, and **Pheasant Coucal** also recorded.



Brown-backed Honeyeaters were plentiful, especially along the water's edge. From the shore a few lucky people were treated to excellent views of **White-browed Crakes** walking across the lily pads, a bit like **Comb-crested Jacanas**. Others glimpsed a **Pale-vented Bush-hen** as it flitted across the path.

As we moved into the forested area, we began to see some of the birds we'd only heard earlier, such as **Green Oriole**, **Black Butcherbird**, and **Spangled Drongo**. **Yellow Honeyeaters** were very vocal but not always easy to spot, while





Spreading out like this does trigger my FOMO, and here's why—not everyone saw the **Koel**, the crakes, the Bush-hen, or the **Dusky Moorhen**. Some of our out-of-town visitors may laugh at the inclusion of the Moorhen, as it's common in many places, but it's a "good" bird for the Cairns area! The counter-argument for those suffering with FOMO, of course, is that if we hadn't been spread out, we may collectively have missed some of these birds altogether.



It's common on this walk for the group to splinter or for people to lag behind—there's simply so much to see. Some of us were distracted by butterflies (Common Crow, Ulysses, and Bordered Rustic were seen), plants, dragonflies, frogs, beetles (Scott photographed a leopard-spotted **Punctate Flower Chafer**), and even crustaceans. Yes, Janet pointed out a crab on the path—a **Tioman Crab** (also known as the White-clawed Mangrove Crab). These attractive, and rather feisty, crabs are common above the high-tide mark in mangroves and forests adjacent to water.



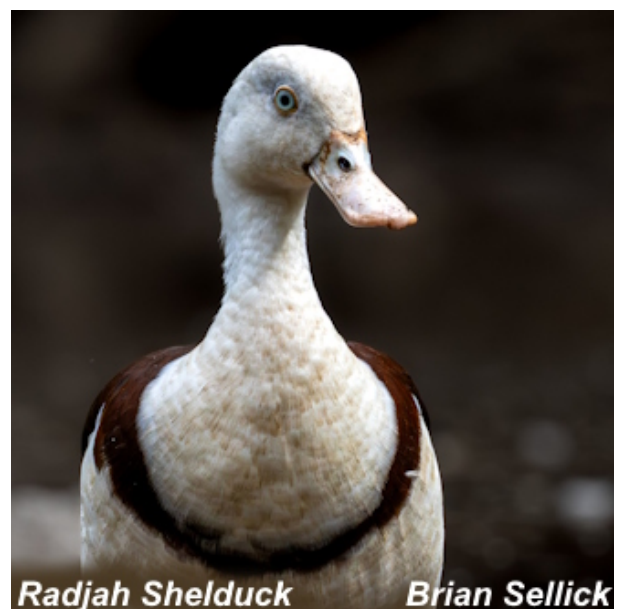
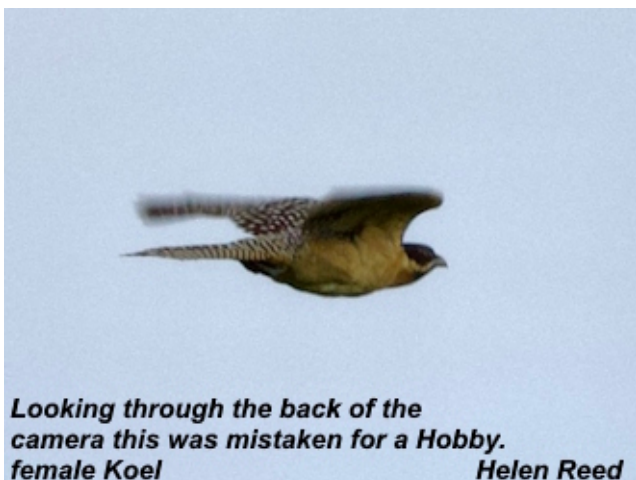
But there was one thing we all definitely saw—mosquitoes, and plenty of them!

46 bird species for the day.

Radjah Shelduck, Pacific Black Duck, Orange-footed Megapode, Peaceful Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove, Torresian Imperial-Pigeon, Pheasant Coucal, Channel-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Koel, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Sahul Brush Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, Dusky Moorhen, White-browed Crake, Pale-vented Bush-hen, Masked Lapwing, Comb-crested Jacana, Australasian Darter, Little Pied Cormorant, Australian



White Ibis, Little Egret, Little Heron, Great Egret, Laughing Kookaburra, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater, Yellow Honeyeater, Brown-backed Honeyeater, Dusky Honeyeater, Helmeted Friarbird, Large-billed Gerygone, Varied Triller, Green aka Yellow Oriole, Australasian Figbird, White-breasted Woodswallow, Black Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Spangled Drongo, Magpie-lark, Golden-headed Cisticola, Welcome Swallow, Metallic Starling, Common Myna, Mistletoebird, Sahul Sunbird, Scaly-breasted Munia



Cairns Botanic Gardens: Tuesday's Guided Bird Walk: Shane Kennedy

*This walk is free and open to all. It is part of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens program of activities.
7:30 Tuesday mornings. [Meet near the 'Friends' office, near the Conservatory.](#)*



It's the season for **Cairns Birdwing** caterpillars. Sean had spotted a chrysalis when we'd parked the car but no grubs so I put the call out and Mayin just couldn't let it go finding one and then another. Others joined in too and soon we had more caterpillars than I could poke a finger at. A couple of butterflies were about so we had the before and after presented nicely.

We did a u-turn and headed back to the boardwalk pausing to admire the vermilion ripening fruit of the **Scrub Breadfruit** aka Urchin Pandanus, *Benstoea monticola*. The boardwalk takes us through the lush paperbark/pandanus swamp full of interest with palms, King ferns, Red Beech, native nutmeg, and native pepper vines. It

If I was the only one to turn up on one of these off-season Tuesdays, I'd probably do the walk anyway. As Scott is want to say, 'every day is different, you just don't know what you're going to see'. No chance of doing a lone walk at the moment with attendance at near record levels. Joining me today were regulars Sean, Scott, Lois, Jeff, Josie, Mayin, Mark, Laurie and Ian. Less regular, but welcome locals Michael, Xian, Mal, Darlene, Kris, Mary, Peter with Janette there to see us off. But wait, there's more; Helen, Monika and Klara, plus Kerry from Brisbane, Karen from Canberra, Steph from Newcastle, Celine from France, Hilary and Phoebe from the UK – that's 28! That's crazy!!



is rich in wildlife and over the years has delivered some fabulous marsupials, reptiles and birds so the anticipation is always high. However, reality check, dense forest birding is tough. It wasn't until we were emerging near Freshwater Lake that Karen noticed a movement. Another few steps and there it was, a **Little Kingfisher** posing nicely.



Nankeen Night Heron Shane Kennedy



Little Kingfisher Scott Ritchie

With the widespread rains, the water birds are spoilt for choice and the temptations beyond Freshwater Lake have taken most of them away. None-the-less there was a **Darter**, a **Little Pied Cormorant** and **Little Black Cormorant** keeping the dumped hybrid duck company. Down by the lake's overflow into Saltwater Creek, the 'sushi train' was open with a **Nankeen Night Heron** and **Little Heron** dining in.

Saltwater Lake gave us a pair of **Shining Flycatchers** playing hard to get in the Mangroves while up on the bank were the **Radjah Shelduck** family. Jeff counted 9 large ducklings or rather duckteens, which is what they started with several weeks ago. Great parenting.

Plenty of blooms on the paperbarks in Honeyeater passage but not a lot of action apart from a couple of **Dusky Honeyeaters**, **Helmeted Friarbirds** and **Australian Figbirds**. **Yellow Honeyeaters** had been heard earlier, and one seen quite well in this area too. A **Little Bronze-cuckoo** was calling from the canopy, as was a **Sahul Brush-cuckoo** that eventually changed trees giving us a glimpse as it passed by. A final highlight near the White Cedar is



Radjah Shelduck Scott Ritchie

the **Papuan Frogmouth**, now with a recently hatched fluff-ball of a chick. We look forward to watching this grow.

Pace picked up at this point, the body has become accustomed to a coffee hit and an exchange of pleasantries. This time it came with a sweet surprise as a pair of **Sahul Sunbirds** are busy finishing off their nest at the cafe just meters away. Does it get any better?!



Sean Han

Stone-curlew, Masked Lapwing, Australasian Darter, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Australian White Ibis, Nankeen Night Heron, Little Heron, Great Egret, Little Kingfisher, Torresian Kingfisher, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Rainbow Lorikeet, Yellow Honeyeater, Dusky Honeyeater, Helmeted Friarbird, Large-billed Gerygone, Varied Triller, Yellow Oriole, Australasian Figbird, White-breasted Woodswallow, Black Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Magpie-lark, Shining Flycatcher, Welcome Swallow, Common Myna, Mistletoebird, Scaly-breasted Munia



Great Egret

Shane Kennedy

Another great birding trip with 43 species for the morning.

Radjah Shelduck, Muscovy Duck x Mallard (hybrid), Australian Brushturkey, Orange-footed Megapode, Spotted Dove, Peaceful Dove, Torresian Imperial-Pigeon, Channel-billed Cuckoo, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Sahul Brush Cuckoo, Papuan Frogmouth, Australian Swiftlet, Bush



Sahul Sunbird

Scott Ritchie

Letters

Firstly, and very importantly, we don't have a treasurer as we don't exist as a club. We're just a hotch-potch mob of birdwatchers, nature lovers and associated oddballs who enjoy a stroll in the bush.

Happily we do have a collector and protector of the funds kindly donated through containers-for-change or dropped into the honour box in return for the wonderful feasts presented during the festival, Christmas etc.

This money is commonly (and very unfairly) referred to variously as Rowdy's Retirement Revenue or the Editors' Bali Bonus but the fact remains it's there for the preservation of our birds, their habitat, and educating the masses on the importance of preserving our natural assets.

People with ideas on how we could best spend these ill-gotten gains for the betterment of our environment are welcome to discuss their thoughts openly with others during one of our regular strolls through the wonderful patch of bush we call home.

Only good can come from it, RowdyB.

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Hello team, My wife and I are members of the Birdlife Sunshine Coast and Birds Queensland and have booked a trip to Cairns in early February. We are looking forward to joining you on some of your outings.

Is there anywhere in Cairns where we can hire a scope and tripod as this may save us from carting our gear?

Our mobile number is 0407 263 269 and would be much obliged if you could provide any suggestions.

Cheers, Ian and Jan Gibson

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In response to last week's article on Black-winged Monarch;

As I recall the first Slater AUS field guide referred to Black-winged Monarch as Pearly.

Cheers, Drew

Observations



Goanna in the Owlet
Nightjar hollow Drew Haffenden

And also from Drew (letter above) comes this piece of news.

Many of you will be familiar with that hollow at Emerald Creek, famous as the roost for the Owlet Nightjar for many years. Drew captured a new tenant! Did the Goanna dine in, or did the bird escape? Do let us know if you have any updates!

Local artist Klara Royster has received a grant to produce a short “stop motion” film about Nordy. For an example of Klara’s talents see <https://calloftherunningtide.com.au/multimedia/>.

I recently met with her after she expressed an interest in making the film about the Cairns Esplanade shorebirds. I told her the Nordy story, and she was hooked. Indeed, Klara and a friend were treated to a “meet the actor” event at the north end of the ‘Nade just before Christmas.

Klara provides a summary of the project.

‘Call of the running Tide’ (CRT) is an environmental arts exhibition supporting local artists and promoting awareness of environmental issues in Far North Queensland.

The focus of the next innovative iteration of CRT is the littoral zones of our tropical region, the dynamic, biodiverse spaces between the land and sea, which will be held as a group exhibit during the 2026 Cairns Festival.

As a Cairns emerging artist I am developing a new digital artwork centred on the littoral zone of the Cairns Esplanade wetlands. This site was chosen for its unique juxtaposition: a constructed inner-city promenade sharply bordering an abundant natural wetland. In the heart of our city, and viewed by thousands of locals and visitors daily, it is a sanctuary for diverse bird species - many of which are endangered or migratory. The Cairns Esplanade provides an extraordinary opportunity to witness thriving biodiversity without leaving the city centre. Yet, despite its accessibility, I believe the depth of the wetlands ecological wealth is overlooked and under appreciated.

This projects aims to highlight and celebrate this biodiversity, specifically the avian species, through a stop motion format digital film. Digital art is an accessible and inclusive medium that offers a universal mode of communication regardless of education, physical ability, ethnicity, age or language. Additionally, there is the potential for flexible distribution, from exhibition screens to online platforms, extending its impact beyond the gallery.

An essential component of this project is the initial research and concept development phases which will begin in January 2026. The emphasis is on fully immersive fieldwork: spending time observing and exploring the environment, documenting species and human interactions, and acquiring local knowledge. From these revelations, I will develop a concept that is site-responsive and environmentally and culturally respectful. This foundation will inform the development of my work which will be done in my own studio and on site. A secondary stage of the project will involve installation and exhibition in August, with a following travelling exhibition along the coastal regions of Queensland.



This work will aim to highlight coexistence, and to inspire continued conscious connection, appreciation and preservation. In many climate statements, the emphasis is on damage and despair, whilst this is an urgent and valid message, I am interested in complementing it to the same affect with a statement of hope, connection, and pride. If viewers see the Cairns Esplanade as more than just an inner city recreational space, but a living ecosystem that they are apart of and can affect, it will foster a deeper emotional connection and a strong sense of conservational stewardship.



Ultimately, this project seeks to use digital animation to bridge communication between science and community. By displaying the biodiversity of Cairns Esplanade in an engaging, approachable and positive way I hope to ignite public curiosity, promote environmental pride, and encourage positive community attitudes towards conservation.

Why do you want to achieve this through your project? (250 words)

I want to achieve this as I am a strong advocate for environment preservation and believe art has a unique and impactful ability to express scientific ideas, that may otherwise be overlooked or discounted, visually and to a wider audience. As a Cairns local emerging artist I feel a strong connection to the nature, wildlife and landscape of our tropical region. I believe there is an urgent need to reconnect the public with nature in the face of the climate crisis, however fear-driven messaging can sometimes be overwhelming and cause a loss of hope and motivation, I want to be hopeful and inspiring in my approach to this project. Through engaging, inclusive and locally grounded art I want to raise awareness and encouraging a sense of value for the community to support, advocate, and take responsibility for. Finally, this project represents a significant step forward in my artist development providing the opportunity to develop new skills and create new connections within the local arts scene. It gives me the opportunity to combine my passions of art and environmental conservation into an ambitious and locally impactful project.

Who will you work with to achieve this, and how will the project impact those involved? For example, you, the community, and artists/cultural workers. (250 words)

During the research and development phase of this project, I will closely consult and collaborate with a variety of local community experts to deepen my understanding of the Cairns Esplanade littoral zone. This includes, but is not limited to, Cairns Esplanade bird watching groups and Cairns historical societies, to produce a respectful, informed creative response. This community involved discussion will directly influence and guide the evolution of the project's flexible concept, tone and focus. There will be a reciprocal exchange of knowledge between myself and community members.

I will work closely with the 12 local artist involved in The Call of the Running Tide Exhibition, particularly its founder and curator, Jill Chism, along with other experienced environmental artists. There is social, economical, and career development benefits to all artists involved.

The final body of work will engage and educate audiences, previously the Cairns Festival has estimated an audience of over 13,000 people, about our local irreplaceable Esplanade biodiversity. It will impact a broader community dialogue around preservation of the environment and showcase the contribution of collaborative, community involved environmental art. It provides social benefits by fostering a sense of place, promoting community engagement, and encouraging pro-environmental behaviours. Festivals can revitalise local economies through tourism.



In addition, the exhibition will travel along the Queensland coast allowing additional artists to be involved and comment on their own local littoral zones. This extends the conversation to a wider audience and gives greater impact for the artists involved.

And if you see Klara along the 'Nade, say g'day and have a chat about the birds. Good birding and great shooting!

A *Big Day* in birding is equal parts planning, stamina, and wonder. It's about seeing how many species can be found in a single day, but more than that, it's about immersion — following the light and, in our case, avoiding the weather, and maximising the tides.

David, Annie, and I planned to meet before 0630 - long after sunrise, but hey, it is New Year's Day after all. It is also Annie's birthday. Our plan was to enjoy birding within the Cairns local government area (LGA) and get our Cairns eBird list off to a good start for the year. Our goal was to also aim for a Cairns Lifer for Annie as a birthday tick, which meant we might need to forgo some of our other targets. For me, my first tick for 2026 was **Pacific Swifts** as I left the house (very nice).



Our first stop was Redford Road, where **Golden-headed Cisticola**, **Tawny Grassbirds**, and **Singing Bushlarks** all called from vantage points in the long grasses. **Pale-vented Bush-hens** made contact calls, hidden in the rank undergrowth. **Chestnut-breasted Mannikins**, **Crimson Finches** perched drying out after the recent monsoonal rains, whilst **Tree Martins**, **Fairy Martins**, **Welcome Swallows**, **White-breasted Wood-swallows**, and **Pacific Swifts** fed

overhead. Also seen at this location were **Peaceful**, **Spotted**, and **Bar-shouldered Doves**, **Metallic Starlings**, and **Australian Darter**.

27 species at our first stop for the day.

As the day warmed, we were determined to move north along the coast to avoid the worst of the tourist traffic and those heading home after a big night out. Next stop, the Port Douglas area, where we added some of the wetland specialists to the list: **Comb-crested Jacana** picked delicately across lily pads, **Dusky Moorhens** fussed along the edges, **Plumed** and **Wandering Whistling Ducks** fed in the





samphire marshes refreshed by recent rain. On closer inspection we also located the regular yet uncommon **Chestnut Teal** and **Pied Herons** (another two highlights). The more common **Grey Teal**, **Pacific Black Ducks**, **Black-fronted Dotterel**, **Little Pied Cormorant**, **Little Black Cormorant**, **Plumed Egret**, **Australian Grebe**, **Pacific Golden Plover**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**, **Red-necked Stint**, **Pied Stilt**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Silver Gull**,

Masked Lapwing, **Pacific Heron**, **Radjah Shelducks**, **7 Glossy Ibis** (another highlight), and **Magpie Geese**.

Overhead **Black Kites**, **Nankeen Kestrels**, **Osprey**, a **Whistling Kite**, and **White-bellied Sea-Eagles** rode the warming air. A little further north, and we picked up **Welcome Swallow**, **Barn Swallow**, **Fairy** and **Tree Martins** feasting over grasslands.

A roadside stop at a location where I had seen **Spotted Whistling-ducks** and **Oriental Pratincole** a few days earlier delivered **Great** and **Little Egrets**, **Royal Spoonbills**, and **Black-necked Storks** — their colours flashing brilliantly in the sun as they stalked the shallows of the ephemeral swamp just north of Wonga Beach.

A Big Day in Cairns isn't just a tally exercise. It's a journey through habitats that few places can match in a single sweep: mangroves, coast, wetlands, woodland, and ancient rainforest. It reminds you how interconnected these places are, and how lucky we are to have them so close to home. Every stop added something new — a reminder of how generous this region can be if you're paying attention.

A quiet moment on a track near the Daintree Village produced another of the highlights of the day: the



Buff-breasted Paradise-kingfisher, first heard, and then seen in all its glorious plumage. This moment was only foreshortened by the aggressive onslaught from many mosquitos which had us seeking refuge in the car once more. We added **Little Bronze-cuckoo**, **Sahul Brush Cuckoo**, plus **Scaley-breasted** and **Rainbow Lorikeets**, **Sahul Sunbird**, **Figbirds**, **Helmeted Friarbirds** and **Dusky Honeyeaters** as they fed on the *Melicope elleryana* - Pink Euodia.

Wet season birding demands patience, and a big day teaches you when to pause as well as when to push on. We made our way back to Cairns for lunch before heading south. As we regrouped over lunch and a cold drink we had tallied 91 species.

The heat and humidity built as we headed south to the locality of Bellenden Kerr - hopeful of finding the **Australian Magpie** that has been frequenting that spot. (It would have been a Cairns lifer for Annie's birthday however a large cloud burst stopped play at that location).

We shifted strategy, targeting the cane fields, banana plantations, and edge habitats. **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**, **Brown-backed Honeyeaters**, and **Cryptic Honeyeaters** were located by their familiar calls, while **Double-eyed Fig-Parrots** zipped past like green bullets.

As afternoon slid toward evening, we returned towards Cairns, where the day often gets a second wind. However, dusk brought the final chapter - a thunder storm at France Road led to an early loss of light as the cloud burst closed in, reducing the visibility. **Bush Stone-curlews** called eerily from the edges of the cane, an out of season **Australian**



Reed-warbler called, **Buff-banded Rails** and **Pale-vented Bushens** skulked. A scan of the sky revealed large numbers of **White Ibis** and a single **Straw-necked Ibis** coming in to roost, along with **Plumed** and **Wandering Whistling-ducks** in large numbers. Meanwhile once more, **Welcome Swallows**, **Fairy Martins**, **Australian Swiftlets** and **White-breasted Wood-swallows** hawked the skies on the edge of the storm front.

When the last species was added and our lists finally closed, the tally was impressive — 104 birds for the day added to eBird with three others left hanging. A possible Oriental Cuckoo seen flying across the front of the car but not all of us saw it, also a Brown Goshawk, and House Sparrows were seen incidentally whilst driving and not in safe places to stop.

A very happy day out birding with friends.

There were quite a few Cairns Birders out on day 1 of 2026 - it's a great way to start the year! Ed



I'll cover some of our spectacular figs as individual species as the year progresses. However as they are such an important genus with interesting characteristics I'll deal with the genus as a whole here.

Figs may be trees, shrubs or even climbers. There are approaching 1 000 species around the world but mostly centered from India to Oceania. We have more than thirty in the Wet Tropics and nearby ecosystems. While most have entire leaves there are some species with significant lobing but all are simple leaves. New leaves are wrapped in pointed stipules which nearly always fall early to leave obvious scars. The leaves, twigs and stem produce milky latex. The tough bark has been used for making string, twine and even rope. Tapa cloth is the beaten inner bark of figs or other Moraceae (the fig and mulberry family).

It is the inflorescence structure of figs which is most interesting. These can be borne on the trunk (cauliflorous), branches (ramiflorous) or often in the leaves (axillary). The flowers occur within an inverted stem and the true fruit are those little hard bits in your fig. The end of the fig it has a small hole sometimes largely covered in scales which may be stacked in an interlocking pattern. Pollination of the little flowers inside the fig involves a complex interaction with wasps.





What bird species is this

Answer to last week's quiz -Rufous Whistler



Rowdy's Ramblings:

Bird song and music: KENTUCKY SONGBIRD BY ROGER WHITTAKER

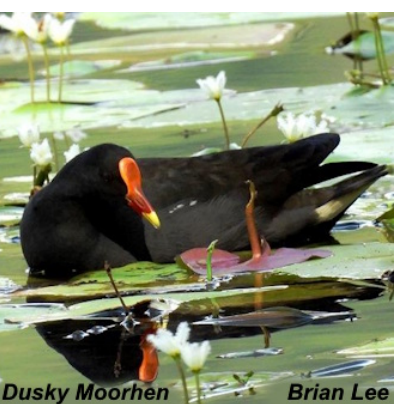
Cairns Birders' Archives are now available for a mere \$5 each including postage. The flash-drive contains more than **830 newsletters** and related articles going back some **27 years** and you can update it yourself as each new newsletter appears. Simply SMS your postal address to Rowdy B on 0406 068 295 and promise to buy him a beer someday. Remember, if you want to contribute to Cairns Birders funds, consider taking your cans and bottles to a recycling point near you and direct the funds to the account below. Alternatively, meet us on our **'first outing of the month' Centenary Lakes or Cattana Wetlands** and **hand over your empties to Rowdy.** CAIRNS BIRDERS Containers for Change Account C10211514.

Extra! Extra! read all about it!

The hunt is on for a [Red-whiskered Bulbul in SA](#)

We don't normally run job advertisements but hey,
this is for a [Field Assistant in Ornithology ... in Finland!](#)

Randoms ... locals birding locally



Norty Corner

