



THE CAIRNS 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 | 12th April | 7am | JCU - trying to keep it local - there is a public car park around the back. Take McGregor Rd, turn right into James Cook University Rd; turn left after the carpark and follow the road around in a great semi-circle. Public Car Park will be on the left HERE |
| Sunday | 19th April | 7am | Andy's Patch |
| Sunday | May 15th - 19th | | Camping at Artemis Station |
| Cairns Birders' Festival | Friday 28th August - Saturday 5th September | | |
| Cairns Birders' Excursion | Tanzania | October 2026 | FULL |

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



The eastern horizon glowed a dusky rose as we prepared to break our fast. These moments are fleeting; the light had already begun to change before we'd finished our coffee, transforming darkness into light and filling us with hope for a rewarding morning of birding ahead.

Cattana Wetlands is a remarkable success story. Once a mosaic of lowland freshwater swamps and dense tropical rainforest (pre-1920s), it became a sugar cane farm before being sold by Franco Cattana in 1993 to the Mulgrave Shire Council for sand and gravel mining in the 2000s. Since opening as a conservation park in 2009, it has undergone an extraordinary transformation. A small remnant of forest had always remained including the vulnerable Feather Palm Forest, but with thoughtful conservation planting this once again has become a biodiverse haven. Birds and wildlife of old are returning, thanks in large part to Geoff and his team of dedicated volunteers, the "Jabirus," who have worked tirelessly and effectively since 2013.



About 25 birders gathered, beginning almost immediately as we exchanged greetings. Some had already spotted a Black-necked Stork surveying the entrance from the tower at the roundabout, and Vishy, first to arrive, already had a list underway. It even included a group of released roosters enthusiastically cock-a-doodle-dooing nearby. Our casual birding during the meet-and-greet soon gave way to a more structured reconnoitre of the car park and its surrounds.

One call in particular intrigued us - a slightly raspy *chirrup*, unlike anything we could readily identify. Could it

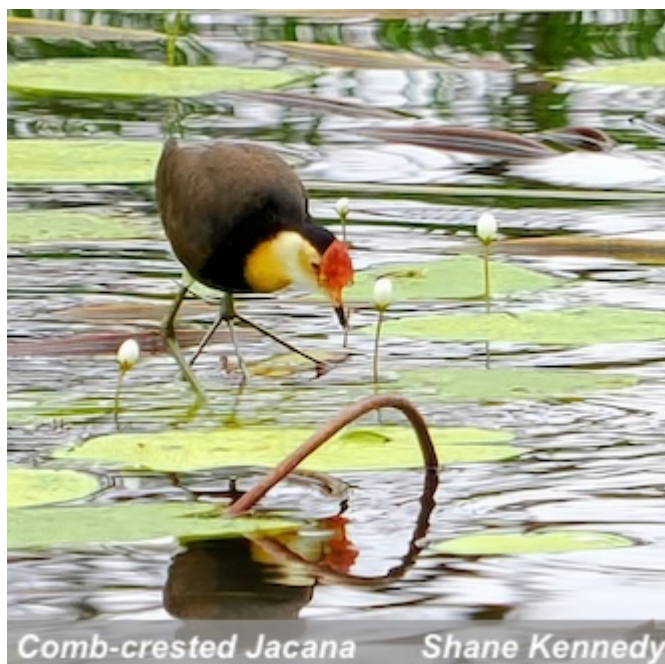
be part of the **Helmeted Friarbird's** repertoire? There were plenty of **Green aka Yellow Orioles** about, their glorious, chortling yodel ringing through the trees. Gradually, we began to get better views. One Oriole in particular, between bursts of song, was making that same raspy *chirrup*. A small but satisfying mystery solved—live and learn.





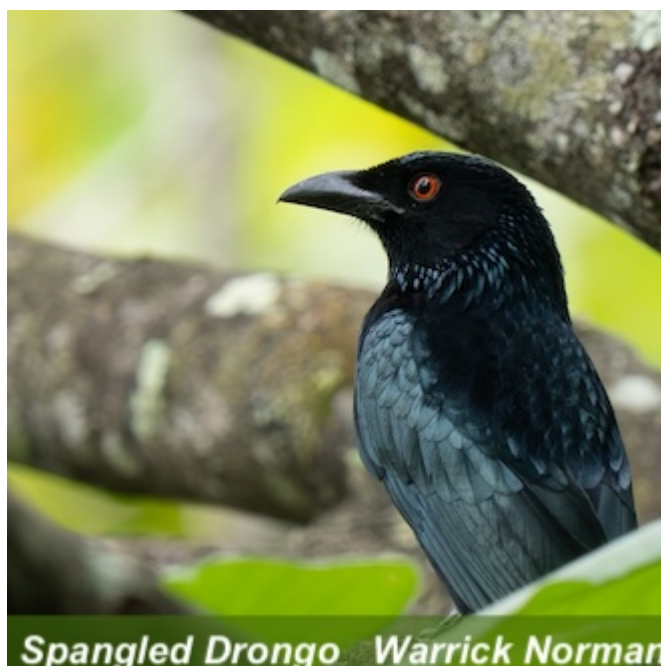
Black Butcherbird Eden Gray-Spence

Not entirely true, though—a week earlier Jake had reported a fluffy Black Bittern chick at a nest. With that in mind, we made our way to Kingfisher Pool. The stick nest was still just visible on the island, but there was no sign of any bird at all.



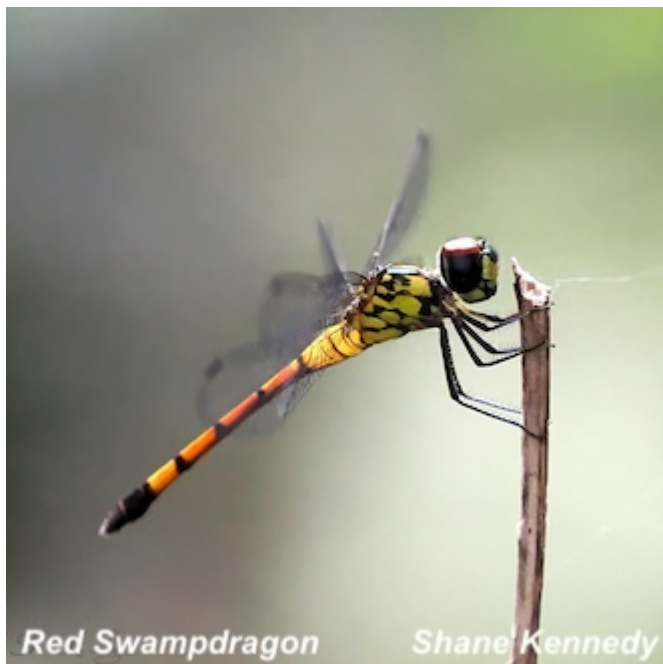
Comb-crested Jacana Shane Kennedy

Darren arrived late and bypassed the car park, waiting instead near the first bridge. There, he quietly pointed out a **Black Bittern** in the tangled of branches and vines. It slipped rapidly out of sight, much to Jake's chagrin. We continued to the Crake Pond, where, as the first of us arrived, another Black Bittern flushed and flew. It landed briefly in the paperbarks across the water before vanishing again. Moments later, yet another flew from the same trees and disappeared. Jake's target species was fast becoming his bogey bird.



Spangled Drongo Warrick Norman

Meanwhile, part of the group had pushed on towards the ford/causeway. We followed, catching up quickly as they became bogged down on a muddy track. Cutting our losses, we returned to the sealed paths around the ponds. Bird activity was surprisingly sparse; **Brown and Brown-backed Honeyeaters** were few and far between. Sean managed to spot a single **Yellow Honeyeater** high in a palm, and a few **Spangled Drongos** offered brief but welcome views. Two **Pacific Black Ducks** were the only waterbirds we encountered, though Snowflake Water Lilies supported plenty of **Comb-crested Jacanas**, and **Welcome Swallows** filled the air above.



Red Swampdragon

Shane Kennedy

As we made our way out, we spotted a lone **Dollarbird** perched on the wires. “That goes on the list,” I said—and so it did. The final tally came to 39 species for the morning, better than we’d expected.

There were other delights to enjoy. Shepherd’s Crook terrestrial orchids were abundant, heavy with seed pods. Leichhardt Trees were into a second flowering, their striking orange-and-white blooms forming spherical clusters reminiscent of a coronavirus. Dragonflies, meanwhile, provided a worthy challenge for the photographers among us.



Leichhardt Tree

Shane Kennedy



Scaly-breasted Lorikeet

Jake Moores

Pacific Black Duck, Orange-footed Megapode, Red Junglefowl (Domestic type), Peaceful Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove, Pacific Koel, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, Bush Stone-curlew, Comb-crested Jacana, Black-necked Stork, Black Bittern, Rainbow Bee-eater, Azure Kingfisher, Laughing Kookaburra, Torresian Kingfisher, Dollarbird, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Rainbow Lorikeet, Yellow Honeyeater, Brown-backed Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Helmeted Friarbird, Large-billed Gerygone, Varied Triller, Yellow Oriole, Australasian Figbird, Black Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Spangled Drongo, Magpie-lark, Welcome Swallow, Metallic Starling, 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.](#)*

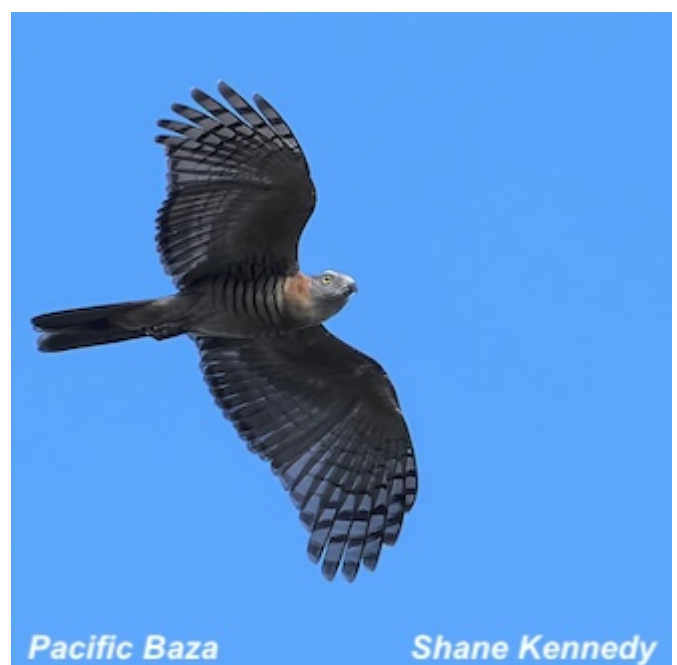


We met Jeff as we parked the car, followed shortly by Lois, and together we walked to the meeting place ... only to find no one there. Slowly, the regular birders arrived: Laurie, Kazu, Darlene, and Roy. For a moment, I thought we might have no visitors, but then Kevin, from Japan, turned up. We were all assembled and ready to go. As the walk progressed, our numbers grew with the arrival of Graham ("Here comes a jogger," joked Lois), followed by Curtis and Jake.



Skipping the usual formalities and caterpillar side trips, we headed straight for Freshwater Lake. Here we saw plenty of **Rainbow Bee-eaters** and hundreds of **Metallic Starlings** flocking together. Moriarty was there, of course, and a pair of **Double-eyed Fig-Parrots** offered brief but rewarding views before disappearing. High overhead were **Australian Swiftlets**, and Jeff spotted a few **White-breasted Woodswallows**. A couple of **Ospreys** were also present, with one occupying the nest.

Approaching the pagoda, Sean spotted a raptor - no, make that three! Two adult **Pacific Baza** were being harassed by a very vocal juvenile. They moved from tree to tree, the juvenile flapping its wings and calling loudly. It was quite a treat for us, though perhaps less enjoyable for the parents.





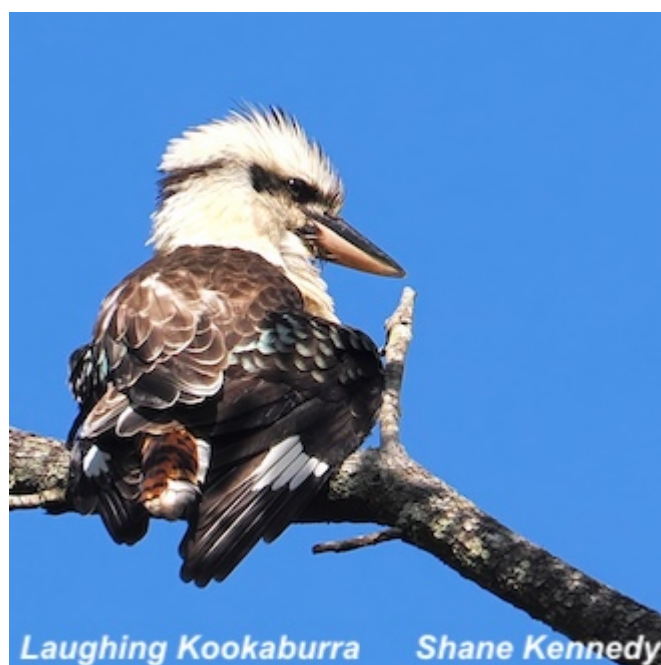
Near the ant-plant demonstration site stands an oddly out-of-place tree. Dwarfed by the adjacent fig tree, it is easily overlooked, until it flowers. It bears small compound leaves, similar to a poinciana, and produces large, cone-shaped clusters of bright orange flowers. **Colville's Glory** (*Colvillea racemosa*) is named after Charles Colville, the third Governor of Mauritius. He was unpopular with local landowners, as he was tasked with improving the conditions of slaves. It is in flower now.

The local **Radjah Shelduck** family is still together. There were at least nine birds at Saltwater Lake, all passing for adults. Nearby, the resident **Bush Stone-curlews** sat discreetly under the mangroves.



From there, we walked to Lerp Lane, where the melaleucas are in profuse bloom. **White-throated and Dusky Honeyeaters** were present, and a lone **Little Bronze-Cuckoo** called nearby. Our international guest, Kevin, had mentioned just one target species, the **Laughing Kookaburra**, and here, in a white cedar, were three. They basked in the sun and even found something to laugh about.

As we moved on from the kookaburras, we encountered three visitors from the USA who had been searching for us. Our time together was brief; we pointed them toward the accommodating Laughing Kookaburras before continuing on for coffee.





Sean Han

Turns out coffee would have to wait as a bird flew into a Rain Tree out the front of The Tanks. I immediately called Varied Triller but was having doubts before I'd finished. Curtis suggested Cuckoo, a better fit. Clear views were hampered by the mosaic of leaves and mottled sunlight but the white notches on the under tail and lack of a prominent eye-ring nailed it for a **Sahul Brush Cuckoo**.

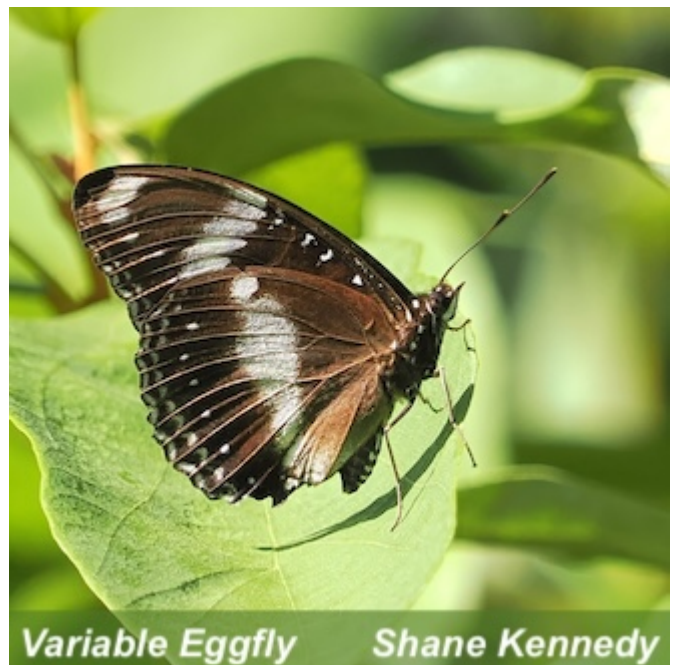
38 species and the coffee was a just reward.

Radjah Shelduck, Muscovy Duck x Mallard (hybrid), Australian Brushturkey, Orange-footed Megapode, Red Junglefowl (Domestic type), Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon), Peaceful Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Sahul Brush Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, Bush Stone-curlew, Masked Lapwing, Australian White Ibis, Osprey, Pacific Baza, Rainbow Bee-eater, Laughing Kookaburra, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Rainbow Lorikeet, Yellow Honeyeater, Dusky Honeyeater, White-throated Honeyeater, Helmeted Friarbird, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, Varied Triller, Green aka Yellow Oriole, Australasian Figbird, White-breasted Woodswallow, Black Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Spangled Drongo, Magpie-lark, Welcome Swallow, Metallic Starling, Common Myna, Sahul Sunbird



Willie Wagtail

Shane Kennedy



Variable Eggfly

Shane Kennedy

Letters;

Hello Shane,

Thank you so much for the free "plug" in the latest issue!

That's incredibly generous of you to feature my art. 😊😊

I had to laugh a bit at the bit that said my other interests were figure skating and professional classical guitar...

I have never been professional in either of those pursuits and don't skate or play guitar anymore, devoting all my time to painting birds. 😊😊

The pictures look terrific, and I'm green with envy at all those birdwatching trips your group does!

👁️👁️👁️

Happy Easter!

Warm regards

Frances

Rowdy's Ramblings:

Bird song and music: Jimmy Dickens ['May The Bird Of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose'](#)

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.

Random images:



Shriketit

Chris Rappolt



Azure Kingfisher

Peter Ohmachi

**Black Bee-eater****Randall Lieschke**

But the birds were really something special. We ended up with 357 species on our list including 9 species of Bee-eaters in a riot of colours.

We love our Sahul Sunbird, but the Sunbirds of Ghana were next level. 18 species, many in iridescent colours.

**Splendid Sunbird****Randall Lieschke**

My main target was Turacos, which I had missed on my previous visits to Africa. Although we did see 5 species, they seemed to be very wary, trying to avoid being photographed. I guess the larger birds are also subject to hunting.

A special moment for me was my very first Pangolin. A very good sighting, but in the middle of the night, we spotted a White-bellied Pangolin, low down in a tree. I managed a few average photos only. Nearby, we visited the roost of the bizarre looking Yellow-headed Picathartes; complete with its yellow "swimming cap and headphones".

**Guinea Turaco****Randall Lieschke**



Trying to juggle my torch and camera, and adjust the camera settings in the pitch black was not easy; and the resulting photos certainly did not do it justice. The two "side" feathers come out of his wings, not tail. They are only present in mating season, and used to impress a female. He really looked like a butterfly as he fluttered away.



Kingfishers were well represented in Ghana, with 11 species making our list, including some real stunners.

It wasn't until we got to the far north, in Mole National Park, that we saw the typical African wildlife. Quite a few Elephants, 2 species of Antelope, Warthog and 5 species of Primate, but here again, it was the birds that took the top billing.

Eight species of Hornbills, Flycatchers, Barbets, Rollers, Owls too many to mention.

If I had to pick my highlight of the tour, it would be an amazing view of a Standard-winged Nightjar. I was about 50 metres behind the rest of the group, when he landed on the track not far in front of me.



What bird is that?



Answer to last week's quiz;



Leaden Flycatcher

Satin Flycatcher

