



# THE CAIRNS FROGMOUTH

*All correspondence to: [cairnsbirders@yahoo.com.au](mailto: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                         | 3rd May                                                                                                              | 7:00     | Centenary Lakes                         |
|                                | Meet curbside opposite the Rondo Theatre, Greenslopes St - Bring empty bottles and cans for our fundraising efforts. |          |                                         |
| Sunday                         | 10th May                                                                                                             | 7:30     | Goldsborough Valley                     |
| Weekend away                   | May 15th - 19th                                                                                                      |          | Camping at Artemis Station              |
| ECOFIESTA                      | 21st June                                                                                                            | 10 - 4pm | Munro Martin Parkland - vollies needed! |
| Cairns Birders' Festival       | Friday 28th August - Saturday 5th September                                                                          |          |                                         |
| Cairns Birders' Epic Excursion | October 2026                                                                                                         | TANZANIA | 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





Sean Han

We were up in time to watch the deep purple of night shrink from the horizon as it lit up with a golden orange intensity, and the space between awash pale yellow, blue and pink. We took it as a good omen and indeed the day was very pleasant, weather-wise, and the birding.

I was looking forward to Behana Gorge; I needed some birds for my annual list. About 28 people came today, but it was Mary who checked out the lie of the land more than an hour before kick-off. Insomnia is a wonderful thing. She came back from the gorge car park to our meeting place by the highway with tales of **Noisy Pittas** and **Golden Whistlers**, but also with the news that today the gorge trail was the venue for a "fun run" - is that an oxymoron?



Chestnut-breasted Mannikin

Jon Westaway



Tree Martin

Scott Ritchie

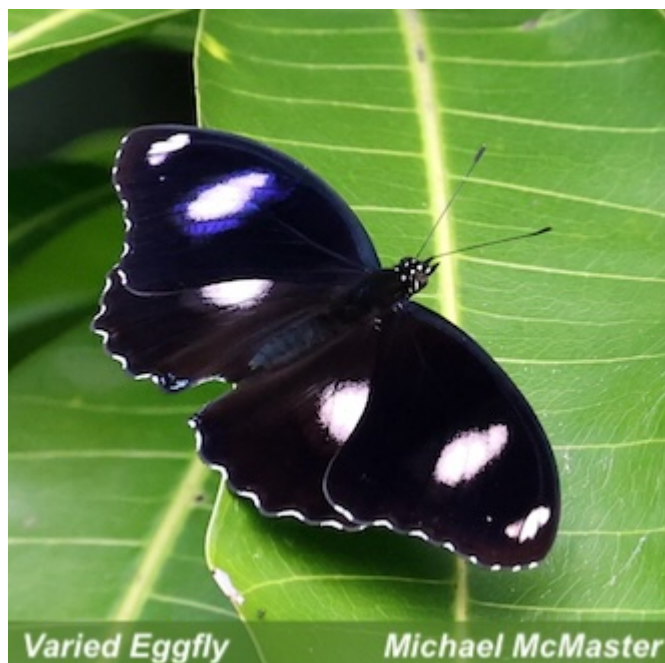
A few of us got in a huddle and quickly came up with a Plan B - Upper Mackey Creek, thanks Daniel. We'd been birding already, of course, and with a reasonable list accumulated, thanks in large part to the flowering calliandras here. I hastily put a notice on Facebook re the change of plans and, noticing that our always-the-last-to-arrive members were now here, I knew it was time to move.

Upper Mackey Creek is grassy fields and sugar cane, while its far edge is bordered by the treed waterway that gives it its name. This mix of habitat gives us a good chance of seeing multiple species of birds. It is, sadly, earmarked for development and soon will become part of the urban sprawl.

We walked a track towards the creek. We could see **Australian Pipits**, **Scaly-breasted Munias**, **Chestnut-breasted Mannikins** and **Tree Martins**, and **Brown Quail** were calling here. Along the way we could hear **Striated Pardalotes** and eventually saw one a long way off on a powerline. We thought we could hear **Golden-headed Cisticolas**; it eluded us for a little while, and then we saw one, and then another, and another. Nearer the cane we could hear a **Tawny Grassbird**, but that remained hidden.



The wooded creek was a different treat. **Yellow-spotted, Cryptic**, and **Dusky Honeyeaters** were plentiful, **Large-billed Gerygones** were calling, **Australasian Figbirds** were busy with berries, and a **Little Bronze-cuckoo** popped into view. Then a bird flew up off the track - a **Peaceful Dove**, some thought - but closer inspection revealed a juvenile **Sahul Brush Cuckoo**. Another one came into view, this one an adult, and they treated us to excellent views. There was a lot happening, with **Spangled Drongos**, **Helmeted Friarbirds**, **Rainbow Bee-eaters**, and **Grey Whistlers** making their way on to our list.



It wasn't just the birds, there were bees, butterflies and other things drawing my attention. I'm grateful to Peter who chatted with me while I was focusing on a butterfly, expressing his appreciation of the newsletter, and the inclusion of some of these other critters. Thanks for the feedback Peter.

Up in the sky, the Martins had been joined by **Australian Swiftlets**, and then came the call, “raptor!” And sure enough, a **Grey Goshawk** flew across the cane field, close enough for some good photographs. We followed the track to complete the ‘loop’, coming out on Draper St and walking back to the cars. From here we went our various ways, but a few walked back down the track looking for that Pardalote. On the way we had two **Nankeen Kestrels** posing - one taking off and hovering not too far away, a great bird. A little further on and we located the **Striated Pardalote** from its call. There were a pair hanging around a mound of earth where they were preparing to breed in a freshly dug tunnel.



*Aust'n Swiftlet*

*Scott Ritchie*



*Striated Pardalote*

*Shane Kennedy*

Walking back, we got to lay eyes on a couple of **Brown Quail** that something had flushed in the field. They quickly plummeted back into cover. A couple of **Double-barred Finches** took off from their feeding. We hadn't seen them till they moved, and they're not frequently seen here. This brought our total to 44 for the morning.

Brown Quail, Spotted Dove, Peaceful Dove, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Sahul Brush Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, Masked Lapwing, Grey Goshawk, Rainbow Bee-eater, Nankeen Kestrel, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Rainbow

Lorikeet, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater, Cryptic Honeyeater, Yellow Honeyeater, Dusky Honeyeater, Helmeted Friarbird, Striated Pardalote, Large-billed Gerygone, Varied Triller, Grey Whistler, Green aka Yellow Oriole, Australasian Figbird, White-breasted Woodswallow, Black Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Spangled Drongo, Magpie-lark, Golden-headed Cisticola, Tawny Grassbird, Welcome Swallow, Fairy Martin, Tree Martin, Metallic Starling, Common Myna, Mistletoebird, Sahul Sunbird, Crimson Finch, Double-barred Finch, Scaly-breasted Munia, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, House Sparrow, Australian Pipit



*Nankeen Kestrel*

*Eden Gray-Spence*

## **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.](#)*



Heavy clouds lined the horizon at dawn, and above them the sky was whitening. No colour - the sun still trapped beneath a grey blanket. Then, in an instant, the clouds were rimmed with gold.



We met Bruce in the car park, and then Sean and I found Leah waiting at the designated spot. Sam appeared - good to see you back - and then came a steady stream of locals: Kazu, Denis (fresh from his African safari), Peter M, Peter O, Laurie, Bronwyn, Scott, Jesse (about time), Darlene, Darren, Graham, Mikey, Jordan, Angus, Ian, Roy, Heather (after a long absence), Jann, Louise, Dave, Clayton, Nigel and Dennie. Phew. But wait, there's more: Lynn and Peter (NSW), Emily (SA), Julia (UK), Connor (Ireland), Hanna (UK) and Shion (Japan). I don't know if you were counting, but I make it 36 when you add Jon, who joined us by Freshwater Lake. Thanks to Laurie for the head count as we wandered around.

We started by checking out some 'handkerchief' trees - those whose new growth starts out like a limp silk hanky. We had some splendid examples in the Panama Flame Tree and the Pride of Burma. We had planned to skip the caterpillar talk, as we hadn't found one earlier, but Leah proved her worth by spotting one as we passed the gate. It was an incy-wincy one, but enough for a bit of show and tell.



Around this time, a flock of about 20 **Topknot Pigeons** rushed past - most missed them. They flew by again at Freshwater Lake, but once more many didn't catch them, as we had the **Little Kingfisher** in our sights. After a long detour, we eventually made our way to the western finger of the lake to find Jon, who was keeping tabs on it. The views were distant, but we all saw it. Jon had spotted a **Pale-vented Bush-hen** in the same area



**Little Bronze-cuckoo** Scott Ritchie

We headed down to the overflow footbridge, where the 'sushi train' featured a **Little Heron** and a couple of **Nankeen Night Herons**. Brian and Minnie arrived, and Brian told me that the mini shrimp that are on the menu are actually adults. He promises to provide more details later. A pair of **Shining Flycatchers** flitted about in the mangroves, and as they moved downstream along Saltwater Creek, so did two-thirds of the group. They enjoyed the encounter but missed an **Azure Kingfisher** that flew back and forth a few times, never offering clear views, Peter O gaining the reputation of the AK whisperer!



**Rainbow Bee-eater**

Scott Ritchie

only moments before. From there, we walked around the lake and saw plenty of activity in the trees above, including **Green Oriole**, **Varied Triller**, **Metallic Starlings**, **Spangled Drongos**, **Rainbow Bee-eaters** and a couple of **Little Bronze-cuckoos**. Our **Pacific Black Duck** family - three of the five chicks still accounted for - held our attention for a while, as did a pair of **Ospreys**, one on the nest. Near the entrance to the pagoda, a new sign reported a recent croc sighting!



**Azure Kingfisher**

Peter Ohmachi

Saltwater Lake didn't yield much, but two **Great Egrets** were a treat, as they've been largely absent during the wet season. A **Pacific Baza** made a brief appearance before disappearing into the trees. We moved on to Lerp Lane, where **White-throated Honeyeaters** could be heard high in the canopy, and a few glimpsed a **Rose-crowned Fruit-dove** exiting 'stage left.'

At the bottom of the paddock, we caught up again with Saltwater Creek. The mangroves revealed **Archerfish**, **Barred Mudskippers** and **Compressed (or Orange-clawed?) Fiddler Crabs**. We do like to mix things up on these Tuesday morning bird walks!

We moved out into the middle of the paddock for a better view of the White Cedar. No birds there - but while gazing up, we spotted a raptor circling. Binoculars helped identify it as a **Nankeen Kestrel** - I think the first I've seen here. Then I noticed another **Pacific Baza**, this one perched and, if you stood in just the right place, offering an unobstructed (if distant) view. Before we could relax, another raptor appeared, its rounded tail helping confirm it as a **Brown Goshawk**.

That was effectively the end of a great morning of birding. With a final tally of 48, it was a jolly good day!

Radjah Shelduck, Pacific Black Duck, Muscovy Duck x Mallard aka Moriarty, Australian Brushturkey, Orange-footed Megapode, Spotted Dove, Peaceful Dove, Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove, Topknot Pigeon, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, Pale-vented Bush-hen, Bush Stone-curlew, Masked Lapwing, Australian White Ibis, Nankeen Night Heron, Little Heron, Great Egret, Osprey, Pacific Baza, Brown Goshawk, Rainbow Bee-eater, Azure Kingfisher, Little Kingfisher, Torresian Kingfisher, Nankeen Kestrel, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Rainbow Lorikeet, Yellow Honeyeater, White-throated Honeyeater, Helmeted Friarbird, Large-billed Gerygone, Varied Triller, Sahul Cicadabird, Green aka Yellow Oriole, Australasian Figbird, White-breasted Woodswallow, Black Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Spangled Drongo, Magpie-lark, Shining Flycatcher, Welcome Swallow, Metallic Starling, Common Myna, Mistletoebird, Sahul Sunbird



**Great Egret**

**Den&Nige Kelly**



**Pacific Baza**

**Leah Drummond**

## ***Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe - Another African Odyssey: Denis Walls***

We were supposed to be going to Scotland after staying with friends in Nice, France but our son, Liam, and partner, Kim, said they wanted to escape the grim Scottish weather and were going to Germany anyway to show off their new sprog, our gorgeous six month old granddaughter, to Kim's ageing grannie. Why not meet up for a week north of Nice in an Airbnb after that? This was all fabulous (and the weather in the south of France was early springlike and glorious by the way). But a little over two weeks in France was not long enough to justify such a long and tiring trip.

Last year, after our coup-induced Madagascar holiday failure, we had ended up in South Africa by default. You may remember some of my articles about that trip. Everyone was saying we shouldn't miss Namibia but, at short notice, the pricing on that particular expedition had run off into ridiculous digits. SO, I popped the question to Stella: why not add an anti-clockwise return to Australia via Namibia this time. The guide from last year, now a friend, was available and so a 23-day trip was born with minor Botswana and Zimbabwe add ons to flesh it out and so we didn't have to drive all the way back to Windhoek, Namibia's capital but could leave from Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe.

The highlights of the French trip were the arrivals of the first **Barn Swallows** from Africa, a lovely perched and singing **Sardinian Warbler** and the multitude of **Blackcaps** flourishing among the early spring growth but the number of species was shockingly low. Bring on Africa. We were not disappointed. Almost as soon as we arrived at our hotel in Windhoek after our long flight from Nice via Munich and Johannesburg, we were lining up **Helmeted Guineafowl**, **Grey Go-away-bird**, **Laughing Dove**, **Pale Chanting Goshawk**, **White-backed Mousebird**, **Rock Kestrel**, **Rosy-faced Lovebirds**, **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Chestnut-vented Warbler**, **Wattled and Cape Starlings**, **Marico Flycatcher**, **Scarlet-chested Sunbird** as well as various weavers. Already this list was bigger than what we had seen during the whole of our 15-day French trip.



Rosy-faced Lovebird

Denis Walls



White-backed Mousebird

White-backed Mousebird



Dune Lark (endemic) Denis Walls



Scorpion Denis Walls

We headed further into Sossusvlei observing the rising water levels at one of the crossings. Our guide, Andrew, worked in Namibia for three years and it rained once in that time. In the two months prior to our arrival there had been more rain than in the previous 12 years and, after we left, the roads were closed as the heavens opened once more to create seldom seen river flows in the Vlei (the low lying ground). Everything next to the dunes was a rare miracle of green.

We stopped for a break and observed a sheltering **Oryx** or **Gemsbok**, one of four oryx/antelope species, the most famous of which is probably the **Arabian Oryx** after which the Unicorn myth was

After a welcome night's sleep, we set off early for Sesriem and the famous sand dunes south west of Windhoek. Unlike others, our target was not to struggle up Big Daddy, the tallest sand dune, but to look for the rare and localised **Dune Lark**. Now, you may be thinking, why in the name of all that's sensible would you seek out a fairly nondescript brownie-grey bird instead of immortalising your trip with a sunrise photo over a world famous sand dune. But I've got to tell you, this was the perfect start to the trip. NOBODY was on the much smaller Elim dune - they were all seeking the Big D - and, in addition to the Dune Lark (which I loved for its confiding nature), we saw Scorpion, multiple lizards and those famous scuttling dune beetles that David Attenborough memorialised with his "even here there is life" remark. That is the wonder of birding; it's often what you discover by accident, while on some wild goose chase, that makes your day.



Big Daddy Dune Denis Walls



Oryx (nearly a Unicorn!) Denis Walls

created based on the single straight horn seen in profile in the shimmering desert sun. This **Gemsbok** decided to saunter towards us, a little disconcertingly, as these males can be aggressive and spike you with their horns. Maybe he was just looking for a feed. Either way we kept our distance and headed back to Dune 45 (don't ask me why that number!). Stella decided to make an attempt climbing it, which is seriously hard yakka. Meanwhile an alert went up from Andrew. **Red-necked Falcon** ahoy. I followed its flight and the pair of us discreetly approached the tree on which it had landed. What a little corker! We got crippling views and it stayed around long enough for Stella to see it as well when she returned from her sandy safari. Amazing first full birding day of our adventure.



Red-necked Falcon

Denis Walls



Rockrunner (near endemic) Denis Walls



Crimson-breasted Shrike

Denis Walls



Bat-eared Fox

Denis Walls



Yellow Mongoose

Denis Walls

## ***Shutterbird 2026. How I got the shot, how I made the photo Scott Ritchie***

I was impressed with the referenced video as it described the entire process of how an award-winning bird photograph was made by photographer Marc Humphries. From an obsession with the bird (I love Dippers too), to finding the location, engaging stealthy field craft and creative use of technology. And then editing the photo to get the final image. Much of this will be more than what the average bird photographer will do, but it is nice to see the process from A to Z. Check it out.

How This Image Won a British Wildlife Photography Award.



Marc Humphrey Photography, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQn69IbT-0>.

With the 'How I got the image' theme, I thought I'd share my story of how I captured one of my favourite images of the year, Two Godwits. I have a real soft spot for shorebirds, and I am especially enamoured with Bar-tailed Godwits (BTGs), true mega-migrators. We're lucky to have these tremendous shorebirds overwinter in Cairns. They are used to the parade of people that the Esplanade throws at them. Thus one can get up close and personal to them as they feed on mudflats or even on the nearby grass of the dog exercise area. They're fattening up for an incredible journey of over 10,000km to their breeding grounds in Alaska. I especially like to photograph the males in their rusty breeding plumage before they take-off.



Two Godwits: The original RAW file. Dull and lifeless, like most RAW images. But don't be fooled. There is all the detail you need to make a good image.

How I got the shot. The ideal setup is an incoming high tide in the late afternoon on a sunny day. If some of the birds are in the north end of the Esplanade, a shaft of golden hour light will illuminate them, and their colours really shine. At 5 PM on 14 March, I parked my fat arse on the sand bar along the north end of the Esplanade. I was joined by Leonard, the doctor from Mareeba, who sat in his new "low rider" folding chair, dry as a bone. Me, I had a wet arse. A small flock of BTG was working slowly toward us, pushed by the incoming tide. I had my camera flat on my left hand, shooting in my "sideways" position. The sky was partly cloudy, with occasional peaks of sunlight. By 5:45, the sun emerged, and two rusty male godwits walked towards each other. The birds were set to pass one another when a cloud, with perfect timing, shaded the sun. I fired away, hoping for the best. The RAW image was a bit underexposed from the cloud, and there were other distracting birds, but the two passing male godwits were posed nicely. I thought I could make something of the image in the post.

How I made the photograph.

First, I had a potential good image that I wanted to give the full treatment to. I ran it in DxO PureRAW 6 to remove noise. I found that this newest version of noise reduction software does a tremendous job of keeping detail while removing noise in underexposed, noisy images. And it did. It also saves DNG files in compressed form so instead of a 100 to 200 MB DNG file, you get a 25 MB DNG. This means that you can run a whole batch of images relatively quickly without eating up tons of space.

How I edited the image.

Into Lightroom Classic (LRC) I go.

- The first step is to straighten and crop the image. I'm a bit of a stickler for having a straight horizon when it is supposed to be straight. And I cropped it quite tightly around the two subject birds.
- I then did basic global adjustments to bring out the exposure and brighten the image. RAW files look flat, but the colours are there. I increased the exposure and added a bit of vibrance to bring out the reds then upped the shadows a bit.
- Then I had to make a call. While I kept versions that maintained the birds in the background, I wanted to see if I could create an image that just had the two opposing birds. So I used the AI remove tool in LRC to remove the bird on the left and the bird that was behind the two males. This was a little bit tricky and had to be done in stages, especially with the bird behind the two males. But it worked.
- I then went to work on the background. It was a dull blue grey in the RAW. I made a background mask, removing the birds, and reduced the background temperature to add a bit of blue. I then dehazed the background to make it softer and lighter. Finally, I made two linear gradients (sandwich mask), top and bottom, to slightly darken the edges, helping to draw our attention to the birds.
- Finally, I went back to the bird mask and added a small bit of texture and clarity to "sharpen" the bird plumage. The key is a bit, very small doses.
- In the end, I slightly brightened the overall image; it captures the scene as I remember it. And no, I was not on mushrooms. I then printed the jpg for FB posting.

Yeah, it's a bit of work. And you could argue against removing birds with AI. I get that. I won't be entering this in any contest as they generally forbid AI removal. But it's a tool, and the final image uniquely captures the beauty of these amazing birds. Good birding and great shooting! And great editing too.



The final edited version of Two Godwits.



Scott's presentation will be one of several, each only lasting 6 mins 40 secs. PechaKucha is a concise presentation format where 20 slides are shown for 20 seconds each, automatically advancing, for a total time of 6 minutes and 40 seconds.

## **ECOFIESTA      21st June 2026      @ Munro Martin Parklands, Cairns**

Ecofiesta is a one-day festival celebrating the natural environment and the practical steps we can all take to leave a lighter footprint on the planet. [Link to CRC Events page](#)

BIRDLIFE North Queensland has long had a stall at this annual event and we are looking to our local community for volunteers to engage with stall visitors.

| <b>ECOFIESTA</b>    |             |       |              |
|---------------------|-------------|-------|--------------|
| Set up 8:30 - 10:00 | Shane       | Vishy | Denis Moeser |
| 10:00 - 12:00       |             |       |              |
| 12:00 - 14:00       | Scott       |       |              |
| 14:00 - 16:00       | Denis Walls |       |              |
| Packing up 15:30 -  | Denis Walls | Shane |              |

As usual, Denis Moeser is setting up a nestbox display on an additional table. So you can ask him any questions.

Entry is free so even if you are not volunteering grab your mates and come down to Munro Martin Parklands for a day of fun, friendship and eco-inspiration, popping in to say hello, of course .

**Please contact Mikey Kudo at [kudo555@hotmail.co.jp](mailto:kudo555@hotmail.co.jp)**

### **Rowdy's Ramblings:**

**Bird song and music: Chickens today and Feathers tomorrow - [Carmen McRae](#)**

**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.

## Letters:

Just wondering ... Any excursions to Kati Thanda - Lake Eyre, for the flooding and bird life forecast for this winter?

Regards, Kathleen

***“We” are not planning to, but if anyone is interested we can put you in touch with Kathleen. Ed***

### **Free Daintree ferry. (Usually \$51 and about to go up.)**

The ferry will be free for locals for the next two months in an effort to boost visitor numbers and support local businesses. Just need to apply to Douglas Council for a Douglas card.

Might be nice to mention this in our newsletter as there's some top-class birding up that way and a sensational creek cruise at Cow Bay.

RowdyB.

## The Bird Quiz

**Louise Baume**

### **Louise's Trivia Quiz from the BLNQ AGM - part 3**

- 1. How fast can an Emu run;**
- 2. How long is the bill on a Latham's Snipe;**
- 3. Which White-tailed Black-Cockatoo has the longest bill – Baudin's or Carnaby's;**

Answer to last week's quiz;

**Who is the current Birdlife Australia CEO;**

**Kate Millar**

**According to Ebird – how many species have been recorded at Hasties Swamp; 280**

**What species of bird is *Melopsittacus undulatus*;**

**Budgerigar**

### Extra Extra! Read all about it!

OK, so this is a little off subject, but Jannette Manins sent this Choral piece by Christopher Tin, 'Waloyo Yamoni (We Overcome the Wind)' - Fabulous  
As Molly would say, "do yourself a favour" [Link](#)

More good press re birders - even in the world of Rugby - [Link](#)

### Norty Corner

