



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:

May 15th - 19th

Camping at Artemis Station

Bring cash, be fully self contained i.e. food, water, cooking, shelter.
There are 2 showers and 2 toilets. Road could be freshly graded.
Drive to conditions. No RSVP required, just turn up.

Sunday 24th May

Rifle Creek & Abattoir Swamp

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



There was a time when birding, for me, was a solitary affair. In silence, I'd follow animal trails through the bush, observing and communing with nature. Every twig I broke underfoot shattered the holiness like a dropped kneeler in a cathedral. If you've been there, you'll know: silence was golden. It was a revelation when I discovered I was not the only one afflicted with birding, but it took quite an adjustment to bird with others, let alone a group. And look at me now :)



Cryptic Honeyeater Shane Kennedy

Figbirds - a **Barred Cuckoo-shrike**. As we focused on the spot, we noticed several more of these striking birds. They were flying to a fig tree a little further away which was trembling with activity and, as we watched, the culprits were exposed. Along with the cuckoo-shrikes and figbirds were **Metallic Starlings** and **Double-eyed Fig-parrots**.



About 12 of us gathered at Upper Bridge on this grey, gloomy day, where we were met with the constant "chip, chip" of the **Cryptic Honeyeaters**. Other honeyeaters were about too, including **Yellow-spotted, Scarlet, White-throated and Dusky**. We walked back down the road a little when I noticed a darker shape among the **Australian**



Barred Cuckoo-shrike Shane Kennedy



Scaly-breasted Lorikeet Leah Drummond

We mounted our steeds and headed up the gravel road. We stopped where the last of the open sclerophyll woodland met the rainforest. These ecotones can be productive places. First up, as I stepped out, was a fantail flitting out of sight. I changed position and locked on to it - a **Northern Fantail** - which stayed around while we were there. The gums were in flower and **Rainbow and Scaly-breasted Lorikeets** were making the most of



Red-browed Finch Mikey Kudo

One of the advantages of birding in a group is the benefit of more eyes and ears. Both Leah and Mikey were hearing **Red-backed Fairywrens**.

"Really?" I teased.

"Yeeaah!" replied Leah.

Sure enough, with a concerted effort, we had visual confirmation. Miles then alerted us to a rail way down the road, working through the horse dung. It took all our technology, though, to make out the distinctive markings of the **Buff-banded Rail**.



Northern Fantail Leah Drummond

the moment. **Dusky Honeyeaters** too. Leah spotted **Red-browed Finches**, often found in this spot. Miles pointed out a **White-eared Monarch** just as it chose to exit the scene, and then Michael drew our attention to a yellow bird high in the canopy.

Foolishly, I assumed figbird, but the only bit of yellow I could see was too intense - more like a sunbird, I thought. As it moved, more was revealed: the black necklace and white bib of a **Golden Whistler**. Within moments another white-bibbed bird appeared, this one with rich chestnut tones - a **Rufous Whistler**.



Golden Whistler

Mikey Kudo

Rufous Fantails and Spectacled Monarchs were about, while a flock of Topknot Pigeons was a tick for Miles' 2026 list. Victoria's Riflebirds and Macleay's Honeyeaters were heard, though not seen. Several Wompoo Fruit-Doves came into view as they were pushed to lower branches, seeking refuge from the noisy mob of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos that landed in the tree above them.



Shane Kennedy

White-eared Monarch, Australian Spectacled Monarch, Magpie-lark, Silvereye, Metallic Starling, Sahul Sunbird, Red-browed Finch

"It's 9:30," says Trish, alluding to morning tea perhaps.

It fell on deaf ears.

We pushed on, navigating the wet gravel road until we arrived at the campground. As with the rest of the day, we juggled brollies - a bit of a hindrance - but we're not wimps. Large-billed Scrubwrens,



Wompoo Fruit Dove

Miles Michaud

"It's 9:30," says Trish...

Hmm. One or more of those statements had to be wrong, but I got the message.

It was time for morning tea!

Pacific Black Duck, Australian Brushturkey, Orange-footed Megapode, Spotted Dove, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Pacific Emerald Dove, Peaceful Dove, Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Topknot Pigeon, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, Buff-banded Rail, Bush Stone-curlew, Masked Lapwing, Eastern Cattle-Egret, Rainbow Bee-eater, Azure Kingfisher, Forest Kingfisher, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Rainbow Lorikeet, Red-backed Fairywren, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater, Lewin's Honeyeater, Cryptic Honeyeater, Dusky Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, White-throated Honeyeater, Large-billed Scrubwren, Fairy Gerygone, Large-billed Gerygone, Barred Cuckooshrike, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, Varied Triller, Eastern Whipbird, Bower's Shrikethrush, Little Shrikethrush (Rufous), Golden Whistler, Grey Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Australasian Figbird, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, White-breasted Woodswallow, Black Butcherbird, Northern Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Australian Rufous Fantail, Spangled Drongo, Victoria's Riflebird,

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.](#)*



Sean Han

Denis gave an Acknowledgement of Country before I moved on to the housekeeping and introductions and then there was no holding us back. There were handkerchief and sausage trees waiting and Cairns Birdwing butterflies and chrysalis as the warm-up act, and hopefully there'd be some birds to follow!



Leaden Flycatcher

Scott Ritchie

Wind was a feature today. The Coral Sea was choppy and the layers of clouds were moving seemingly in different directions. But not us, we were headed straight to the Botanical Gardens for our regular Tuesday morning bird walk!

There were 26 of us today including Sean, Denis, Scott, Leah, Bruce, Kazu, Darlene, Graeme, Ross, Ian, Emma, Michael, Lois, Dave, Clayton and local birding royalty, Dave and Annie! Jess and Craig were up from Victoria, Tracey from the ACT, Miguel from SA and Annie from Germany.



Metallic Starling

Shane Kennedy

The birds did come, slow at first with a sprinkling of **Spangled Drongos**, **Metallic Starlings** and **Black Butcherbirds** near the starting point. It wasn't until we'd reached Freshwater Lake, having slowly and expectantly walked down the Western Finger, that we were met by **Moriarty**, the dumped domestic hybrid. Good old faithful!

Moving around the corner, our expectations and caution were rewarded when I spotted a **Little Kingfisher** perched just above the water. It was close, but tiny, and therefore a challenge for some to see on the leafy branch. It dived into the shallows and flew off to another branch. A jewel of a bird.



It was playing a game of hide and seek with us, and in the middle of all that there was another movement. A **Little Bronze-cuckoo** was feeding and calling only 3m away, and at eye level. This bird generally gets on our list, sometimes heard only, or seen at a distance, but rarely close up like this. Extraordinary. Michael pointed out the rufous tinges to the wings and tail; this was the *russatus* subspecies, the old Gould's Bronze-cuckoo.



We made our way to the pagoda and had Freshwater Lake spread out before us. A **Darter** was drying out, a **Little Pied Cormorant** flew off and a **Great Egret** and **Plumed Egret** waded in the shallows. Beautiful **Rainbow Bee-eaters** flew above while **Welcome Swallows** hugged the water's surface. On the not-so-far shore I spotted the **Little Kingfisher** again. A clear view for all.

A distant **Osprey** appeared. It was carrying something, a branch it would seem. It flew closer, no, it was a tree! I jest, but it was a HUGE branch. This bird's skill and strength were outstanding. In

this strong wind, it had grabbed this branch in the perfect spot for balance, flew from somewhere

over the horizon against a strong wind, banked and approached the nest from downwind, stopped midair before gently descending vertically between the pylons. We broke into applause.

Moving beside the mangroves some birds, like the **Large-billed Gerygone**, **Torresian Kingfisher** and **Mistletoebird**, were just a tantalising sound, and a **Little Heron** blended perfectly in a tangle of roots.

Lerp Lane was our next place to pause. Both a **Brown** and **Yellow Honeyeater** could be heard, but we had reasonable views of a **White-throated Honeyeater**, **Leaden Flycatchers** and **Australasian Figbirds**. Across Lily Creek, there is a dead tree that is worth checking out. Today it was the chosen site for a pair of **Double-eyed Fig-parrots**. They've carved out a nesting hollow and they have both been in attendance for the last couple of weeks.

We scoured the White Cedar tree and, sure enough, there was a **Sacred Kingfisher** in residence with a **Willy Wagtail** keeping an eye on it. It didn't allow a closer inspection, but above were a pair of **Pacific Bazas** putting on an aeronautical display, a bit of courting going on.

Another great day with 44 species under our belt. A coffee break was well deserved!

Moriarty the Muscovy Duck x Mallard (hybrid), Australian Brushturkey, Orange-footed Megapode, Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon), Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Sahul Brush Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, Bush Stone-curlew, Masked Lapwing, Australasian Darter, Little Pied Cormorant, Australian White Ibis, Little Heron, Great Egret, Plumed Egret, Osprey, Pacific Baza, Rainbow Bee-eater, Little Kingfisher, Torresian Kingfisher, Sacred Kingfisher, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Rainbow Lorikeet, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater, Yellow Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, White-throated Honeyeater, Helmeted Friarbird, Large-billed Gerygone, Varied Triller, Green Oriole, Australasian Figbird, White-breasted Woodswallow, Black Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Spangled Drongo, Magpie-lark, Leaden Flycatcher, Welcome Swallow, Metallic Starling, Common Myna, Mistletoebird, Sahul Sunbird



Etosha National Park is the wildlife jewel in the Namibian firmament and one of the largest national parks in Africa. Located in the north west of the country it spans an area of 22,270 sq km and was named after the huge Etosha ("great white place") saltpan which covers 23% of the park. The park is home to hundreds of species of mammals, birds and reptiles, including several endangered animals such as the Black Rhino. You may have read about the terrible fire that ripped its way through the park last year destroying a third of the vegetation. However, because there had been so much rain, there was very little evidence of the burning during our visit. Everything was lush and green and testament to the park's remarkable powers of recovery given the right circumstances.



Like all national parks in Africa, you are not allowed to get out of your vehicle, which can sometimes make birding a little frustrating when the bird you want to see is just out of sight, or too far away, as you peer out of the car window. We managed better in Kruger last year from an open top safari vehicle despite occasional 40 (and 15) degree temperatures! Those of you going to Tanzania in October be prepared for extremes. We dipped on **Kori Bustard** last year as the big birds hadn't bothered to make it to Kruger but in Etosha they were aplenty.

There's a contest going on in the Trivial Pursuit market over the world's heaviest flying bird with Kori and Eurasian/Great Bustards as the two main contenders. Both species have recorded birds weighing more than 20 kilos, but AI tells me that Kori currently holds the top spot based on *average* maximum weight. Don't ask me who's been doing the birdy weigh-ins! By comparison, I am informed from the same ethereal source that our male Australian Bustards can, exceptionally, reach 14.5k in weight. This is one for BBC/ABC's QI program. More interesting anyway than how many moons Earth has, a repeated theme on the program!



My Etosha obsessions were sandgrouse, coursers and Secretarybirds. Sandgrouse are morning or



afternoon drinkers depending on species which, given the plentiful surrounding water, made camp waterhole viewing less likely. Fortunately, we stumbled upon two of the three possible species in roadside puddles. **Namaqua** and **Double-banded Sandgrouse** are the most gorgeous birds with banded, patterned males and barred or streaked females. They nest on the ground and the males carry water to the chicks in specially adapted belly feathers.



Two of the four possible coursers are nocturnal which made seeing all of the species very difficult. However, the diurnal **Temminck's** and **Double-banded Courser** were obliging, especially the latter which gave crippling views from the vehicle. It was around this time that I looked to my left out of the car window to witness a giant bird jumping up and down bashing something with its feet – a **Secretarybird** in full hunting frenzy. Having stunned its prey – a Striped Mouse – it grabbed the poor rodent in its massive beak before devouring it whole before I had a chance to snap a photo of the mouse's passage through its distended gullet.

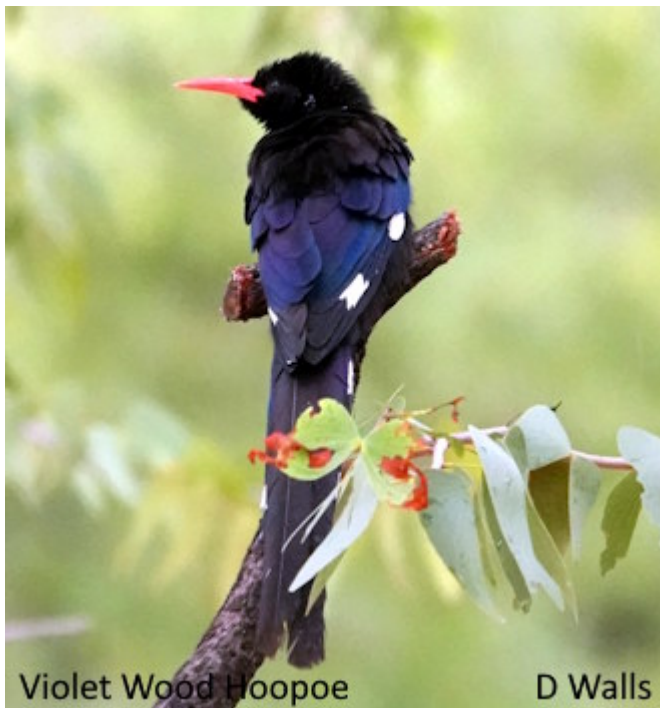


Off the Secretarybird then regally strode looking for the next tasty titbit. It is a great glory, and in some ways a miracle, that creatures like this can still exist in our depleting world. Sadly though, it is now listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species having been upgraded from Vulnerable

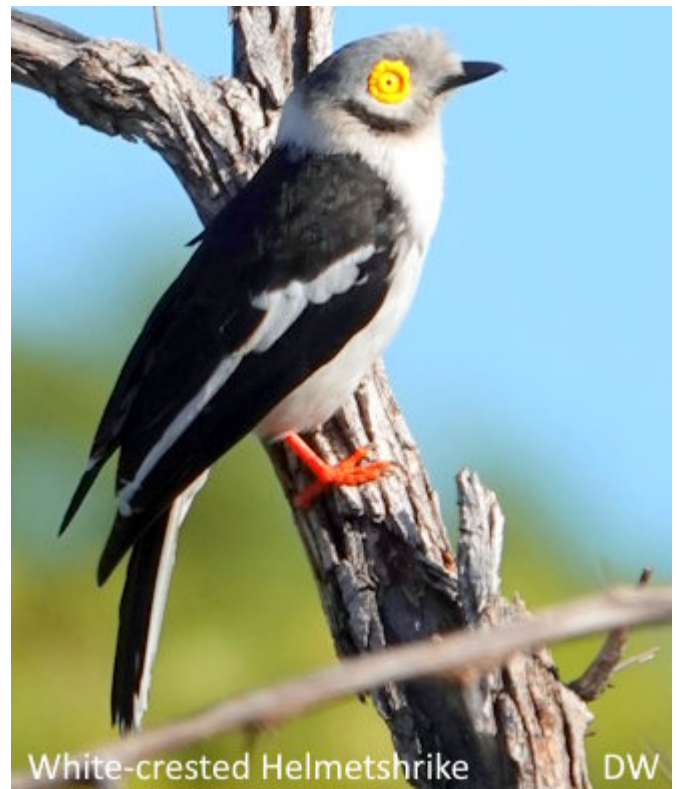
in 2020 due to a rapid population decline across its sub-Saharan African range, driven by habitat loss and human disturbance.

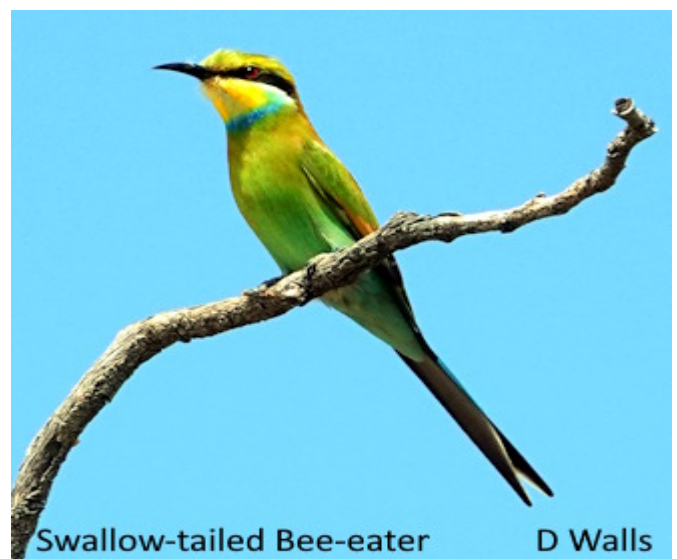


Other highlight birds in Etosha were **Bare-faced Babbler**, **White-crested Helmetshrike** and **Violet Wood Hoopoe** as well as unexpected sightings like **Lesser Kestrel** (a rarity in Etosha) and **Dusky Lark** (more recorded than ever before). The Big Cats were all hiding in the tall grass, which bothered first time visitors to Africa as you can imagine, but **Spotted Hyena**, Black and White Rhinoceros, African Elephant, Plains Zebra, Southern Giraffe, Black-backed Jackal and multiple exquisite species of Antelope more than made up for it.



Next Week: Okavango Delta, Botswana





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.

ECOFIESTA			
Set up 8:30 - 10:00	Shane n Paul	Vishy	Denis Moeser
10:00 - 12:00	Peter Manins		
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

Rowdy's Ramblings:

Bird song and music: Rudolph Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn - [SWAN LAKE - act 3 Pas de Deux](#)

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:

Local Birder/guide wanted!

Claire Williams from Adelaide is looking for a local birder/guide for a half / full day birding in or around Cairns. Dates 28 July 3 August. She is expecting to pay, as she normally does on trips up here. Please contact her directly on claire-williams@bigpond.com

The Bird Quiz

Louise Baume

Louise's Trivia Quiz from the BLNQ AGM - part 5

1. What colour irises does a female Galah have;
2. What colour bill does a female Red-tailed Black-cockatoo have;
3. What's the widest wingspan of a Fairywren;

Answer to last week's quiz;

What food source do Glossy Black-Cockatoos predominately eat;	Casuarina Seeds
Excluding Catbirds How many species of Australian Bowerbirds are there;	8
How tall is a female Plains Wanderer;	up to 20cm



Today I was contacted by the people who manage THE cattle station near Mt Isa, and they said they have had issues with unauthorised visiting birders. As a result, they may shut the property to everyone.

I don't know why they picked me to warn as a representative of the birding community, as I haven't been to the station over three and a half years now, and I don't have any plans of future visits. Anyway, I once again remind everyone to obtain permission EVERY TIME you try to visit, don't start fires, leave nothing behind, and try not to disturb the working cattle station, seriously. They have got a new station manager.

The access is now on the edge of closure, just like it happened to former McNamara Road years ago. Please share with relevant people/groups.

Take Note; Walking in off the road is generally, even if unfenced, on private land.

RANDOMS FROM THE TURF FARM



When it's a painted-snipe, of course!

Early naturalists lumped them together because of superficial similarities, but modern taxonomy shows they are not closely related. While both belong to the shorebird order *Charadriiformes*, they are placed in different families.

Some notable differences:

- **Painted-snipes** have large eyes, shorter legs, and a more crouched posture.
- They are **crepuscular**, often active from dusk to dawn, when they feed. Relying heavily on camouflage during the day.
- In species such as the Australian Painted-snipe, the **female is larger and more brightly coloured** than the male, courts the male, and leaves him to incubate the eggs.

All of this is particularly topical because one has turned up at the France Rd Turf Farm! Jan received a mobile phone photo from the turf farm owner asking, "What is this bird?" Her response was essentially, "OMG — that's a Painted-snipe!" Though she may have used slightly more colourful language than that.

Doing the right thing by her local birding community, Jan immediately let us know, and within an hour Martin and I had arrived on site. Mary soon followed, then Daniel. Jan herself is unfortunately working out of town. Great catching up with other birders, and every now and then other interesting birds would make an appearance, such as **Grey Goshawk**, **Australian Hobby** and a **Spotted Harrier**!



The bird made only a brief appearance around midday before hunkering down again until about 5:30 pm, by which time Mikey, Dave and Annie, Michael, Lois, Sam, Carmel, Peter, and Jannette had joined the growing crowd — and we were ecstatic even with the decidedly average views.

I can't find any previous records of this species from Cairns itself, although in 2024 some of us travelled up to Hasties Swamp where one had been lurking in the reeds.

These birds are nomadic, notoriously difficult to see, and consequently under-reported. But if there is any justice in the birding world, it will still be there when Jan returns this weekend!

PS DO NOT TRESPASS ON THE PROPERTY - STAY BEHIND THE FENCE LINE.

Extra Extra! Read all about it!

A brilliant interview on Why birds survived the asteroid. Highly recommended. Steve is an enthusiastic scientist! [LINK HERE](#)

Native Pacific black ducks at risk in Tasmania due to introduced species [LINK HERE](#)

Norty Corner

