



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 31st May	7:30am Catch a Barra, 46 Walker Rd Please arrive on time so we are not entering in dribs n drabs.
Sunday 7th June	7:00 Cattana Wetlands
ECOFIESTA	21st June 10 - 4pm Munro Martin Parkland - vollies needed!
Cairns Birders' Festival	Friday 28th August - Saturday 5th September 30th August - Michaelmas Cay - book now - see below
Starry starry night	12 September - Tablelands - more info to come ...
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





Model T Ford

Shane Kennedy

A few of us arrived early in our campervans, with Sean and I finding a nice little spot away from the riff-raff. Before long, a Model T Ford rolled in towing a tiny camper trailer. It cruised around the available campsites before deciding to pull up next to us. At least they had style! But then another arrived... and another... and another... followed by a Model A. Very quickly, our quiet corner became the main attraction of the rest area, with everyone wandering over to admire these wonderfully quirky Grey Nomads and their marvellous machines. They'd come all the way from southern NSW and, even more impressively, were heading to the Tip!

We managed to squeeze in a bit of birding before settling into nibbles and drinks around an imaginary campfire with our own variety of quirky campers - birders. The rest of the gang started rolling in from 7am the next morning, bringing our numbers to 26 all up.

The old Fords were still proving a distraction, but even there the birds kept us entertained. High in the flowering eucalyptus canopies were **Brown, Scarlet, White-throated** and **Macleay's Honeyeaters**, along with several **Forest Kingfishers** perched lower down, giving us excellent views in the soft early morning light.

We crossed the road and wandered up the gravel track to the Pistol Club, which turned out to be very productive. **Lemon-bellied Flyrobin, Fairy Gerygone, Spangled Drongo** and **Sahul Cicadabird** all showed themselves off nicely. We also spotted both **Grey Fantail** and **Northern Fantail**. Doug informed me - and probably educated at least a few of us - that Grey Fantails are far busier than Northerns, constantly flitting about and fanning their tails, they are rarely sitting. Us northerners, apparently, are much more relaxed and composed!



Scarlet Honeyeater

Shane Kennedy

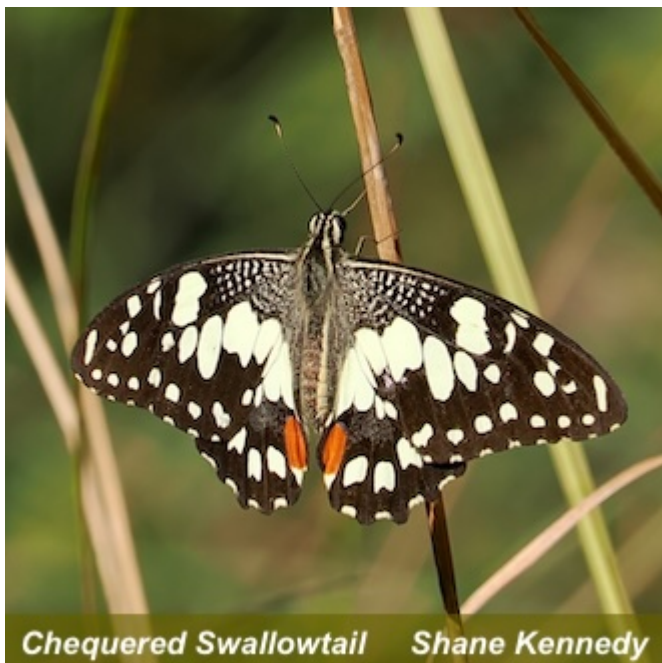


Forest Kingfisher

Shane Kennedy



In one tree, silhouetted against the bright sky, sat a **Wompoo Fruit-Dove**. It would have been the perfect view if only the colours had shown through. Thankfully, Eden worked some post-production magic and managed to produce a fantastic image anyway.



Around this point, poor Daisy — Mal's sweet little foxie — was rushed by a dog that bolted out from one of the nearby properties. We managed to pull it away before the owner arrived. Daisy ended up with a few puncture wounds ultimately requiring stitches and a day in hospital. Hopefully headed for a quick recovery.



Yellow-breasted Boatbill Michael McMaster



Bridled Honeyeater Miles Michaud

Next stop was Abattoir Swamp, another birding hotspot where the mix of habitats and proximity to the nearby ranges means almost anything can turn up. The local volunteer group maintaining the site has clearly been hard at work planting native grevilleas and callistemons. Here we added **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **Red-backed Fairy-wren** (sadly Drew still missed out on his Lovelies), **White-cheeked Honeyeater** busily building a nest, **Yellow Honeyeater**, **Bridled Honeyeater** and a pair of **Yellow-breasted Boatbills** that kindly perched low and in the open for everyone to enjoy. Naturally, I happened to be looking somewhere else at the time.



White-cheeked Honeyeater Michael McMaster



Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog Shane Kennedy

There was plenty more to see too. The melaleuca swamp was alive with dragonflies, and we also found the cutest little **Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog** — barely 2cm long and very easy to mistake for a blob of bird poo. Once spotted though, it was anything but!



After morning tea, we gathered around a recently installed bench seat dedicated to local birder, author and artist **Lloyd Nielsen** OAM, remembered fondly for both his ornithological contributions and his gentleness and humility. Stories were shared, memories revisited, and for a little while, Lloyd was very much with us again.

50 species all up;

Abattoir Swamp:

Peaceful Dove, Australian Swiftlet, Forest Kingfisher, Rainbow Lorikeet, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater, Lewin's Honeyeater, Cryptic Honeyeater, Bridled Honeyeater, Brown-backed Honeyeater, Dusky Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, White-cheeked Honeyeater, Macleay's Honeyeater, Striated Pardalote, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, White-breasted Woodswallow, Eastern Yellow Robin

Rifle Creek:

Australian Brushturkey, White-headed Pigeon, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Peaceful Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove, Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, White-necked Heron, Rainbow Bee-eater, Forest Kingfisher, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Rainbow Lorikeet, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater, Lewin's Honeyeater, Cryptic Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Dusky Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Blue-faced Honeyeater, White-throated Honeyeater, Macleay's Honeyeater, Striated Pardalote, Fairy Gerygone, Large-billed Gerygone, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, Varied Triller, Sahul Cicadabird, Little Shrikethrush (Rufous), Grey Whistler, Black Butcherbird, Northern Fantail, Grey Fantail, Spangled Drongo, Victoria's Riflebird, Australian Spectacled Monarch, Leaden Flycatcher, Lemon-bellied Flyrobin, Silvereye, Sahul Sunbird, Red-browed Finch.



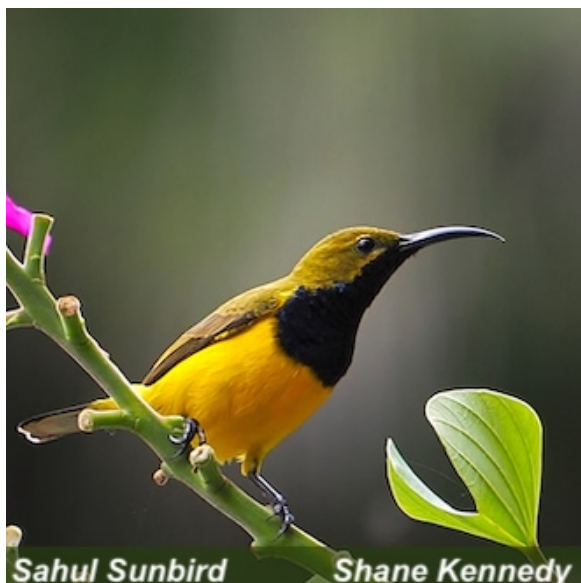
Azure Kingfisher **Peter Manins**

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.](#)*

These walks are getting way too popular!

Picture this: 7:30am kickoff time and we already have 20 people gathered. That's about average these days, but I suggested we wait a few minutes for any stragglers. By the time we'd run through the preliminaries - Acknowledgement of Country and a bit of housekeeping - our numbers had doubled. Yep, 41 people!



Denis and I took one look at the crowd and agreed to split into two groups. Thankfully we had plenty of local expertise on hand, with Sean, Scott, Jeff, Kazu, Jake and Mia all helping out. I'll break with tradition and not list everyone individually, but the breakdown was still pretty interesting: 22 locals, 5 more from wider QLD, 7 from Victoria, 2 from SA, 1 from China and 5 from Texas.

Our group headed east, doing the loop in reverse and making our way toward Saltwater Creek via the Tanks, while Denis led his crew out through the western gate and down the boardwalk to Freshwater Lake.

Team Shane paused first at the enormous 25-year-old **Orange-footed Scrubfowl** mound. The resident pair were hard at work raking fresh material onto the pile, which gave us a good opportunity to chat about megapodes and their fascinating nesting habits. From there we wandered behind the information centre where we had decent views of **Green Oriole** and the first of what would become many **Willie Wagtails**.



As bird activity slowed a little, we filled the gaps talking about plants along the way - Fish Poison Tree (*Barringtonia asiatica*), sprawling figs, Rain Trees and various orchids as we encountered them. This eventually brought us to the bamboo forest where Jake picked up the calls of a juvenile **Rufous Owl**. It's apparently been hanging around for about a week now but continues to stay frustratingly well hidden.

Just before crossing Saltwater Creek we spotted a pair of **Varied Trillers** feeding on the fruits of what I think was Creek Premna, *Premna serratifolia*. I probably should double-check that one!



Our next stop was the little single-lane bridge over the creek, where **Five-spotted Archerfish** and **Northern River Garfish** were easy to spot below us. It's also a great place to talk about the tidal system, the mangroves and, of course, to remind visitors that yes - we really do get crocodiles here too.

At the White Cedar paddock we added **Masked Lapwing**, **Australian White Ibis** and **Bush Stone-curlew**. The White Cedar itself hosted a **Sacred Kingfisher** and our first **Laughing Kookaburra** of the morning. Later we even heard one calling, which is always a highlight for international visitors - even non-birders know the kookaburra laugh! **Rainbow Bee-eaters** and **White-throated Honeyeaters** were active here too, while **Welcome Swallows** and **Australian Swiftlets** zipped overhead. A little further along Lily Creek we came across a very cooperative **Little Heron** stalking the bank.

Then on to Saltwater Lake, where several **Radjah Shelducks** were scattered about — some perched in trees, others tucked beneath mangroves, and only a couple actually out on the water. These stunning ducks gave our species list a welcome boost during what had been a fairly quiet stretch of birding.



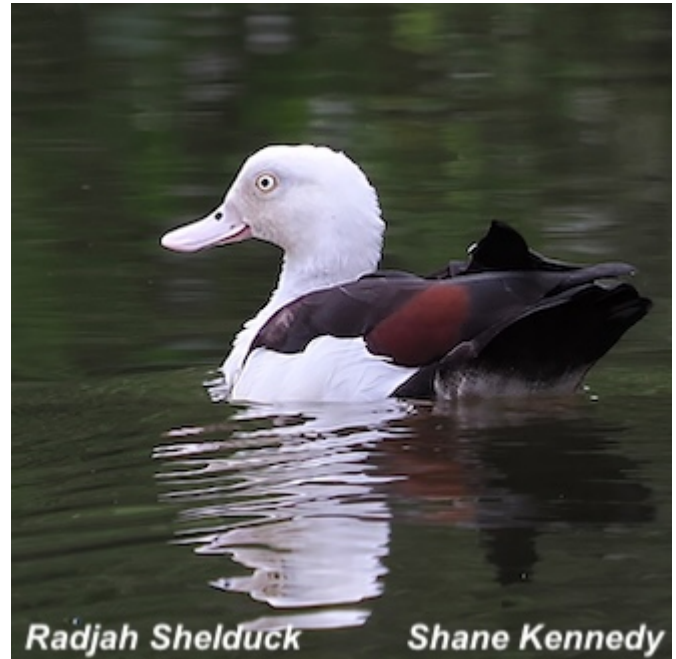
From there we headed to the Pagoda, where the Bauhinia was in full bloom. Spotting **Sahul Sunbirds** among the deep purple flowers was a real treat. Things stayed fairly quiet as we walked the western shore, though we did see a **Darter** preening itself high in a paperbark tree.

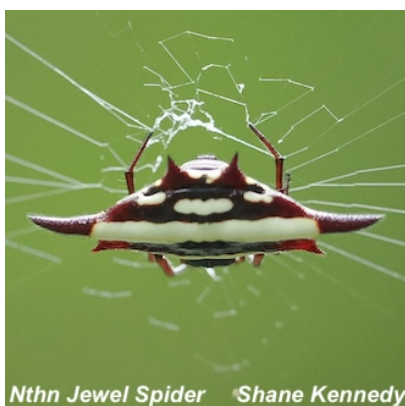
And then the magic happened.

A **Little Kingfisher** suddenly darted into the water before returning to an exposed branch right in front of us. It sat there long enough for everyone to get brilliant views before disappearing again. We caught up with it once more down at the corner where it perched out in the open and successfully caught a fish. Nobody wanted to leave, but eventually the bird made the decision for us. Then, a little further along at the “western finger”, we found another Little Kingfisher — noticeably bluer than the first.

Such an incredible little bird, and a brilliant way to finish the walk.

Freshwater Lake was next. The **Ospreys** were on the nest, though unfortunately nothing was happening at the “sushi train”. The **Pacific Black Duck** family was still there too — now with five ducklings — and one of the adults was hanging around with **Moriarty**, the dumped hybrid domestic duck. Nothing good can come of that!





Once again, what had seemed like a fairly slow morning somehow ended with 45 species recorded. A very good day indeed.

Radjah Shelduck, Pacific Black Duck, Moriarty - Muscovy Duck x Mallard (hybrid), Australian Brushturkey, Orange-footed Megapode, Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon), Topknot Pigeon, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, Bush Stone-curlew, Masked Lapwing, Australasian Darter, Australian White Ibis, Straw-necked Ibis, Little Heron, Plumed Egret, Osprey, Rufous Owl, Rainbow Bee-eater, Little Kingfisher, Laughing Kookaburra, Torresian Kingfisher, Sacred Kingfisher, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Rainbow Lorikeet, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater, Cryptic Honeyeater, Yellow Honeyeater, Dusky Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, White-throated Honeyeater, Helmeted Friarbird, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, Varied Triller, Green aka Yellow Oriole, Australasian Figbird, Black Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Spangled Drongo, Magpie-lark, Leaden Flycatcher, Welcome Swallow, Metallic Starling, Common Myna, Mistletoebird, Sahul Sunbird



We only spent three days in Botswana in the northwestern part of the Okavango Delta known as the Panhandle, a stretch of the Okavango River that follows a more or less straight course for approximately 70 kilometres before entering the vast wetlands. You need to be as rich as Musk to afford some of the more spectacular delta accommodation which costs up to US\$6000 per person per night!! We were, thankfully, on the much cheaper end of the budget spectrum although not quite in your average backpacker's! Let's make no bones about it. This part of Africa is very expensive.



We meandered back towards the Caprivi Strip through the lovely Mahangu/Chobe National Park. It was the first time during the trip that our next port of call was only a short drive away. Elephants, **Sable Antelope** (what a fine animal!), Plains Zebra, Southern Giraffe, Bushbuck and the ubiquitous Impala were easily seen from the car window. Our target from this point on, or should I say my obsession, was the glorious **Southern Carmine Bee-eater**. Andrew, our guide, told us that it was touch and go whether we would see them as they head north in autumn to escape the southern cold. The latter half of April was very borderline.



All along the Caprivi there was no sign of them: none either at Katima Mulilo the last major settlement before we ducked back into Botswana to return the car at Kasane and cross into Zimbabwe. There we were hanging about waiting for the transfer to occur when Andrew pointed to some birds in the car park. Sure enough some exquisitely coloured bee-eaters were flitting back and forth with a guttural "krik,krik,krik" as they very conveniently continued to fly and perch right next to us. Hawking and squawking! Ain't that typical? You hunt for days to see a bird and there they suddenly are as confiding as a butcherbird at a barbecue – Southern Carmine Bee-eaters.

I then became obsessed about trying to photograph them in flight a la Cairns Birders' experts. But the light was difficult (my excuse) and

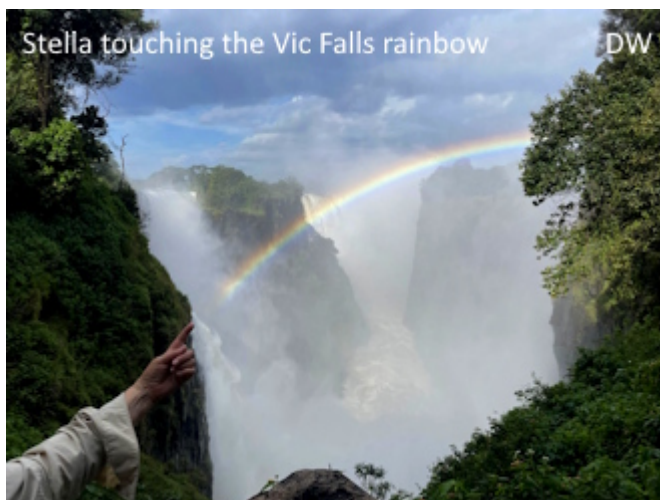
my camera inadequate for the task at hand (bad workman blaming tools) so I followed the Homer Simpson principle. If at first you don't succeed, give up!

I'm rich, so rich. Three rocks for ten, twenty or fifty billion!



And soon we were in Zimbabwe where I am a billionaire many times over as you see from my bank notes. Unfortunately, so are many other people from the days of hyperinflation in the late 2000s. The Zimbabwean dollar was canned and replaced by the US dollar thereafter. Damn those American imperialists!

I'm going to rave about Victoria Falls now. It hadn't been seen like that for decades following the monumental wet season, that is if 'seen' is the correct term. There was so much spume and spray that a thorough drenching was *de rigueur*. There was no point in pretending it wouldn't happen. What a spectacle. Its title as one of the seven natural wonders of the world is well merited. This wasn't the 'awesome' of a young person pleased that you've just given them directions to the nearest bus stop. This was total, gobsmacking, jaw-dropping awe at the sheer power of nature. AWESOME man!



Now I'm going to have to say something about the birds before I get sacked from my columns. They will correspond to my best remaining photos surprisingly enough. For once, **White-browed Robin-Chat** and **Blue Waxbill** allowed their pictures to be taken. The robin chat is a common bird and a beautiful songster, but it tends to hang out most of the time deep in the bushes. The **Woodland Kingfisher** is an obliging member of its tribe as was the **Arrow-marked Babbler** which had just woken up from an afternoon siesta.

Collared Palm Thrush is localised and tricky and the **Black-collared Barbet** is nearly always high in the canopy. The **African Barred Owlet** drove us mad one night with its incessant, plaintive, high-pitched trills from a tree right outside our safari tent. The **White-backed Vulture**, like so many of its brethren, is Critically Endangered due to poisoning so it was nice to see their ugly mugs around the Victoria Falls Safari Club where educational awareness and feeding are the order of the day.



White-browed Robin-Chief D Walls



Blue Waxbill D Walls



Woodland Kingfisher Denis Walls



Arrow-marked Babbler D Walls



Black-collared Barbet D Walls



Collared Palm Thrush D Walls



And finally, I wanted to show you what a fine job **Dung Beetles** perform. They are, as science is proving, a very underrated ecological artiste. They act as nature's ultimate cleanup crew by feeding on and burying animal waste with elephant dung as a particular favourite. This is a critical ecosystem service which enriches soil health, recycles nutrients, suppresses populations of pest flies and parasites, disperses seeds and reduces harmful greenhouse gas emissions like methane. Hooray for Dung Beetles. And with that scatological finale I'll bid you *sara zvakanaka* (Shona for goodbye) from these southern African epistles.



Four Days Birding Around Port Moresby

I recently spent four days in Port Moresby, the bustling capital of our nearest neighbour, Papua New Guinea. For birders travelling from Cairns, Port Moresby is remarkably accessible — only a 1.5-hour flight on modern aircraft, with reasonable airfares and accommodation comparable to any other city of around 750,000 people in our region.

I had engaged the services of Mr Daniel Wakra, proprietor of New Guinea Natural Tours, a well-known and highly knowledgeable local birding guide.



We set off before dawn on the first morning, heading northwest into the mountains above the city. The drive through the gorge and onto the Soger Plateau was spectacular. At the turn-off to Varirata National Park we stopped in the early morning light, where I encountered my first birds of the trip.

The ubiquitous **Yellow-faced Mynas** were calling noisily, accompanied by several **Fawn-breasted Bowerbirds**. In roadside grasses nearby, a trio of **Grey-headed Munias** fed quietly, while a magnificent, jet-black **Pheasant Coucal** moved steadily down the valley. Familiar species for North Queensland birders soon appeared — **Willie Wagtails**, **Lemon-bellied Flyrobins**, **Blue-winged Kookaburras**, **Brahminy Kites**, **Rainbow Bee-eaters**, **Varied Trillers**, **Spangled Drongos**, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and ever-present **Torresian Crows**.

The lower country resembled savanna woodland not unlike areas north of Mareeba. Above about 700 metres, however, the habitat changed abruptly as we entered dense tropical rainforest within the national park. The dawn chorus was almost overwhelming.



Around the visitor area the birding became frenetic. New species appeared constantly, including my first **Raggiana Birds-of-Paradise** — mostly females and immature males. Other highlights included **Red-capped Flowerpeckers**, **Growling Riflebirds**, **Black-capped Lories**, **Red-cheeked Parrots**, **Papuan Eclectus** and several honeyeaters. The continuous calls of **Green-backed Gerygones** formed a constant backdrop.



A particular surprise was a pair of **Barking Owls** watching us suspiciously from tall casuarinas. Numerous species were heard but remained unseen, including the enigmatic **Pheasant Pigeon**. Daniel then led me along one of the forest trails and somehow located a **Brown-headed Paradise-Kingfisher** deep within the dense rainforest — an elusive and highly sought-after species. His ability to detect and locate birds in thick forest was extraordinary.



Kingfishers were a particular interest of mine, and our third species for the morning was the delightful **Yellow-billed Kingfisher**. Other memorable sightings included **White-faced Robins** and several species of pitohui — including the striking **Orange Pitohui**, regarded as the world's only poisonous bird. Fruiting trees also held Hooded and **Rusty Pitohuis**, **Papuan Cicadabirds**, **Little Shrikethrushes** and **Boyer's Cuckooshrikes**.

For the first two days we lunched at the Koitaki Country Club, a holiday and conference retreat set amongst rolling hills and a golf course near Sogeri. The rough access track itself produced several species including **Chestnut-breasted Munias**, **Grand Munias** and a **Pied Bush Chat**, while **White-shouldered Fairywrens** called from nearby grassland.

The grounds of the club held many familiar Australo-Papuan species including **Grey Shrikethrushes**, all four egret species, **Sahul Brush Cuckoos**, **Channel-billed Cuckoos**, **Australasian Figbirds** and **Masked Lapwings**. Less familiar species included **Pink-spotted Fruit-Doves**, **Brown Orioles**, **Black-backed Butcherbirds** and **Hooded Butcherbirds**. Three additional kingfishers were added to the trip list here — **Azure**, **Forest** and **Sacred Kingfishers**.



Our second morning in Varirata National Park began before sunrise in order to witness one of the great spectacles of New Guinea birding — displaying **Raggiana Birds-of-Paradise**.

We parked beneath towering rainforest trees on the escarpment edge, where dozens of males in full breeding plumage called loudly from exposed perches. In the early sunlight the birds glowed like flames against the canopy. Whenever a female approached, the males erupted into display — spreading their flank plumes, bobbing, prancing and vibrating their wings in spectacular fashion. We spent nearly two hours photographing and observing them, eventually leaving with stiff necks from staring skyward. A tripod or monopod would be highly recommended for anyone carrying heavier camera gear.



Raggiana B-of-Paradise Daniel W-M



Barred Owlet-Nightjar Daniel W-M

Later that morning Daniel pointed out a hollow high in a tree trunk containing a single **Barred Owlet-nightjar** peering down with enormous dark eyes and its distinctive facial bristles. Nearby, **Grey Crows** passed overhead while we searched unsuccessfully for calling **Papuan Scrubwrens**, **Rusty Mouse-warblers** and the scarce **Obscure Berrypecker**. I got to observe and photograph another Kingfisher species, the spectacular **Rufous-bellied Kookaburra**.

On the third day we travelled west into the vast lowland savannas of the Papuan Gulf country. The landscape strongly resembled parts of Cape York Peninsula — broad grasslands, seasonal wetlands and scattered agricultural clearings planted with bananas, plantains and breadfruit.

Much of the day involved what Daniel described as “road birding” — simply driving until something interesting appeared or called from roadside habitat.

Again there were familiar species: **Spotted Whistling-Ducks**, **Wompoo Fruit-Doves**, **Torresian Imperial-Pigeons**, **Dollarbirds**, **Fairy Gerygones**, **Black-faced Monarchs** and **Sahul Sunbirds**. One surprise was a vagrant **Australian Hobby**.



Rufouse-bellied Kookaburra Daniel WM

Daniel became particularly excited when we located one of his favourite local species — the spectacular **Golden Myna**. Nearby we flushed an equally stunning **Common Paradise-Kingfisher**, glowing cobalt-blue above with immaculate white underparts and elongated tail streamers. We later spent considerable time watching a family group with two recently fledged young.

Pigeons and fruit-doves were especially well represented in this area, including **Dwarf Fruit-Doves**, **Coroneted Fruit-Doves**, **Orange-bellied Fruit-Doves** and the handsome **Zoe's Imperial-Pigeon**. **Coconut Lorikeets** were abundant throughout the region, appearing almost identical to our Rainbow Lorikeets back home.

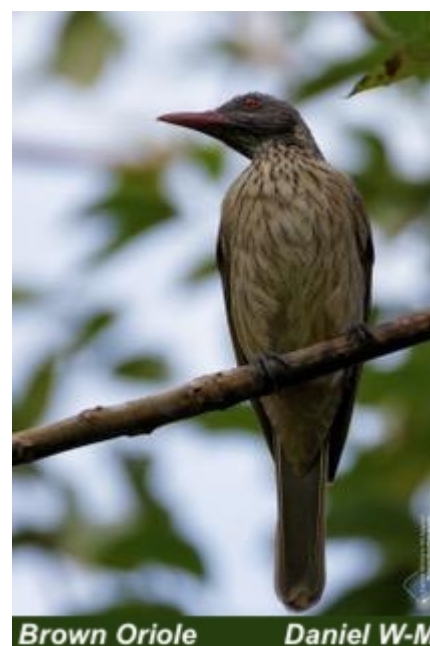
After returning to Port Moresby for lunch, our final afternoon was spent exploring the grounds of Pacific Adventist University in the northern suburbs. The campus contains a mosaic of wetlands, manicured lawns and coastal grasslands that support a surprisingly diverse bird community.

Familiar species included **Pied Herons**, **Australian White Ibises**, **Pacific Black Ducks**, **Radjah Shelducks** and **Wandering Whistling-Ducks**. A fitting final addition to the trip list was the endemic **Singing Starling**.

Port Moresby is a highly rewarding destination for birders. While tourist infrastructure remains limited and roads can be poor, the city is surprisingly accessible from northern Australia. For first-time visitors, local knowledge is essential, and travelling in groups would certainly be advisable.

Despite the city's reputation, I found the people of Papua New Guinea gracious, hardworking and quietly welcoming. Everywhere we travelled, people were courteous, reserved and invariably smiling.

Over four days I recorded 112 species, including 56 lifers — an immensely rewarding introduction to the birds of Papua New Guinea.



Walking around the saltwater ponds today our attention turned once more to the majestic Nipa Palms aka Nypa palm, spilling their enormous fronds over the water. As any good birder knows, these palms create safe pockets for such treasures as Black Bitterns, Little Kingfishers and nesting Night Herons to hide. My first sighting, of a White-browed Crake, was skulking in the darkness created by the immense overlapping fronds many years ago.

One of the world's most multi-purposed palms, the Nipa Palm has been used for millennia for food, drink, fuel, construction and medicine. Today, it is the fourth most important commercially-grown palm in the world (excluding ornamental palms). As you may imagine, the huge fronds are used for weaving baskets, brooms and hats, as well as providing fuel for cooking.



The true importance comes from the cluster of woody, angular seeds - the wooden mace. This 'flower spike' is actually a cluster of smaller seeds that, when harvested young, can be cut laterally to reveal a soft jelly-like endosperm that can make a nice addition to a fruit salad or sweet drink. However, before the spike is cut, the inflorescence must first be bent over, tied down and then roughly beaten with a hard piece of wood for at least 40 times - because why not.



As well as relieving tension, this causes the palm to flood the flower spike with its rich, sweet sap. Around two weeks later, the spike is cut and the sap is collected from both the plant, and the cut end of the spike; This process can take hours. The sap can be turned into a sweet drink, a local wine, or a palm vinegar. If heated, it thickens into a sugary treacle known in Indonesia as *Gula Nipah*.

Although the Nipa Palm shares many similarities with that other salt-tolerant and extremely versatile palm we have growing around the Saltwater Lake, the Coconut Palm, they are only distantly related in the Arecaceae family, separated by over 35 million years. The Nipa Palm, *Nypa fruticans*, sits within this family but in its own monotypic subfamily (*Nypoideae*) as the only species in the genus *Nypa*. It is considered the only palm adapted specifically to the mangrove biome with the persistent leaf bases passing air down to the root system.

28 May 2026. Scott Ritchie

One of the unwritten rules of bird photography is “no hand of man”. Another words, photos of wild birds should not contain man-made features or man-made structures. As a general rule, I abide by this (Rainbow Bee-eaters on crusty old tombstones being an exception). Particularly for images that I hope will be wall hangers rather than just an ID shot. However, after seeing the heroic measures that are being employed at Artemis Station in Cape York to save the critically endangered Golden Shoulder Parrot (GSP), I readily make an exception. Three years ago, I was traveling up the Cape on tour with Doug Herrington, and I got this image of the male GSP. For those who went on the Artemis trip a fortnight ago, they will recognize this anthill. Yes, it’s a real anthill. But it’s not in its natural state. The tip of the anthill had been sawn off and placed atop the 44-gallon drum used as a feeder for the GSP. A prop to capture a photo of these birds in their natural environment. No hand of man.



A male Golden Shouldered Parrot sits sentinel atop an anthill prop at the feeder, Artemis Station. June 2023.

However, the hand of man is an integral part of the GSP environment at Artemis Station. The GSP Conservation Program at Artemis Station includes several interventions to enhance the survival and reproductive success of this iconic bird. For a description of the program, see the report by Stella Martin in last week’s Cairns Frogmouth Newsletter.

So, I look at the images I captured of the GSP at Artemis Station in a new light. They capture the parrot, and the role man plays in trying to save it. We can see the trail camera that monitors the feeding station. The wires of the cage that protects feeding GSPs from marauding predators such as goannas, butcherbirds and goshawks. And look at the birds closely. Their legs are banded. These birds are known to the Artemis staff. And now I can really appreciate the hand of man in these images. It is saving these birds.



An immature male GSP takes flight from a feeder perch. Leg bands clearly identify this bird.



Two frames later, and a trail camera comes into view. It's all part of this bird's story.



A female and male GSP at the feeder at dusk. The setting sun catches the eyes of these lovers, as well as the bands on the female's legs.

Good birding and great shooting!

Festival: Daintree River Boatman 1st AND 2nd September

Daintree River Boatman

- 1st September 4pm evening cruise - 9 people
- 2nd September 7am Dawn Cruise - 9 people
- Book Direct - text or email - 0417 651 929 - <https://www.daintreerivertours.com.au/>
- Cairns Birders special price of \$60/person is extended to all other cruises during the festival, just mention "Cairns Birders Festival" when booking.

Festival:**Michaelmas Cay Cruise****Sunday 30th August**

Seastar is hosting another Birders Only Michaelmas Cay cruise. Must book and pay before Sunday, July 26. As we cater for a small group of 36 passengers we do recommend to book ahead to save disappointment.

Full Day at Michaelmas - Included in your day is:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Unlimited island time · Island circumnavigation depends on weather and tides. · Morning and afternoon tea, Lunch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Glass Bottom boat tour Snorkel equipment Guided snorkel tour |
|--|--|

All for the special price of \$228 per person.

We are seeking expressions of interest of any who would like to travel. To book please phone us with payment by Visa or MasterCard on (07) 4041 6218.

We require Full Names, Email Address and phone number of all passengers. E C O F I E S T A
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.

<i>E C O F I E S T A</i>			
Set up 8:30 - 10:00	Paul Fisk, set up	Shane Kennedy	Denis Moeser
10:00 - 11:00	Peter Manins	Vishy, Ceri Pearce	Denis Moeser
11:00 - 12:00	Peter Manins	Tricia, Ceri Pearce	Denis Moeser
12:00 - 14:00	Scott Ritchie	Tricia Gates	Denis Moeser
14:00 - 15:30	Denis Walls		Denis Moeser
Packing up 15:30 -	Paul Fisk	Shane Kennedy	Denis Moeser

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 .

Mikey Kudo, the usual organiser, is in Japan so contact Denis W on 0434 279 552 for more info.

Rowdy's Ramblings:

Bird song and music: [Mix – André Rieu - Cuckoo Polka](#)

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:

Request for local help

Hi Fellow birders

4 lady birders coming from Bellarine Birdlife up from Victoria making our way to Iron Range.

We are staying close to the Esplanade and have one day in Cairns for a spot of birding - we were thinking Cattana Wetlands and Botanical Gardens. If any locals are free to show us around **THIS SATURDAY, 30th May**, we would be delighted.

We don't have transport but happy to make our way with uber. We just don't know where to look!

If anyone has some spare time on the 30th, we would love to hear from you.

Text Kerry on 0421187249

Many thanks

Extra Extra read all about it!

Just a note about BIRD FLU - The Australian continent is still free of this scourge but if you see sick or dead birds (especially a number) **AVOID RECORD REPORT** [more here.](#)

Observations:

Spotless crane - 23 May 2026 - was observed in the wet ephemeral margin of the Melaleuca forest reserve that adjoins the Saltwater Creek at Manoora. **Peter Anderson**

Shane is slipping something in here requiring a response;

My family, amused at my birding life, asked what is the collective noun for twitchers/birders and those long zoom lenses?? Send in your suggestions

Answer to last week's quiz;

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| • Which Woodswallow has white on its wings – Dusky or Little; | Dusky |
| • Do Ospreys have reversible outer toes – YES or NO; | Yes |
| • Are Brush-turkey chicks altricial or precocial | Precocial |
| • Nordmans Greenshank when breeding – do they nest in trees or on the ground; | Trees |
| • What is Australia's rarest raptor; | Red Goshawk |

Norty Corner

