



THE CAIRNS FROGMOUTH

*All correspondence to: info@cairnsbirders.com
or connect with us on [Facebook](#) or Cairnsbirders.com*

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 5th July	7:30 Centenary Lakes Meet on Greenslope St opposite Rondo Theatre LINK
Sunday 12th July	7:30 Redden Island
Thursday 9th July	Birdlife talk on Bird Flu - Malanda - LINK
Cairns Birders' Festival	Friday 28th August - Saturday 5th September 30th August - Michaelmas Cay - book now - see below 1st September - Daintree evening cruise - book now - see below 2nd September - Daintree morning cruise - 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](#)

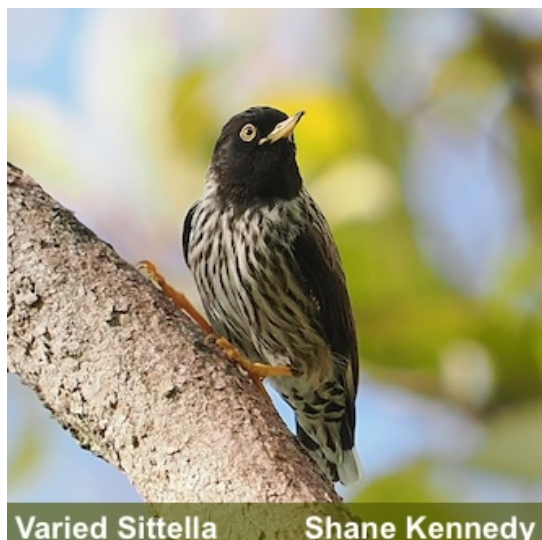
Art by Yorz Trooley





Sean Han

We are in the middle of a wet spell. Well, I thought, this will sort the wheat from the chaff! What was it that Andy used to say . . . “only wimps let a little rain stop them from birding!” Something like that, haha! I must confess, if it weren’t for the fact that I felt some obligation to turn up, I, so easily, could have found something else to do! Glad I didn’t though!



Varied Sittella

Shane Kennedy

We were committed, so much so that we jumped in the camper van and headed up a day early. The skies were blue all the way. We stopped halfway up Gillies Range at a little spot that’s been good to us in the past. It must be in an ecotone, where habitats overlap, as it was pumping: **Red-backed** and **Lovely Fairywrens**, **Red-browed Finches** and **Chestnut-breasted Mannikins**, **Grey** and **Northern Fantails**, **White-throated Treecreeper** . . . and then the magic - a **Fantail Cuckoo** showed itself, initially harassed by a flock of **Varied Sittellas** before their hunger got the better of them and they busied themselves in the canopies around us foraging.

We joined Louise, camping by a stream complete with platypus. Another bit of magic. There’d be no need for a 5am start the next day; it was only five minutes away.

The next day was marked by gentle misty rain. Poor Gerhard thought the start time was 7am, but by 8 he’d been joined by about 12 other hardy souls. A cuckoo caught Drew’s attention. It was some distance away down at the tree line but I could make out the yellow eye-ring and buffy throat of a **Fantail Cuckoo**. There was an LBJ (Little Brown Job) bobbing about on the branch near it, clearly not happy. As we crept closer we could see it was a **Yellow-throated Scrubwren**.



Fantail Cuckoo

Shane Kennedy



Myotis Bats **Shane Kennedy**

We walked up the entrance road where **Pale-yellow Robins** were flittering about. Mark spotted a chunkier bird hidden away — a whistler, he thought. We could hear **Grey Whistler** at the time, but Jake got a pic that nailed it as a female **Golden Whistler**. There were **Spectacled Monarchs**, **Brown Gerygones** and **Large-billed Scrubwrens** along our path too.

We went back to the bridge to see the **Myotis microbats**. There are at least two clusters of them tucked up in dark corners. While I was leading people in relays, others were entertained by **Fairy Gerygones** and **Yellow-breasted Boatbills**. Reunited, we were called down to the river's edge where Jake had a **Pied Monarch**. That's not all: there were **Bower's** and **Little Shrike-thrush**, **Silvereyes**, **Brown Cuckoo-dove** and a possible **Spotted Catbird** disappearing into the forest.



Brown Cuckoo-Dove. **Shane Kennedy**



Green Ringtail **Louise Baume**

We arrived at the upper car park, currently closed, and walked around that open space. Ever hopeful, we had a real good look into the large spreading fig tree. We once saw a mother and baby **Green Ringtail** here. Like old fishermen's tales, this tree is now a hot spot for the species. We've not seen them here since! Some way further on I noticed a lot of movement in the bushes and mentioned that this was more than any bird could muster. Sure enough, a **Green Ringtail** broke from cover as it climbed higher to safety. At one point when it was in the open, Sean said, "that'll do." It stopped and gave us a glance. Clickety-click went the cameras.

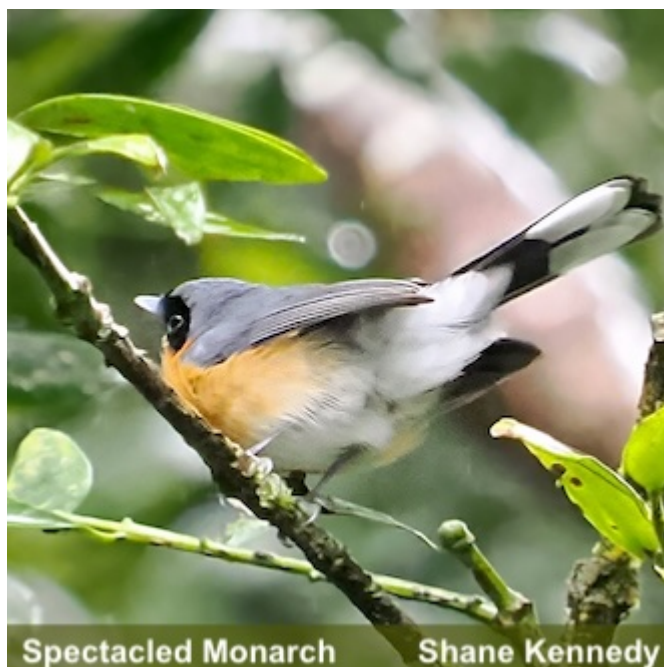
We did our circuit of the upper clearing and arrived back at the upper car park where Sean again drew our attention to a bird, this time a **White-eared Monarch**. We all got a view and then a male **Golden Whistler** popped out into the open. There were lots of birds here including **Macleay's** and **Dusky Honeyeaters**, **Brown** and **Fairy Gerygones**, **Scrubwrens** and **Shrike-thrushes**.

That might have been it, but Jake picked up an **Azure Kingfisher**, **Pacific Baza** and **Topknot Pigeon**, and I spotted a **Forest Kingfisher**, bringing our total to 33. Not bad considering the weather.



White-eared Monarch

Jake Moores



Spectacled Monarch

Shane Kennedy



Sean Han

33 species

Australian Brushturkey, Orange-footed Megapode, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Pacific Emerald Dove, Topknot Pigeon, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, Straw-necked Ibis, Great Egret, Pacific Baza, Black Kite, Azure Kingfisher, Laughing Kookaburra, Forest Kingfisher, Australian King-Parrot, Lewin's Honeyeater, Dusky Honeyeater, Macleay's Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Scrubwren, Large-billed Scrubwren, Brown Gerygone, Fairy Gerygone, Varied Triller, Bower's Shrikethrush, Little Shrikethrush (Rufous), Golden Whistler, Grey Whistler, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, White-eared Monarch, Australian Spectacled Monarch, Pied Monarch, Pale-yellow Robin, Silvereye.

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.](#)*



As we move away from the winter solstice, the sun rises earlier, and today at 6:00 there was enough of a break in the clouds to let it light up the horizon. It gave us false hope of a dry morning, for as we gathered at 7:30, the clouds had reclaimed the sky. Fortunately, their threat was exaggerated, with only a couple of light showers. Pah! I didn't even bother to put up the brolly.



Jeff, Sean and I arrived at the meeting place together. There was no one there! That was a first. Hopes for an early coffee were dashed as we went from three to 31 in record time. We had 18 locals, five from interstate, Jennie and David from NZ, Andreas from Germany, Kate and John from Scotland, and a lovely family from Italy: Elisabetta, Augusto and Matilde.



It's a lovely time to be in the gardens, with so many spectacular trees in bloom, including the Panama Flame Tree, the Yellow Saraca and the Pride of Burma. The cacao and coffee trees are in fruit, and the African Sausage Tree is like the salami section of a deli, or *salumeria*.



Little Kingfisher

Shane Kennedy

Another flowering exotic is the Pink Orchid Tree, or Camel-foot Tree (*Bauhinia monandra*), at the pagoda. This tree is Sunbird Central at the moment, with **Sahul Sunbirds** guaranteed! It's also a good spot to watch **Rainbow Bee-eaters** and **Welcome Swallows** as they hunt insects on the wing. Down at the lake's overflow, aka the *sushi train*, we found a lone **Little Heron** (ex Striated Heron) patiently waiting for morsels to wash over the rim.

But we quickly left the exotics behind and took the boardwalk to Freshwater Lake. We saw **Moriarty** (the dumped domestic hybrid) in the distance, in the company of a couple of **Pacific Black Ducks**. Then, perched on a twig, our target species. The **Little Kingfisher**, dwarfed by the lilies, took the occasional plunge after fish before flying back behind us and out of sight. It was good to get this bird under our belt early, as it can be quite challenging.



Little Heron

Jon Westaway



Green Oriole

Jon Westaway

We walked on to Saltwater Lake, spotting **Little** and **Great Egrets** along the way, plus **White-breasted Woodswallows**. At the lake itself, we saw another **Little Heron**, as well as a couple of distant **Nankeen Night Herons** in the tangle of mangrove roots at the far end.

Lerp Lane has been a bit hit-and-miss lately, and today it seemed to be more of the same. There is, however, one fruiting tree near the main path that is bringing **Green Orioles** and **Australian Figbirds** down low, making them very visible. Sean spotted an **Olive-backed Oriole** high in an adjacent tree, and a few of us managed a better look at another

nearby. We moved out to Lily Creek, then turned back with the sun behind us and looked into the paperbarks. We were rewarded with great views of **White-throated Honeyeaters**, a **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Varied Trillers**, **Laughing Kookaburras** and several vocal **Yellow Honeyeaters**. Speaking of vocal, there was a Little **Bronze-Cuckoo** and a **Sahul Cicadabird** up there somewhere too. *Lerp Lane* turned out to be a hit!



Yellow Honeyeater Jon Westaway



White-throated Honeyeater Shane Kennedy

We ventured on to the café adding **Sacred** and **Torresian Kingfishers** on the way leaving us with a respectable 42 species under our belt. The Italian family were very grateful and, courtesy of Jeff, went home with a birdy tea towel! Nice one, Jeff.



Varied Triller Jon Westaway

Pacific Black Duck, Muscovy Duck x Mallard (hybrid), Australian Brushturkey, Orange-footed Megapode, Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon), Bar-shouldered Dove, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, Bush Stone-curlew, Masked Lapwing, Nankeen Night Heron, Little Egret, Little Heron, Great Egret, Osprey, Rainbow Bee-eater, Little Kingfisher, Laughing Kookaburra, Torresian Kingfisher. Sacred Kingfisher. Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Rainbow Lorikeet, Yellow Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, White-throated Honeyeater, Helmeted Friarbird, Varied Triller, Sahul Cicadabird, Olive-backed Oriole, Green aka Yellow Oriole, Australasian Figbird, White-breasted Woodswallow, Black Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Magpie-lark, Leaden Flycatcher, Welcome Swallow, Metallic Starling, Common Myna, Sahul Sunbird, Scaly-breasted Munia.

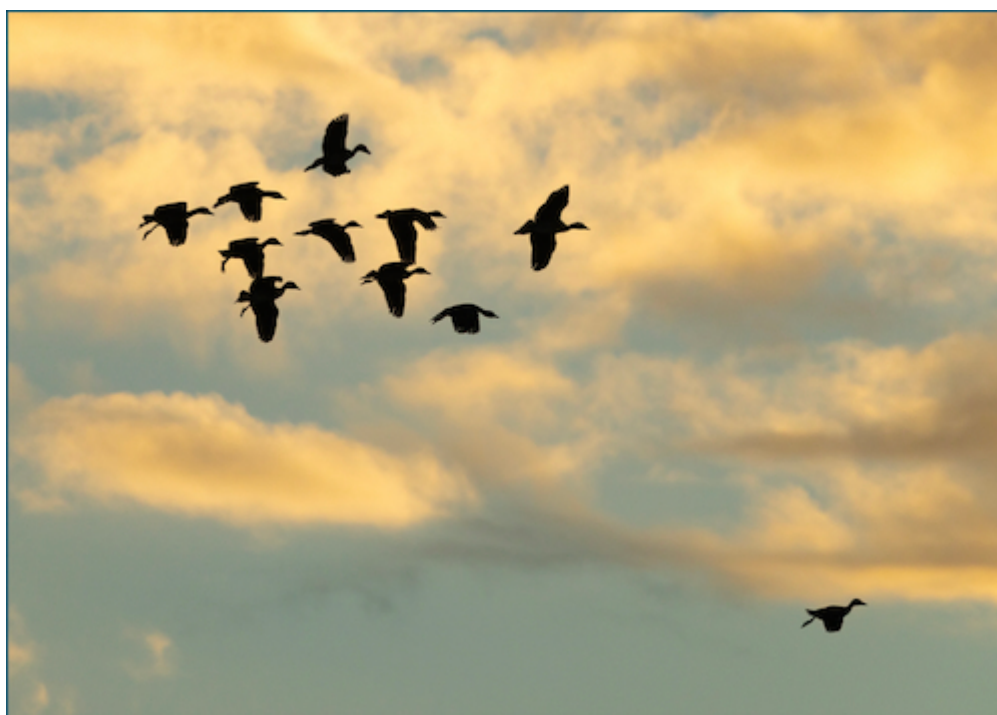
This past month, I have joined the Patreon communities (online subscription) of Scott Keys and Andy Rouse, two of my favorite wildlife photographers. Why join a patron community? I think the main benefit is that you were given access to a community that shares a common interest in photography. And you can get direct feedback from the leader of the group as well as the members. Both communities have a project or a challenge for a given month. June, the first month that I've been in these communities, ironically had the same challenge. Silhouettes. All images shot with a Canon R5-II and a RF 200-800 zoom lens.

So I'm going to run you through some of the images that I took and then show some of the varieties of bird silhouette images that you can get. The basic approach of a silhouette shot is to have the primary subject as a dark outline, or dark with a rim light outline. Andy Rouse likes them completely dark with only the outline of the subject. Scott Keys doesn't mind a little bit of detail showing up, giving it more of a backlit look. Here is an example of a photograph of a Red-capped Plover that shows just a little bit of detail in the bird. The plover is highlighted against the warm light of sunrise coming from the upper right. In this case, the little bit of detail in the bird adds to the image. It also gives us a chance to identify what it is.



***Just a bit of detail in the bird. Red-capped Plover,
Redden Island. 1/2500; F11; ISO 3200; 800 mm***

The other important aspect of silhouettes is the background. Well, obviously the subject is important. But you're really exposing for the highlights in the background. And there's a variety of styles you can use. One of my favourites is a dynamic sky, typically a sunrise/sunset with nice warm tones. Clouds also add drama. Here is a flock of Plumed Whistling Ducks coming down for landing near Yorkies knob. In this case, it's the dynamic clouds in the background and the interesting grouping of the flock of ducks. I really think it's the lone duck in the lower right-hand corner that makes this image. My one wish for this image would be that all the ducks in the flock were separated. There are a couple on the bottom of the flock that are just touching the ones above them. I'm sure Jon Westaway would be able to move these birds a centimetre or two to sort this issue out.



***Plumed Whistling Ducks come in for landing.
Yorkeys Knob. 1/4000; F10; ISO 4000; 400 mm.***

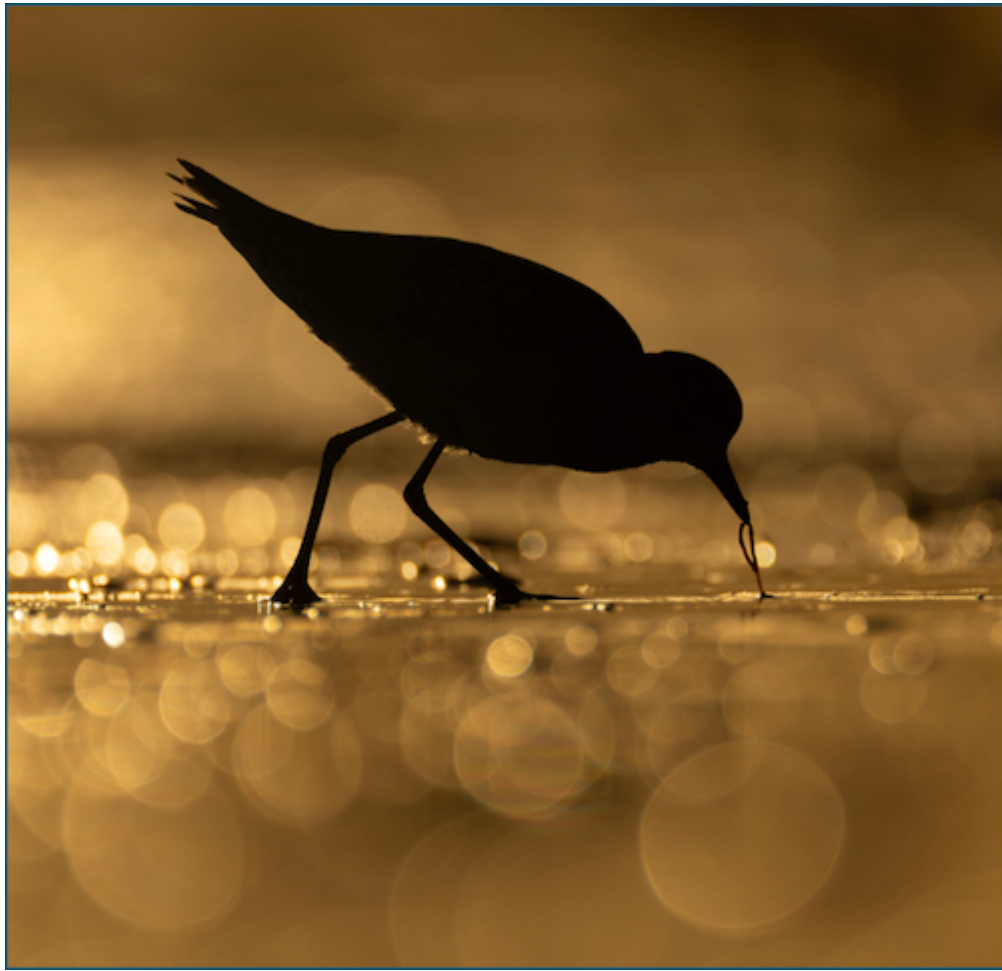
The other key to an effective silhouette is to capture the shape of the bird. If it's a bird in flight then you want to see the wings out and in profile, you might even be able to identify the completely black silhouette. Here is a picture of a bird feeding at sunrise at Redden Island. Can you identify what it is? I'll give the answer at the end of the article. I also like that with silhouettes you can make the bird small in the frame against a dynamic background. Ideal for birdscapes.



Seabird fishing at dawn, Redden Island. 1/3200; F10; ISO 3200; 370 mm.

You can capture interesting spectral highlights as part of the background. One of my favourite photographers, Shelley Pearson from Western Australia, has been a big influence for me for this style of photography. (For Shelley's take on silhouettes see [LINK](#)). She often shoots waterbirds at shallow lagoons at Mandurah ([LINK](#)). She literally gets right down on the ground, wet arse style, to capture spectral highlights manifest as bokeh balls around the subject. Sometimes they can be a bit too much, but I do think they're interesting and add a dynamism to the image. In this case we have a Pacific Golden Plover that is pulling a worm out of the mud at Redden Island. I was literally right on the ground, and the sun was coming up from behind the bird. The bokeh was created by refractions of light through sand crystals or water droplets on the beach; use a lowest F-stop to enhance the effect. The capture of action, in this case, pulling the worm out of mud, also really helps to make this a dynamic image. I really cranked the shutter speed up as the bird walked into the direct sunlight. It was a quick response to avoid blowing the highlights. In hindsight, I should have left the SS at say 1/2000 and dropped the ISO into the low hundreds.

Capturing a bird as a silhouette against either the sun or the moon. I don't have a photo of this, but it is certainly doable. The key here, and indeed the key to any of these background-dominated silhouettes, is to get your exposure right so that you don't overexpose the background elements. With the sun you're really gonna have to crank the shutter up and drop the ISO way way down. So in a sense if you're thinking of getting these shots, it's good to practice and figure out what sort of exposure you need with the sun or moon before you even go and try to take the shot. Silhouettes against dynamic lit backgrounds are also an example of a situation where Auto ISO can be useful, as it exposes the background as it makes up most of the image.



Lots of light! Pacific Golden Plover, Redden Island. 1/26000; F9; ISO 2000.

Silhouettes create wonderful rim lighting of the subject. The best way to exploit this is to have a dark, even black, background. Make sure you're exposing for the highlights, so they don't get blown out. This is where Auto ISO is not going to do you any favours as it lightens the dark background, blowing out the rim lighting. So I use manual setting to expose for highlights i.e. the rim lighting on the subject. You can also use exposure compensation (try negative 3 stops). Check test image for zebras (blown highlights) in camera if you're a Canon user. Here's a picture of a Western Grey Kangaroo with the setting sun behind him. And a couple of mosquitoes to his right. The classic roo pose is highlighted by the rim lighting. Just a hint of detail in the shadows shows the face of the roo. And editing you can darken up that background to black.



Get that background dark! Western Grey Kangaroo at sunset, Pemberton WA. 1/4000, F10, ISO 3200, 800 mm.

So when this rain finally ends, get up early for sunrise silhouettes. The Redden Island site is a great location for this. Good birding and great shooting!

The quiz. The bird flying against the dynamic Redden Island sunrise was a Greater Crested Tern. You can see the characteristic tern feeding shape - long pointed wings, head down and relatively thick body, of this bird.

Festival: Daintree River Boatman 1st AND 2nd September

Daintree River Boatman

- 1st September 4pm evening cruise - 9 people (Fully Booked - try the waitlist)
- 2nd September 7am dawn cruise - 9 people (Fully Booked - try the waitlist)
- **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 booking ahead to save disappointment. (22 of 36 already booked)

Full Day at Michaelmas - Included in your day is:

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| · Unlimited island time | Glass Bottom boat tour |
| · Island circumnavigation depends on weather and tides. | Snorkel equipment |
| · Morning and afternoon tea, Lunch | 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.

Rowdy's Ramblings:

Bird song and music: - [The Sleeping Beauty \(The Royal Ballet\)](#)

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.

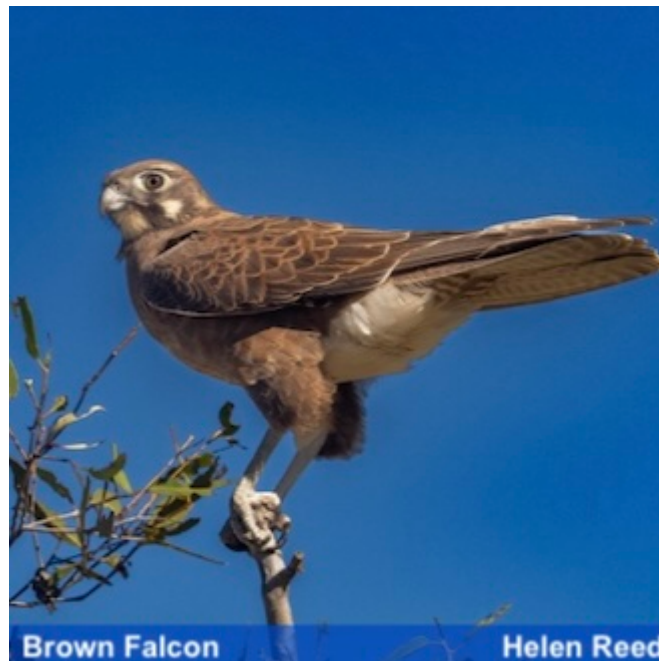
The intention of this trip was to celebrate my girlfriend's 60th Birthday, with a glass of bubbly in hand, at sunset in the red centre, Ayers Rock/Uluru.

We departed with a convoy of like-minded friends, caravans, camper trailers and our motor home AKA the LUVSHAC.

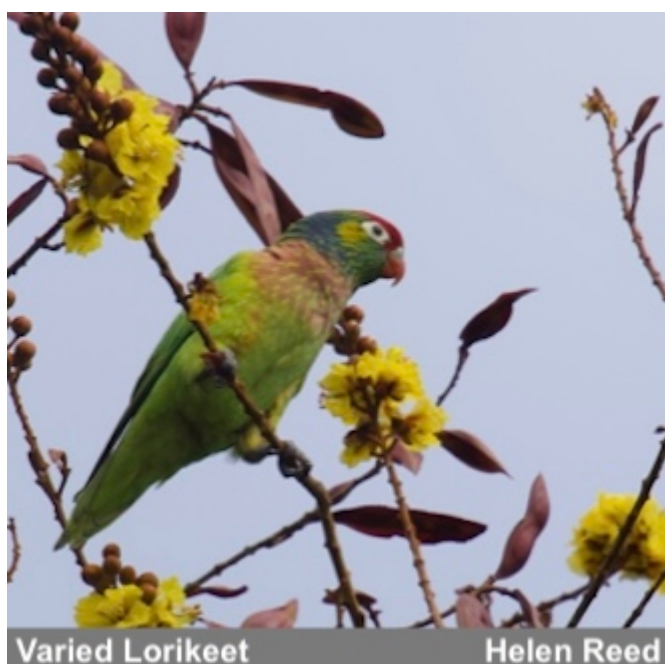
As soon as I knew we were off on this adventure my bird prep started. How many birds would we see, how many lifers can I add to my list, will I get great photos, this is going to be so much fun.

Do I make a targeted bird hit list?

I didn't really want a hit list, as I feel disappointment when the target species is missed and the pressure involved. Truthfully, I love them all, so I was more than happy just capturing them as I go.

**Brown Falcon****Helen Reed**

I settled on ensuring I understood the bird species, perhaps their sound (always an ongoing learning experience) and then targeting their habitat. So, with my camera in hand, I was always on the lookout and at the ready.

**Varied Lorikeet****Helen Reed**

In the end I settled with a combo approach.

My equipment included my Merlin, Morcombe & Stewart guide apps, hard copy bird ID book and a great one I would highly recommend, *Finding Birds Australia*.

Under my sun visor I have a laminated birds of prey in flight photo, this is a great way of trying to identify them.

I had a list in the sense that I understood what birds could be about and where they may be located but had to also be mindful this was not a dedicated bird watching journey we had to fit in with other members and activities. It had to be a balance.

However, in saying that it wasn't long before I had everyone on the hunt!!!!

Sightings come across the CB radio;

“birds on the right”,

“emu up ahead”,

“What bird is that one?”

We travelled at the rear of the convoy, my husband doing all the driving so I could concentrate on spotting and photography. That way when I yelled “**BIRD**”, we didn't have any unexpected rear ornaments flying to the front!

I commenced a bird count; this was how many species of birds I could see in the entirety of the journey. This also created interest from our travel companions as each day there was an update, number of species, any lifers and any photos. I categorize my list as sighted and or photographed and then if it was a lifer for me.



We started our trip in Cairns, Charters Towers (Dalrymple Tourist Park), Cloncurry Caravan Park, Barkly Homestead, Devils Marbles/Karlu Karlu, Wanngardi Caravan Park, Ayres Rock Resort Camping, Kings Canyon, Ormiston Gorge, Hale River Homestead, Camooweal Lagoon, Julia Creek Canavan Park, Porcupine Gorge (Pyramid Camp ground) Pinnarendi Station Stay. The intention was to make a run for the forward journey and then meander somewhat on the way back home.

Nothing really beats the pure joy you experience, the excitement and the joy in sharing that experience with others when you see that new bird. Particularly when you share those details to people that they didn't know. While riding our bikes around “The Rock” we spotted some **Zebra Finches**,



We had initially decided to come back in time for the Cairns Birders Artemis trip but then considered we had travelled so far that we should make the most of the Northern Territory environment and Artemis will be there for a shorter journey later in the year.



Diamond Doves and a single **Budgerigar**. As usual when you have the camera up people are curious. This young lady was so amazed when I told her budgerigars are native to Australia.

Birding is truly a tonic for your soul, you observe so much more, appreciate so much more and feel so much more. How fortunate are we to live in Australia and have so many spectacular birds and an amazing environment to observe them in.

Seeing 21 lifers and 88 species was fantastic. However, at the risk of boring you I have selected just two lifers. As I mentioned I didn't have a hard-set list, I just formed one in my mind ,the ones I may get a chance to see.

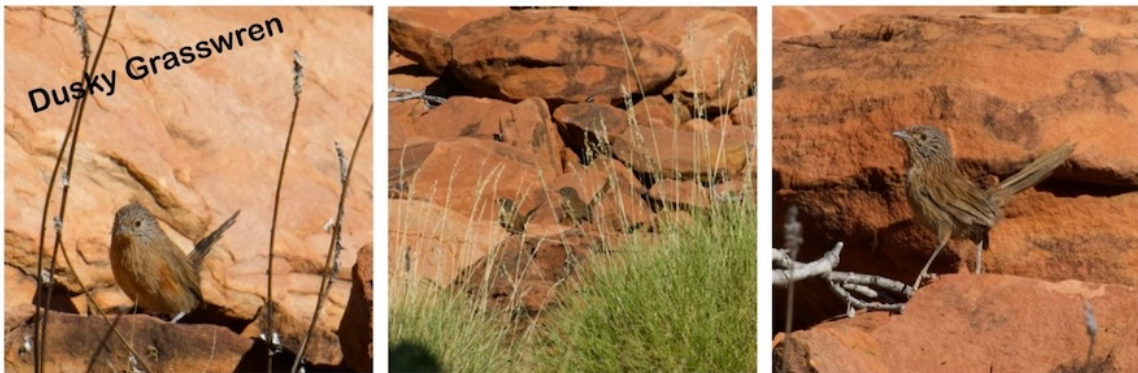
Kings' Canyon Creek Walk. This is a beautiful stroll amongst magnificent white gums with the brilliant ochre colour of the rocks accentuated by the setting sun. We did this in the afternoon. As a recovery walk considering we did a six-hour rim walk of the canyon the day before.

Walking along the creek bed felt like we were the only people in the world, the sun began its descent for the magical golden hour, with the only sounds of the wind rushing past the trees and of course the beautiful chorus call of the birds. This is my happy place.

All eyes were peeled for any movement and any sound. Suddenly I see a mid-size bird, looks like a young bird then we spot two other birds, parents we assume. We don't know what they are, but that is irrelevant, experience the sighting, get those photos and don't forget to get absorbed and be present in the moment.

While observing this, another movement caught my eye.

I had spotted **Dusky Grasswrens**. They are extremely difficult to see, let alone get that great shot. They are so camouflaged, blend into their environment so well, hopping about quickly with spinifex grass



impeding a clear view. These are some of the challenges of bird photography.

I was thrilled with the sighting and my photos. I also filmed some great video footage.

Our travel friends have now experienced the joy of bird watching, eager to see if we have added to 'the list', but more importantly they commented on how this has enhanced their experience in the great outdoors. They are now more observant, more aware, connected and more appreciative of the beautiful Australian birds and the environment in which they live.

Every adventure in the great outdoors is birdwatching time for me and as always, it is not necessarily what you see but how you see it.

Letters:

Clicking on the black lozenge worked perfectly! Thank you for making it so easy to enjoy the Frogmouth!

Loved the article on birding off shore at Kaikoura... all those albatrosses & petrels made me think of the Sub-Antarctic Islands. Jeanette McInnes

Cattana Capers

Come to the Bat Night

Geoff McClure



FREE FAMILY TOURS

MICROBAT NIGHT

CATTANA WETLANDS

SATURDAY 18 July
5.30PM

Free family event to assist Bat and Tree Society of Cairns conduct a survey of insect eating microbats with ultrasonic detectors and infrared lights.

Watch the microbats fly-out from their roost!

Meet in Cattana Wetlands carpark
Bring torch & bug spray

Photo - Kauring-gill Bat Conservation Society Inc

GREEN SPACE OUR PLACE

Cairns REGIONAL COUNCIL

Special outing . . . Starry Starry Night

12 September 2026

SPECIAL OUTING: **Starry Starry Night** limited to 14
12 September - up on the Tablelands (near Kay Rd)
There may be places left; if you get rejected, let me know

Includes:

- an evening meal,
- discussion about the night sky with access to a telescope,
- then stories around the campfire.
- there is a campground nearby

Doug is organising this to celebrate Carolyn's birthday and thought, rather than joining a group of 12 randoms, wouldn't be nice to do it with folk he knows.

So if you want to help Doug and Carolyn celebrate then book here [STARRY STARRY NIGHT](#) and use the discount code **FNQastro** for 20% off. This is a regular NightSky event but this date is set aside just for us birders. - limited to 12 people.



Bargain Birding at Bamaga - the Tip of Cape York Mid- March 2027

This has generated a lot of interest and those on the short list will be contacted soon with dates and expected costs.

The rest who have expressed interest have been put on the wait list.



Who is this ?



Last week's quiz:

- A) Mangrove Honeyeater
- B) Varied Honeyeater



Norty Corner

