



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 19th July

7:30 Little Mulgrave

Turn onto Little Mulgrave Rd, meet by the river 200m in. [LINK](#)

Sunday 26th July

8:00 Lake Barrine, then Thomas Rd, then Hasties Swamp

Turn onto Thomas Rd, park on the side of the road 500m in. [LINK](#)

Cairns Birders' Festival

Friday 28th August - Saturday 5th September

30th August - Michaelmas Cay - book now - see below

1st September - Daintree evening cruise - FULL

2nd September - Daintree morning cruise - FULL

Starry starry night

12 September - Tablelands - see below for details

Cairns Birders' Epic Excursion

October 2026 TANZANIA

FULL

ONLINE SHOP

Cairns Birders merchandise

Look 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





At 5:30 I could hear squeals and other noises coming from the Esplanade. Partygoers with a second wind perhaps, or an early morning boot camp? No, it was the marathon. And it wasn't the runners making the noise; that came from little pockets of supporters, strategically placed to urge them on with strident encouragement. I knew Ben would be there somewhere, so I watched for a while and would have cheered too had I seen him.

Go Ben!



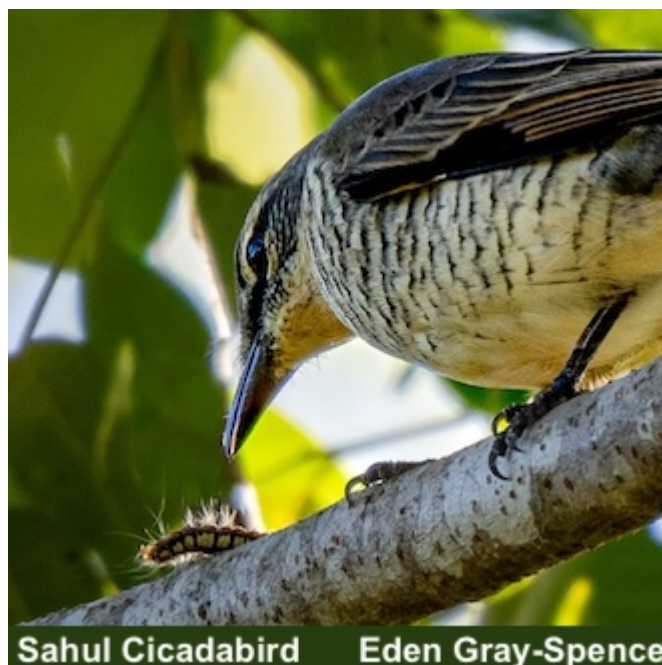
Laughing Kookaburra Shane Kennedy

Our own event at Redden Island would be less gruelling and started a little later, at the very civilised hour of 7:30. More than 20 of us gathered to walk into the tropical vine scrub that constitutes this little patch bordering the Barron River. It can harbour some great birds, but today proved challenging. Early on we heard **Lovely Fairywrens**, but they did not reveal themselves. We heard them elsewhere as well, but only a few people managed to see more than movement in the undergrowth.

We also heard a **Torresian Kingfisher** and then startled it from its perch high in a dead tree. As I raised my camera it skedaddled. We all got to see **Spangled Drongos**, though not as well as we'd have liked. **Laughing Kookaburras**, **Bar-shouldered** and **Peaceful Doves** were plentiful.

The walk in was slow going, bird-wise, but we soon reached that sweet spot in the middle that kept us busy. **Mistletoebirds** and **Sahul Sunbirds** were prominent, feeding and collecting spider webs for their nests. Another bush was alive with **Fairy Gerygones** and a lone **Spectacled Monarch**. In the background

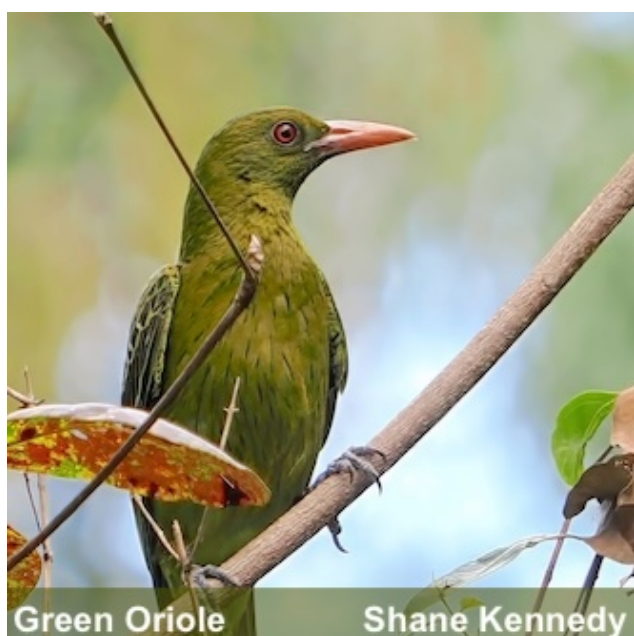
was a **Black-faced Cuckooshrike** that we caught glimpses of from time to time. **Varied Trillers** were about and then, directly above us, a male **Sahul Cicadabird** sat in a "window", clear for all to see. A little while later a female came into view, complete with a hairy caterpillar. All the while I could hear a **Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove** in one direction, while others saw a **Superb Fruit-Dove** in another. We had **Large-billed Gerygones** and **Green Orioles** in view, along with an elusive **Rufous Fantail**. This patch was rich, but hard going.



Sahul Cicadabird Eden Gray-Spence



Leaden Flycatcher Geneviève Vallée



Green Oriole Shane Kennedy

We made our way back to the river and the sandbars at the river mouth. The tide was retreating nicely, allowing us to venture out. There were a few **Bar-tailed Godwits** poking around and a lone **Pacific Golden Plover** that had decided to overwinter here. A few **Red-capped Plovers** and **Red-necked Stints** could also be seen, along with a pair of **Pied Oystercatchers**. **Crested and Australian Terns** were encamped on some outer sandbars. Jake reckoned he heard **Beach Stone-curlews**. Sure enough, away on the far bank of the broad Barron River stood that distinctive bird. We had just been talking about them, so it felt a bit magical.

As we strolled back to the cars we were entertained by the **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** as they cavorted in nearby trees and sometimes crossing the road at head height and only meters away. How lucky are we to live where we live!

It'd been a long morning, just shy of 4 hours, about as long as Ben took for the marathon . . . but we'd only travelled 2kms! No medals for us but we did get 53 species under our belt!

Orange-footed Megapode, Spotted Dove, Peaceful Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove, Superb Fruit-Dove, Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove, Pheasant Coucal, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, Beach Stone-curlew, Australian Pied Oystercatcher, Pacific Golden-Plover, Red-capped Plover, Eurasian Whimbrel (Siberian), Bar-tailed Godwit, Red-necked Stint, Silver Gull, Australian Tern, Crested Tern, Black-necked Stork, Royal Spoonbill, White-faced Heron, Great Egret, Rainbow Bee-eater, Laughing Kookaburra, Torresian Kingfisher, Sacred Kingfisher, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Lovely Fairywren, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Helmeted Friarbird, Fairy Gerygone, Large-billed Gerygone, Black-faced Cuckooshrike, Varied Triller, Sahul Cicadabird, Green aka Yellow Oriole, Australasian Figbird, White-breasted Woodswallow, Black Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Australian Rufous Fantail, Spangled Drongo, Australian Spectacled Monarch, Magpie-lark, Leaden Flycatcher, Welcome Swallow, Metallic Starling, Common Myna, Mistletoebird, Sahul Sunbird



Cairns Botanic Gardens - Tuesday's Guided Bird Walk: Emma Steele

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.](#)

Initiation by Ink: A Tuesday Outing Debut

By Emma Steele

Date: Tuesday, 14 July 2026

Location: Cairns Botanical Gardens

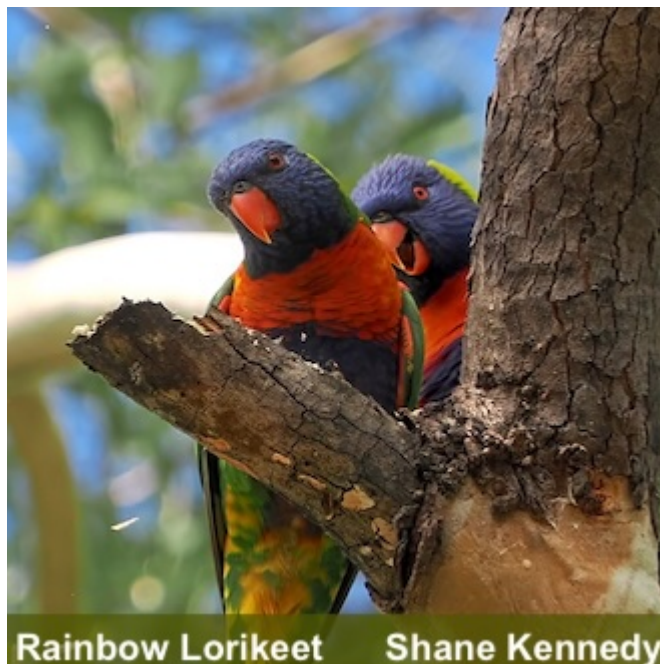
Stats: 46 species | 8,500 steps | 1 missing sun visor | 1 slice of breakfast tart

As an 18-month Cairns Birders member and avid reader of *The Frogmouth*, I finally made my debut at a Tuesday morning Botanic Gardens outing. Word of warning to other rookies: club initiation apparently includes report writing! It started innocently enough. I overheard Shane mentioning he is always on the lookout for newsletter content, so I piped up to offer a piece on my metallic starling adventure from the previous day. Shane accepted on one condition—photos must be accompanied by a story. Fine by me, so long as I don't have to deliver it via interpretive dance! Somewhere between that conversation and finishing my piccolo, I somehow became the official trip reporter. But on with the show!

07:00 – The Impromptu Welcome Wagon

My morning began with a frantic 7:00 am internal debate: *Should I join the walk today?* The answer was a resounding yes. Cue a whirlwind of activity—grabbing binoculars, camera, water, slapping on sunscreen, and rushing out the door for 7:30 arrival to Greenslopes Street. Having no time to look up the exact meeting spot, I figured I would just start at Centenary Lakes and track down the flock.

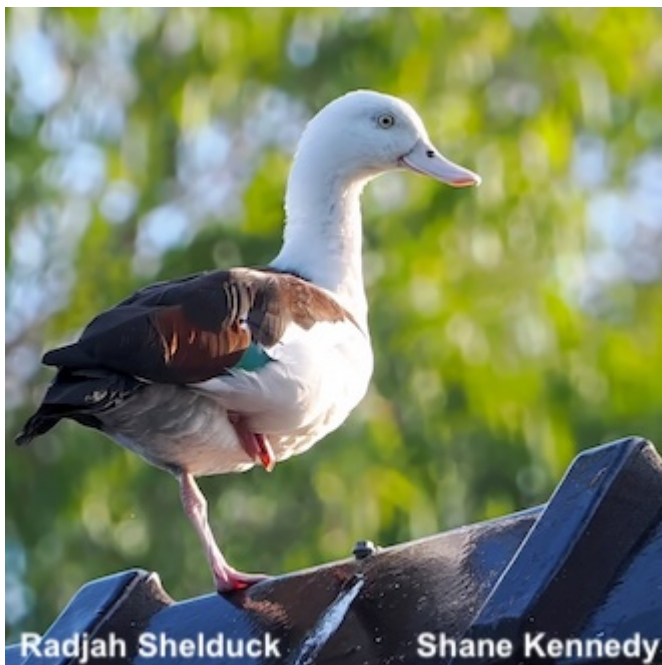
As I crossed the street, a little kingfisher zipped across the water. Turning back to look across the road, I spotted an osprey acting as a majestic lookout atop the signal tower. My raised camera caught the attention of two blokes with binoculars and a massive lens. It turned out to be Luke and Noah, a father-and-son duo visiting from Melbourne. Completely unaware of our club outing, they gladly joined



Rainbow Lorikeet Shane Kennedy



Sean Han



Radjah Shelduck

Shane Kennedy

Royalty, Vacationers, and Acrobats

Once we merged with the main group, the birding went into overdrive. The **Little Kingfisher** was putting on a show, albeit a frustrating one for the photographers. As Jon pointed out, the clever bird was intentionally staying in the deep shade to maintain a better visual advantage over the fish. Meanwhile, our visiting **Australasian Grebe** seems to be enjoying an extended winter vacation. Spotting it took me back to my rookie birding days when I genuinely thought a grebe was just a baby duck. Too cute (the bird, not me!).

The air was thick with bird calls and acrobatics. A **Sacred Kingfisher** chimed in with its sharp "*ki ki ki*", while **Rainbow Bee-eaters** looped de loops through the air—zipping from perch to insect and back again, emitting a cheerful "*prip prip*" on every return flight. Down on the water, three **Pacific Black Ducks** skimmed the lake before waddling onto the bank to preen in the early morning sun, while a small honking squadron of **Magpie Geese** touched down on an island patch.

my mini-posse. Before we even rendezvoused with the main group, we managed to secure them a handful of local lifers: **Yellow Honeyeaters**, continuing self-appointed pagoda sentinel Mr. **Radjah Shelduck**, a pair of **Orange-footed Megapode**, and **Moriarty**, our resident dumped domestic duck.



Australasian Grebe

Emma Steele



Little Kingfisher

Jon Westaway

The Great Visor Hunt & Hollow Drama

Disaster struck halfway through. Reaching around to my backpack, I realized my sun visor had vanished. Leaving the group, I retraced our steps in a solo rescue mission. The bad news? The visor remains at large. The good news? My detour led me straight back to Jon, who was busy photographing a **Double-eyed Fig-Parrot** while a charm of **Scaly-breasted Munia** hopped through the grass right behind him. Jon immediately alerted the group leader to share the coordinates, as the fig-parrot is a major target for Cairns visitors.

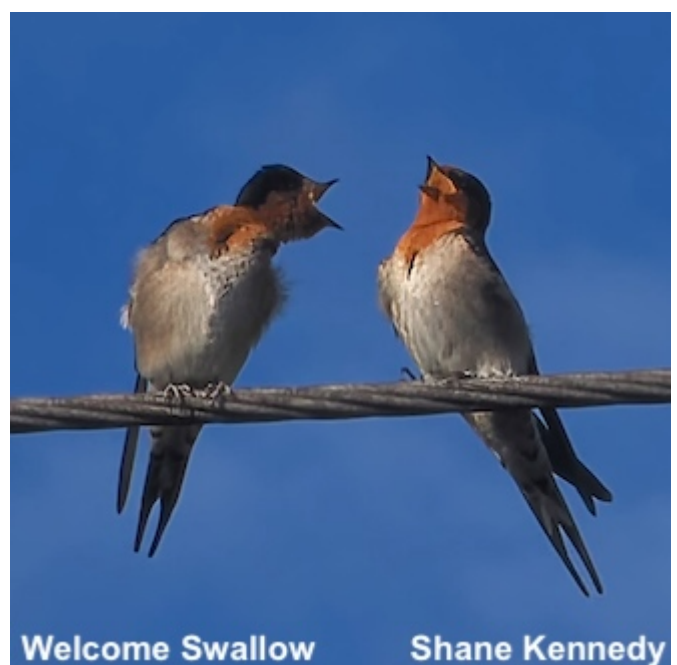


drama settled, we noticed the clever little parrot appeared to be taking a bath in another hollow, which must have collected a nice pool of recent rainwater.

Of course, by the time the main group marched back to the site, the parrots had fled. Thankfully, the birding gods were smiling on us; another **Double-eyed Fig-Parrot** was located shortly after. Tick, tick, tick for everyone!



Suddenly, three **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** announced their descent into a large eucalyptus with their trademark ear-splitting screeches. One of the cockatoos comically began poking its head in and out of a tree hollow. This did *not* sit well with a double-eyed fig-parrot perched just two metres above in the same tree, who loudly vocalised its utter displeasure at the noisy intruders. Once the



46 Species and a Tart Finish

The rest of the morning was a delightful blur of our usual feathered friends popping by to say hello. Our final tally hit an impressive **47 species**, thanks to appearances by:

- **Vocal Residents:** Varied trillers, Australasian Figbirds, Black Butcherbirds, Yellow Orioles, and Spangled Drongos.
- **The Canopy Crowd:** Mistletoebirds, Sahul Sunbirds, Rainbow Lorikeets, and White-breasted Woodswallows.
- **Water & Ground Crews:** Great Egret, Australian White Ibis, Little Pied Cormorant, Australasian Darters, Welcome Swallows, and Willie Wagtails.
- **Doves & Cuckoos:** Peaceful Doves, Rock Doves, Little Bronze-cuckoo, and Sahul Brush-cuckoo.

On our final stretch back, Shane treated us to a bit of botanical history, showcasing a Fish Poison Tree (*Barringtonia asiatica*). Historically, traditional cultures pounded the seeds and leaves to release toxic saponins, effectively stunning or suffocating fish in calm waters for an easy harvest.

We finally made it to the café with 8,500 steps clocked on my tracker—mostly accrued by my frantic, failed search for the elusive sun visor. If you ask me, that extra mileage was the perfect, guilt-free excuse to order a citrus tart for breakfast!



The List: Magpie Goose, Radjah Shelduck, Pacific Black Duck, Muscovy Duck x Mallard (hybrid), Australian Brushturkey, Orange-footed Megapode, Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon), Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, Bush Stone-curlew, Masked Lapwing, Australasian Grebe, Australasian Darter, Little Pied Cormorant, Nankeen Night Heron, Great Egret, Osprey, Rainbow Bee-eater, Azure Kingfisher, Little Kingfisher, Laughing Kookaburra, Torresian Kingfisher, Sacred Kingfisher, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Rainbow Lorikeet, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater, Yellow Honeyeater, Dusky Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, White-throated Honeyeater, Helmeted Friarbird, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, Varied Triller, Sahul Cicadabird, Green aka Yellow Oriole, Australasian Figbird, Black Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Spangled Drongo, Magpie-lark, Welcome Swallow, Metallic Starling, Common Myna, Mistletoebird, Sahul Sunbird, Scaly-breasted Munia.

With spookily poignant timing, Birdlife Northern Queensland had this talk lined up before the arrival of H5N1 and “we” asked our roving correspondent, Miguel, to report back.

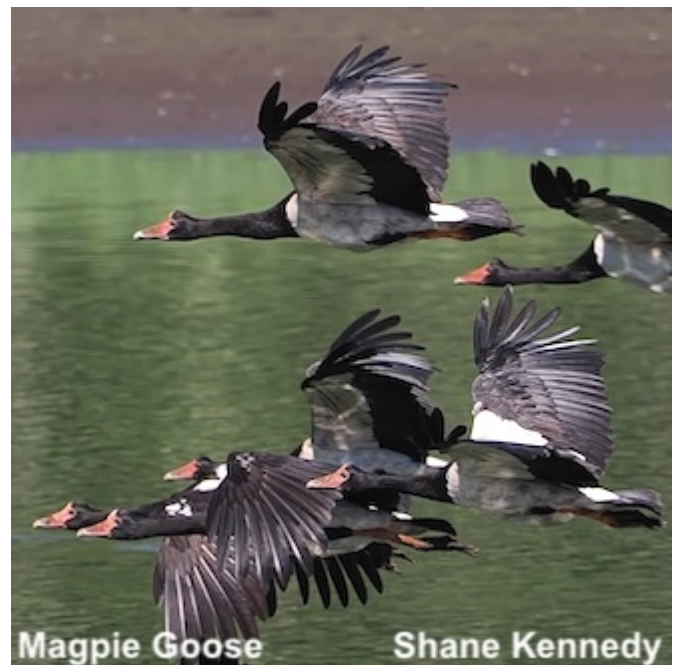
BirdLife Northern Queensland – Tablelands Talk, Thursday 9 July, Malanda Hotel**Bird movements and the ecology of avian influenza in Australia - Dr David Roshier**

Despite the cold and wet night in the Atherton Tablelands, dinner at the Big Hotel in Malanda - the largest timber pub in Australia - was booked out. After dinner, we moved into the presentation room for an acknowledgement of the *Ngadjon-Jii* people and then Dr David Roshier was introduced by Drew Haffenden. With such unseasonal weather, it was fortunate that David did not have far to travel; although an adjunct at Adelaide University, he lives “down the road” in Kuranda. He outlined his work with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy and his research on waterfowl movement and avian influenza. Coincidentally, his presentation came just one day before H5N1 was detected in a Greater Crested Tern in South Australia—the first infected non-migratory seabird recorded in Australia. Had the talk occurred a day later, it might have carried heightened urgency.

David explained that wild waterfowl and shorebirds are the natural reservoir for avian influenza, with low infection rates (up to 5%) but moderate exposure rates (20–60%) in Australia. Until June 2026, Australia was the only inhabited continent without highly pathogenic H5N1, though serology showed some migratory birds had encountered it overseas. The main risk was thought to be migratory arrivals via the East-Asian Flyway or Indonesia, where H5N1 is endemic, though the Wallace Line limits movement. However, H5N1 has already crossed into West Papua.

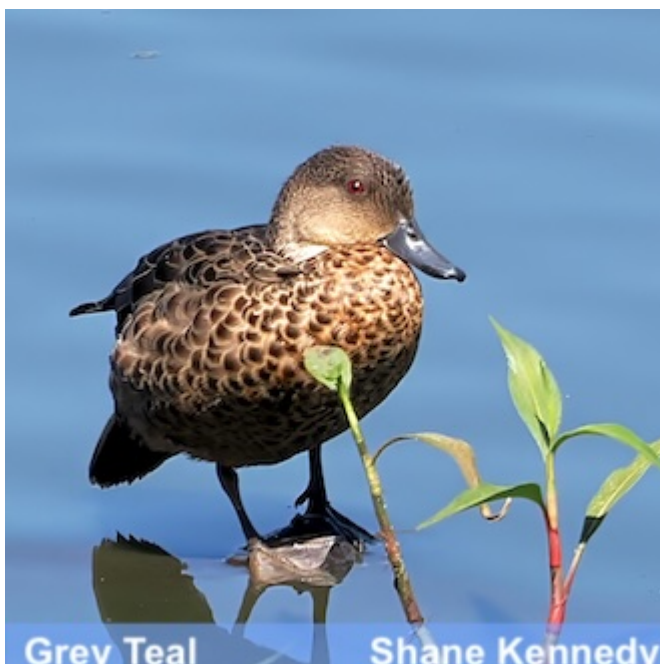


Satellite tracking shows several waterfowl species regularly cross the Torres Strait and congregate with birds in West Papua in large numbers. Genetic studies reveal **Magpie Geese** are highly connected across the region, while **Wandering Whistling-Ducks** show strong population separation, indicating flock loyalty. As expected, the Timor Leste subspecies were distinct from the Australian subspecies found here and in southern New Guinea. Remarkably, birds from two Cape York sites only ~100 km apart were genetically distinct: one group resembled birds from New Guinea, while the other differed from all other sites studied. Together, these findings suggest the Torres Strait is not a barrier to virus entry.



Unexpectedly, the recent Australian H5N1 incursion came from the Sub-Antarctic, not Asia. Whether it spreads further depends heavily on waterfowl movement.

Unlike the northern hemisphere, where changes in day length drive regular long-distance migrations, Australian waterbirds move erratically in response to shifting water availability. They disperse widely during floods and then concentrate densely as wetlands dry, conditions that can accelerate virus transmission.



Their movements can be astonishing: one **Grey Teal** flew more than 500 km in just over six hours, averaging 99.9 km/hr. These birds seem to know exactly where they are going—they can “see and smell” water at great distances and “sense storm activity”; one bird travelled 1,200 km in 1.5 days to get from one water source to another.

While these movements are fascinating, the boom-and-bust cycle of Australian water resources makes their nomadic patterns difficult to predict, complicating forecasts of avian influenza spread.

Caroline Ivory Nut Palm (*Metroxylon amicarum*)

Keep an eye on the ground around the gardens and you might be lucky enough to spot one of the remarkable fruits of the Caroline ivory nut palm (*Metroxylon amicarum*). These enormous, scaly wooden fruits resemble 'dragon eggs' and are among the most striking palm fruits in the world. I wanted to find out a little more about them.

Native to the Caroline Islands in the western Pacific, particularly the island of Pohnpei in the

Federated States of Micronesia. It is an impressive solitary palm which can grow to around 25 metres tall. Its sturdy trunk is marked with the scars of old leaves and supports a magnificent crown of long, arching, feather-like fronds that can reach several metres in length. Small flowers develop into the large, rounded fruits for which the species is famous. Inside each fruit is a hard, smooth white seed known as an "ivory nut" because it resembles elephant ivory. These seeds have long been carved into decorative ornaments and small artworks, providing a sustainable alternative to animal ivory.



For generations people have made extensive use of every part of the palm.

- Its durable leaves are one of the region's most important thatching materials, producing roofs that can last for up to five years.
- The leaflets are woven into baskets, used to line cooking pits, and fashioned into temporary containers, while the stiff midribs are made into brooms, sewing pins, and skewers for securing thatch. Whole leaves are also used to protect stored canoes from the weather.
- The broad leaf sheaths have many traditional uses. Their rough outer surfaces have served as natural rasps for grating sago and other foods, while the smooth inner surfaces are used as kneading boards or temporary trays. Children have apparently turned the large leaf bases into surfboards, rafts, bats, and balls, demonstrating the remarkable versatility of this palm.
- The trunk also has valuable uses. The soft central growing tip, known as the palm heart, is considered a delicacy and may be eaten raw or cooked in curries and other dishes. Harvesting the palm heart, however, kills the tree because it removes the single growing point. The starchy pith can also be processed into sago, although it is less productive than the closely related true sago palm (*Metroxylon sagu*). Immature seeds are reportedly eaten by children, while the palm nut meat is used as feed for farmed pigs and shrimp.



But wait there's more, *Metroxylon amicarum* provides important environmental benefits. It thrives in wet soils where its extensive root system helps stabilise the ground and trap sediment, reducing erosion. Young palms are covered with numerous sharp spines, making them effective living fences that deter livestock and 'unwanted visitors'?

Whether admired for its spectacular dragon egg-like fruits, its towering beauty, or the countless ways it has supported island communities for generations, the Caroline ivory nut palm is a remarkable example of how a single plant can have so many amazing stories. Good luck finding your own dragon egg.

Why some bird names changed to Sahul something-or-other?



During the last ice age, lower sea levels connected Australia, New Guinea, and Tasmania into one landmass called Sahul - some birds common across this area now, and not beyond, have had their name changed e.g. Sahul Sunbird and Sahul Cicadabird

CAIRNS BIRDERS FESTIVAL

28th August - 6th September 2026

Table 1

CAIRNS BIRDING FESTIVAL 2026			
Friday, 28 August 2026	PHOTO COMP		Doug
	1800	Stratford Library - Nest box success	Denis Moser
Saturday, 29 August 2026	730	Cattana Wetlands	Bird Photography with OM Rep - Luke
	1600	Centenary Lakes	Bird Photography with OM Rep - Luke
Sunday, 30 August 2026	700	Cruise: Michaelmas Cay	
	1600	Centenary Lakes	
Monday, 31 August 2026	800	Lake Morris/Copperload Dam	BYO morning tea
	1600	Centenary Lakes	
	1800	Stratford Library - Habitats of Australia	Iain Campbell
Tuesday, 1 September 2026	730	Botanical Gardens walk	Shane
	1600	Cruise: Daintree River Cruise	Shane n Murray
Wednesday, 2 September 2026	700	Cruise: Daintree River Cruise	Shane n Murray
	1500	Esplanade across from the RSL	
Thursday, 3 September 2026	730	Lake Barine then Thomas Rd – BYO chairs, morning tea	Louise
	1600	Esplanade northern end	
	1830	Spot-lighting tour - TBA	Mikey
Friday, 4 September 2026	730	Behana Gorge – BYO chairs, morning tea	
	Tide ?	Esplanade across from the RSL	
	1800	Stratford Library	Scott Ritchie
Saturday, 5 September 2026	630	East Trinity - BYO morning tea	Denis
	1400 - 1600	Welcome the Waders: Esplanade	Mikey
Sunday, 6 September 2026	700	Cattana Wetlands - Morning tea. Catered RSVP.	Various various!

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

Must book and pay before Sunday, July 26. (25 of 36 already booked)

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

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

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.

Letters:

Thanks again from the Victorian contingent Shane, the walk was great and enjoyed by us all. I've also stocked up on t-shirts and stickers. Super cute. Can't wait for the next Cairns visit. We saw heaps in the Daintree!

Fiona

Rowdy's Ramblings:

Bird song and music: - [Handel Organ Concerto - The Cuckoo and the Nightingale](#)

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.

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

Swift Parrots and Loggers [LINK](#)

Drama on the high seas! Has this Osprey taken on too much? [LINK](#)

Peregrine Falcon carer, Deb Carter, Townsville, prepares for avian influenza [LINK](#)

Reminder; Bat Night 18th July



Special outing . . . Starry Starry Night

12 September 2026

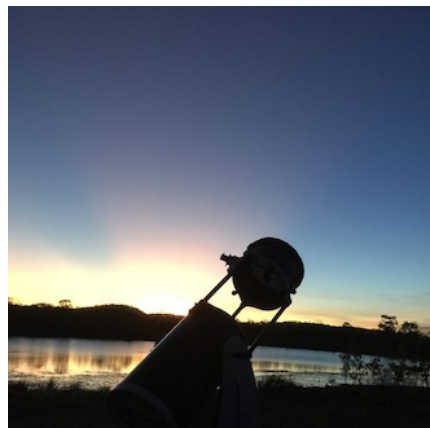
SPECIAL OUTING: **Starry Starry Night** limited to 14
12 September - up on the Tablelands (near Kay Rd)
4 places left;

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.



The Bird Quiz

Louise Baume

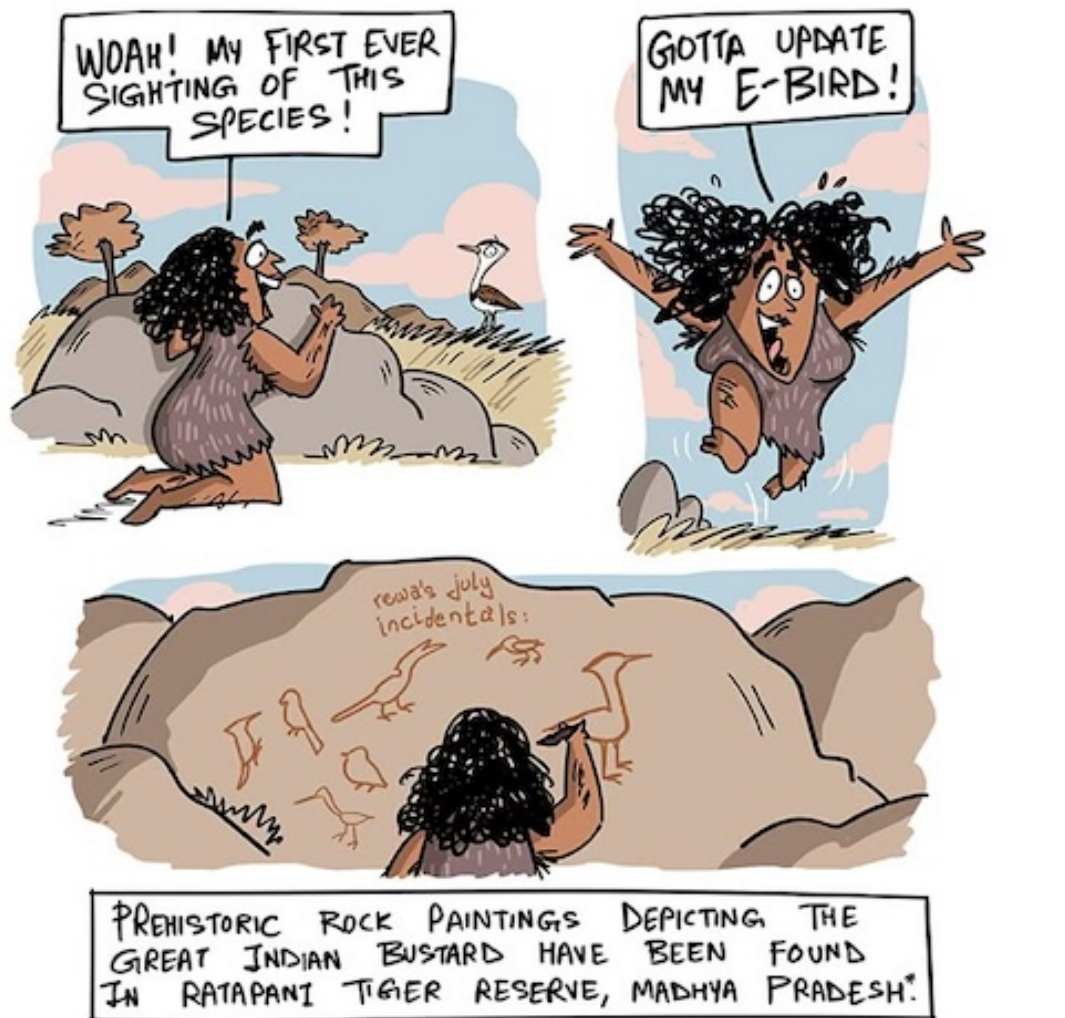
What is this ?



Last week's quiz: What is this?

Musk Duck preening





*DR. SRINIVASA S. H. SRINIVASA

roundglassustain.com/green-humour

KEVIN