



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:

Check for updates [HERE](#)

Sunday 27th Sept

8:00 Springvale Rd, Wondecla - BYO morning tea/chairs
Turn off Longlands Gap Rd onto Springvale Rd and gather there. Then bird you way (with vehicles) to our usual spot. ([see map link here](#)) where Springvale Rd crosses Spring Ck.

Tuesday - every week

7:30 [Friends' House](#), Botanic Gardens, Collins Ave, Cairns

Sunday 4th October

7:30 Centenary Lakes

Sunday 11th October

7:30 JCU TBA

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

A bright, cool morning and a gentle breeze made for near-perfect birding conditions as 15 Cairns Birders gathered at the Rifle Creek Rest Area at Mount Molloy.



The birds were already putting on a show before we had properly set off. Forest Kingfishers flashed their beautiful indigo sheen in the morning sun as they dropped to the ground after arthropods and small lizards. Australasian Figbirds called noisily from the canopy, while Olive-backed Orioles, Rainbow Lorikeets, Rainbow Bee-eaters and Red-winged Parrots moved through the lower branches.

There were plenty of voices coming from birds that preferred to remain unseen too, including Channel-billed Cuckoo, Sahul Cicadabird, Pied Butcherbird and Pied Currawong.

White-throated Honeyeaters, meanwhile, seemed to be everywhere. This turned out to be something of a warning. Honeyeaters were about to take over the morning.

Our enthusiastic little convoy of birders crossed the Mulligan Highway and headed north on foot along Wetherby Road. Chris Rappolt had already done some reconnaissance and reported plenty of activity among the roadside callistemons. Fortunately for us, the birds had apparently received the same memo.

The flowering trees were alive with honeyeaters.



Varied Triller

Daniel Win-Mac



Aus Rufous Fantail

Chris Rappolt

Yellow-spotted, Lewin's and Cryptic Honeyeaters presented us with that familiar Far North Queensland birding challenge: "Which one of the three is that?" Thankfully, the birds were calling regularly and their voices helped settle at least some of the arguments. Macleay's, Scarlet, Dusky and yet more White-throated Honeyeaters added themselves to the list. Australian Rufous Fantails and Grey Fantails flitted through the roadside vegetation, while noisy little bands of Fairy Gerygones made sure nobody overlooked them as they busily foraged through the trees.



Eventually Louise rounded us up and we returned to the cars for the short drive to Abattoir Swamp Conservation Park at Julatten.

As soon as we arrived, the racket coming from the direction of the bird hide suggested the honeyeaters had beaten us there. Dozens of Dusky and Brown-backed Honeyeaters were working the flowering callistemons. Brown, Yellow and White-cheeked Honeyeaters soon joined the tally, along with a single Bridled Honeyeater. Chris also picked out some Red-backed Fairywrens in the open.

By this stage, morning tea was calling almost as loudly as the birds.

Most of the group headed back up the hill, while Daniel and Bruce took a small detour along the lower fenceline track. Their reward was a delightful little group of Lovely Fairywrens, including at least one adult male, several females and a couple of uncoloured birds, presumably the fledglings recently reported from the area.

Back at morning tea, a pair of young White-throated Honeyeaters provided the entertainment by trying to "catch" the drips falling from the water tap. A Yellow-faced Honeyeater watched from above, apparently deciding that joining a group of birders around a dripping tap was beneath its dignity.

The surrounding bush remained busy. Rufous Whistlers were giving their morning operatics, a pair of White-bellied Cuckooshrikes passed overhead, and Little Shrikethrushes and Silvereyes worked through the lower vegetation. A pair of Northern Fantails also appeared, and a sharp-eyed observer spotted a nest under construction nearby. Louise picked up the call of a Striated Pardalote, while others watched Macleay's Honeyeaters probing among bark and dry leaves for spiders.

Our visiting English birder Henry was particularly pleased with the Lovely Fairywrens, and a pair of Eastern Spectacled Monarchs helped add several more "lifers" to his day.



Later in the morning the breeze began to stiffen and the birds became noticeably less cooperative. Taking the hint, we gradually called it a day.

By the finish, honeyeaters had well and truly earned top billing, with 13 species recorded. Across Rifle Creek, Wetherby Road and Abattoir Swamp, we recorded 48 species in total.

A bright spring morning, some excellent birds, a few identification debates, plenty of laughs and very good company — another thoroughly enjoyable Cairns Birders outing.



Australasian Figbird, Australian Rufous Fantail, Australian Spectacled Monarch, Bar-shouldered dove, Black Kite, Bridled Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Brown-backed Honeyeater, Channel-billed Cuckoo, Cryptic Honeyeater, Dusky Honeyeater, Fairy Gerygone, Forest Kingfisher, Great Bowerbird, Grey Fantail, Lewin's Honeyeater, Little Shrikethrush, Lovely Fairywren, Macleay's Honeyeater, Mistletoebird, Northern Fantail, Olive-backed Oriole, Orange-footed Megapode, Peaceful dove, Pheasant Coucal, Pied Butcherbird, Pied Currawong, Rainbow Bee-eater, Rainbow Lorikeet, Red-backed Fairywren, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Red-winged Parrot, Rufous Whistler, Sahul Cicadabird, Scarlet Honeyeater, Silvereye, Spangled Drongo, Striated Pardalote, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Topknot Pigeon, Varied Triller, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, White-cheeked Honeyeater, White-throated Honeyeater, Willie Wagtail, Yellow Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater

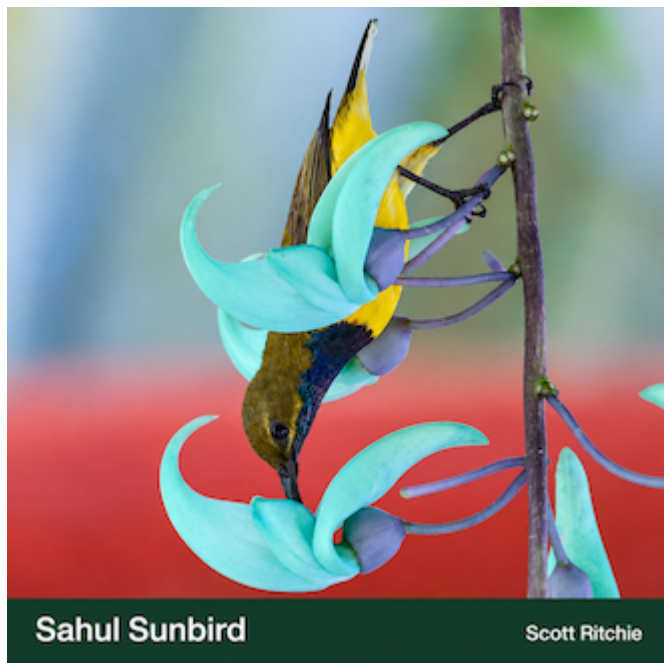
This walk is free and open to all. It is part of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens program of activities. 7:30 Tuesday mornings. [Meet near the 'Friends' office, near the Conservatory.](#)

Weather, what bad weather? Yep this morning's Cairns Botanic Garden birdwalk had ideal conditions. Mostly sunny with light winds and a bit of coolness in the morning air. Unfortunately, Shane was home sick (get well soon!). Scott volunteered to lead, and write this report. A big shoutout to Jake for compiling the bird list, and to Jeff for the attendee list. In all, we had 31 birders! Scott, Jeff, Jake, Chris, Pat, Leah, Sue, Mayin, Bridget, Tim, Nigel, Denny, Sandy, Daniel, Jade, Kazu, Mark, Sonia, Tony, Clayton and Julia. Visitors: Claire, Sue and Nigel from Brisbane, Ruth from the Gold Coast, Noleen from Melbourne, James and Trisha from Adelaide, with overseas visitors Henry (UK) and Hisako and Junko from Japan.



Little Pied Cormorant

Jon Westaway



Sahul Sunbird

Scott Ritchie

The day started with an Australian Brushturkey, busily digging a new mound near the western gate. I bet the ground staff love this! While this fellow was scratching around, we could hear a Pacific Baza singing overhead. We went around the corner looking for caterpillars, none seen except a sphinx moth caterpillar, but Tony brought a takeaway container with two small Cairns Birdwing caterpillars for us to see. Thank you, Tony. So down we went towards Collins Street where a raptor was seen high in the sky. A Black Kite, bit of an unusual visitor on this walk, kept his eye on us. And then we went towards Freshwater Lake. Moriarty and his friends, the Pacific Black Ducks, welcomed us. A lovely backlit Plumed Egret was feeding across the lake, while an Australian Australasian Darter preened overhead. We kept an eye peeled for the Little Kingfisher. And on the western shore of the lake a young Comb-crested

Jacana foraged alongside 2 Pacific Black Ducks. Then we went into the Chinese pagoda. The Jade vines once again served a banquet for Sahul Sunbirds and especially the Rainbow Lorikeets. Our visitors couldn't get enough photos of these amazingly colourful birds, feeding on these similarly amazingly coloured flowers. We are really blessed to see this. Suddenly, Jake said "Little Kingfisher". And there he was, skimming the water over towards Bittern Island. Many didn't see him, but enough of us did to at least tick

him off. We then walked around the mangroves towards the White Cedar paddock. A Nankeen Night Heron was resting in the mangroves, trying to sleep and hoping we would go away. Once in the paddock, we heard Varied Triller and Little Bronze Cuckoo. And then someone said "What's this bird in the tree right above us?" I looked straight up, aimed my camera, then my right knee screamed "Ouch!" And the bird took off. But enough people saw it and got shots to confirm it was a Black-faced Monarch. An unusual visitor for us down here, and indeed our bird of the day. We walked around the paddock where we saw a White-bellied Cuckooshrike on the ground. Sunning, or perhaps even anting. Then out of the blue a Radjah Shelduck out of the trees towards the lake. Perhaps they are nesting in a nest box? It was an enjoyable morning and we ended up with a very respectable 53 species seen and or heard.



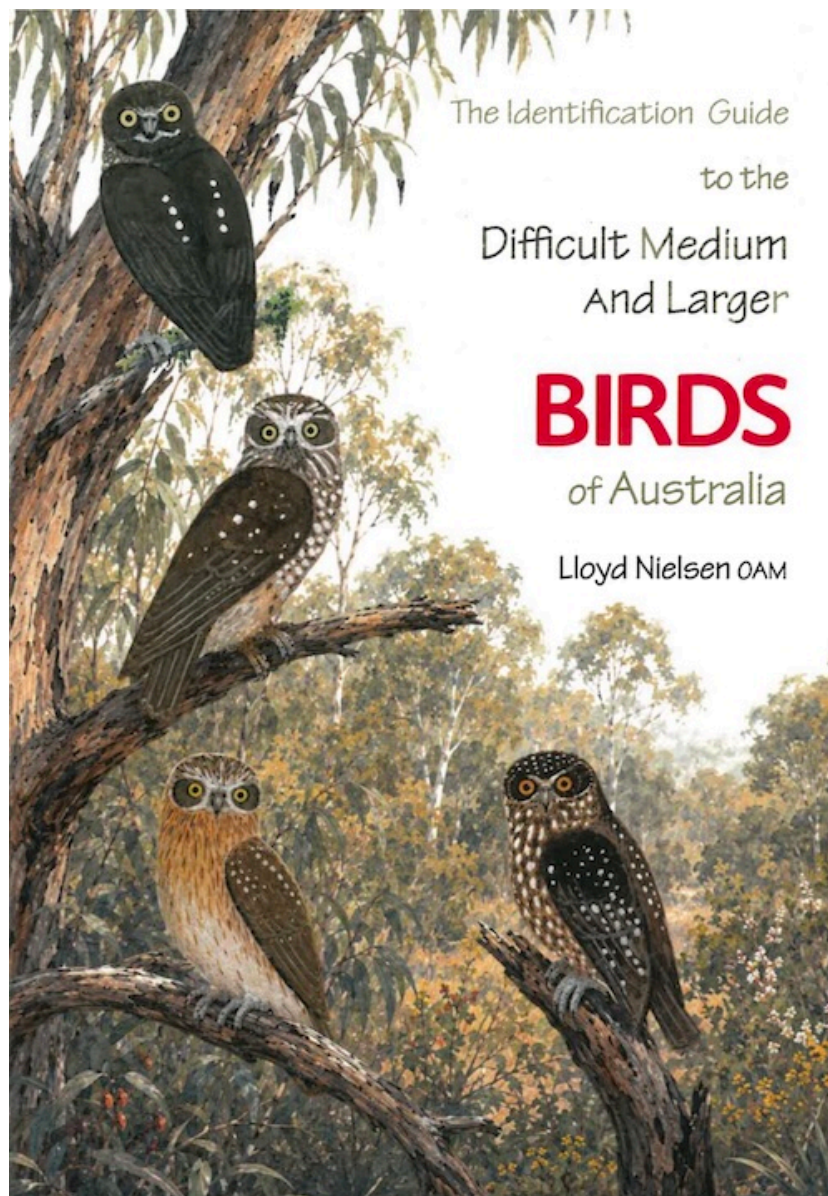
Radjah Shelduck, Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove, Pacific Black Duck Australian Brushturkey, Orange-footed Megapode, Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon), Peaceful Dove, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, Bush Stone-curlew, Masked Lapwing, Little aka Striated Heron, Plumed Egret, Australasian Darter, Osprey, Comb-crested Jacana, Black-necked Stork, Pacific Baza, Black Kite, Brahminy Kite, Rainbow Bee-eater, Little Kingfisher, Laughing Kookaburra, Bar-shouldered Dove, Torresian Kingfisher, Australian White Ibis, Little Pied Cormorant, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Torresian Imperial Pigeon, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Rainbow Lorikeet, Yellow Honeyeater, Dusky Honeyeater, Helmeted Friarbird, Large-billed Gerygone, Channel-billed Cuckoo, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, Varied Triller, Green aka Yellow Oriole, Australasian Figbird, White-breasted Woodswallow, Black Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Spangled Drongo, Magpie-lark, Leaden Flycatcher, Shining Flycatcher, Metallic Starling, Common Myna, Mistletoebird, Sahul Sunbird, Sahul Brush Cuckoo, Sahul Cicadabird, Little Bronze Cuckoo, Black-faced Monarch



Lloyd Nielsen passed away in June 2025, but his work lives on. In a true labour of love, his sister Sybil and friend Del Richards have teamed up to publish his final book - ***The Identification Guide to the Difficult Medium and Larger Birds of Australia***. This guide serves as a companion piece and complements his earlier volume on difficult small birds.

Lloyd spent the last five years of his life working on this project, compiling 1,074 images and clear, complementary text. As a completely self-taught field ornithologist, he was incredibly passionate about sharing his knowledge, and this milestone marks his seventh publication.

Del Richards will share a full review of the book in our next edition, including details on how you can get your hands on a limited-edition copy.



Perhaps the rarest resident land bird proven to exist in North Queensland is the largely overlooked local subspecies of the **Yellow Thornbill** (*Acanthiza nana flava*).

The small handful of available public photos of this bird, all show it to occur in high altitude casuarina dominated forest in the Wondecla/Kaban/Tumoulin/Ravenshoe area.



There are plenty of other records (with no supporting photographs) in savanna and rainforest locations but I am not sure about these. In rainforest, confusion with Fairy Gerygone and Mountain Thornbill is possible. In savanna to the west we have the similar very bright yellow subspecies of the Buff-rumped Thornbill (*Acanthiza reguloides squamata*). In other savanna we also have the Weebill.

In recent historical times the species used to be moderately easy to encounter in the SW Atherton Tablelands and top local guides like Alan Gillanders would find it regularly.

But there are almost no reliable records these days and it has taken me 20-30 dedicated visits to potential sites over 6 years to finally track down just this one single individual last week. Thanks to Tim Hawkes for finding the spot.

This subspecies is rated as Least Concern and was associating with a group of Brown Gerygones rated Endangered in North Queensland although abundant in the area.

Clearly a more appropriate rating is Critically Endangered.

It is interesting to speculate what has caused this subspecies to reach the brink. There appears to be substantial suitable habitat. There should be no lack of small insects to feed on. Perhaps this high altitude subspecies is just sensitive to temperature and a number of heat waves over recent years could be taking their toll

For the first time, I got the opportunity with my work to visit the Autonomous Region of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea. While my eight-day stay didn't present an opportunity to venture into the tantalising and ornithologically obscure mountain regions, I was able to do a spot of birding on the side around Buka, the capital, and also the south of Bougainville.

**Cardinal Lory****Matt Painter****Island Imperial Pigeon****Matt Painter**

Ubiquitous but striking, the fire-red **Cardinal Lory** was readily seen madly darting about the place, matched in numbers only perhaps by the **Coconut Lorikeet**. **Long-tailed Myna** and **Brown-winged Starling** frequently perched at the tops of palms and dead trees, while **Lesser Frigatebirds** wheeled overhead from time to time. The vocal Island **Imperial-Pigeon** was also common, and locals told me the rather plump bird has sometimes ended up on a plate.

**Midget Flowerpecker****Matt Painter**

Around the Buin and Siwai districts, smaller birds included the spectacular **Midget Flowerpecker** – which was readily heard but harder to pinpoint, due to their diminutive size and hyperactivity. A lone **Yellow-throated White-eye** also betrayed its presence near my accommodation, a splendid variation on the 'standard' white-eye colouring.

In the grounds of the pleasant Panakei Lodge in Siwai, I could spot **Steel-blue Flycatcher** and **Chestnut-bellied Monarch** - the latter sporting a Bougainville-specific set of unusual pale lores. A good number of **Solomons Corella** could also be seen squawking to and fro above rainforest treetops.



Chestnut-billed Monarch Matt Painter

All in all, the amount of ‘new’ species on offer here was very enjoyable. Sure, there were ‘regulars’ to Cairns locals like **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Willie Wagtail**, **Sahul Sunbird** and even **Eurasian Tree Sparrow**, but the majority of birds in Bougainville were new and exciting finds for me.

Air Niugini flights can take you from Cairns to Buka in a single day, and a local operator now flies to Buin regularly removing a painfully long vehicle journey on poor roads. While tours were well beyond my budget and itinerary length, there are local guides and a good number of endemics for the more adventurous birder wanting something a little different.

For those also interested in the story of Bougainville’s journey towards independence and its rich WWII history, the region has much to offer.



Long-tailed Myna Matt Painter



Midget Flowerpecker Matt Painter

Letters:

PNG National Bird-of-Paradise day

Hello Cairns Birders,

My name is Manuel Quiroga — a wildlife and bird photographer based in Papua New Guinea, originally from Bolivia. I've spent years photographing PNG's birds-of-paradise and have published a number of articles on them in the Post-Courier newspaper.

This month we're running a small grassroots campaign called National Bird of Paradise Day (#PNGBirdDayBoP), publishing a daily species profile — Raggiana, Stephanie's Astrapia, Lawes's Parotia, Greater Lophorina, Ribbon-tailed Astrapia, Short-tailed Paradigalla and more to come — to build public awareness around these extraordinary, PNG-endemic birds and the case for giving them their own symbolic day on the national calendar.

Given how closely birds-of-paradise are tied to the wider birdwatching community across the region, I wanted to reach out and ask whether whoever puts together your weekly e-bulletin might consider mentioning the campaign and linking to the article, for anyone in your group who'd like to follow along or help spread the word with the hashtag (#PNGBirdDayBoP). I'm happy to send over the article link, ([LINK](#)) daily species cards, ([LINK](#)) any other material that would make that easier.

Thank you for considering it, and for the work Cairns Birders does connecting people around birds more broadly.

Warm regards, Manuel Quiroga

Hello Cairns birders,

Sorry I don't get to your events. Maybe one day. I'm at El Arish. I have a question. Currently black butcher birds are calling (different calls) for hours on end. Dawn to dusk it seems. Yes I can hear them now at 2:30 pm, too. You can tell that there are not that many individuals, here in 100 acres of rainforest. I also adjoin national park on three sides.

Any increase in my knowledge will be appreciated. Thanks.

Regards, David Chandlee

Hello,

Thank you for another great newsletter! I really enjoyed reading this week's update, especially the exciting news about the Kelp Gull.

My name is Hur, so please feel free to call me Ms. Hur.

I previously worked for the local government of Seocheon County in the Republic of Korea, where I was responsible for the conservation of the Seocheon Tidal Flats. During that time, I was involved in efforts related to the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) and the successful inscription of the Korean Tidal Flats as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

I also have fond memories of visiting Yubu-do, one of the most important shorebird sites in Seocheon, together with colleagues from BirdLife during those conservation efforts. Because of those experiences, I always enjoy following shorebird news from across the East Asian–Australasian Flyway, and your newsletter is one of my favourites.

Thank you again for sharing such wonderful updates. I hope to visit Cairns and the Esplanade one day.

Best wishes, Ms. Hur

BIRDSCRIBE *(I'm re-running this, let's get it out there! Ed.)* **Dave Lyons**

G'day Cairns Birders,

A progress report and a favour, and the favour isn't more testing from you, you've done your share.

Since some of you kicked the tyres on **BirdScribe** over winter, it's grown up. Free on both app stores, and the big change this fortnight: it learns. Correct a bird once, "sistickle" to Golden-headed Cisticola, and it ranks first every time you say it that way again. Flick Auto-log on a name you trust and it logs the bird the moment you say it, eyes still on the canopy. Full list at birdscribe.com/whats-new.

Here's the thing. The app runs region by region now, and each region's built-in names come from the birders who train it there. The UK list is being built as we speak by some serious birders over there, and FNQ is covered because it's home ground. The rest of Australia is empty. A birder in Sydney or Perth is still starting from scratch, and it'd be a poor show if the Poms end up with better coverage than most of the country.

So the favour: your networks. Every one of you knows birders down south and out west, club mates, trip mates, the rellies who bird. If you know someone who'd enjoy putting their stamp on their patch, point them at birdscribe.com/trailblazers. First birder in a region sets its voice, their corrections become the defaults everyone after them starts with, and there's a straight line to me for anything the app gets wrong.

It's free, it stays free, and the more of the country it learns, the better it gets for all of us.

Rowdy's Ramblings

Bird song and music: - [The Lark Ascending - Ralph Vaughan Williams](#)

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 Bird Quiz

Louise Baume

What is this ?



Last week's quiz: Female Golden Whistler



Extra Extra! Read all about it ...

Live-cam of the falcons at 367 Collins St, Melbourne.

They've been nesting here since the early 1990s and this pair have four eggs laid about a week ago so they're due to hatch around the end of the month. [LINK](#)

BIRDSCRIBE is up and running - Voice control bird listing, inc. exporting to ebird - [LINK](#)

Something to sing about - Let's hear it for the the Plover [LINK](#)

Tits, Boobies and Hooters - with Dr Ann Jones [LINK](#)

Rare video of night parrot chick hiding in spinifex tunnel in WA desert [LINK](#)



[Part of What's About, our weekly birding wrap - see all editions](#)

These records are flagged as unusual by eBird's automated filters and may be reviewed, corrected or withdrawn afterwards. We re-check each one against eBird before posting, but a flagged sighting is provisional until it is confirmed.

The Kelp Gull is no longer just a rarity, it is an institution. Three weeks into its stay on the Cairns Esplanade, the numbers are extraordinary: comfortably the most-reported bird in the region, logged day after day, and now pulling birders from well outside the district, tour guides among them. For a single stretch of city foreshore to hold a bird like this for this long is genuinely remarkable, and it shows no sign of moving on.

Still the gull's show

Right through the week the Kelp Gull was reported along the length of the Esplanade, northern end to southern, and from the odd balcony above the water too. The northern end at a falling tide remains the reliable spot. It has become the anchor of a busy patch, the Esplanade was again the most-watched site in the region, and a good deal of that traffic is people making the trip specifically for the gull. Not bad for a bird that belongs several thousand kilometres to the south.



Spring keeps delivering

The gull may be hogging the headlines, but the season is doing plenty behind it. The pick of the fresh arrivals was a **Wandering Tattler** on the northern beaches, a scarcer cousin of our common tattler and always worth a careful look. On the coast a **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** and a **White-throated Needletail** passed through, with a **Tawny Grassbird**, a **Pied Heron** and a **Double-barred Finch** about, and up top a **Dollarbird**, an **Australian Tern** and a **Diamond Dove** out towards Chillagoe. The shorebirds and aerial migrants are arriving thick and fast now, it is a fine time to be out.

Flagged as unusual by eBird (relayed, not verified by us)

Our top three flagged records for the week, by number of reports. These are pulled straight from eBird's automated rare-bird filter, not verified by us, and may be reviewed, corrected or withdrawn. eBird also flagged a number of common species on subspecies grounds this week; we have left those out.

1. **Kelp Gull** - reported daily right along the Cairns Esplanade, comfortably the most-watched bird of the week.
2. **Ashy-bellied White-eye** - reported from Green Island, off Cairns.
3. **Satin Flycatcher** - reported near Port Douglas and at Redlynch.

Our thanks, as ever, to everyone who got out and logged what they saw, and to the local photographers who share their shots; the whole picture is built from all of it.

That was the week around Cairns and the Tablelands. A record-breaking gull, a scarce tattler on the beaches, and the migrants pouring in. See you Thursday.

Norty Corner

