



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 4th October

7:30 Centenary Lakes

Meet on Greenslope St, opposite the Rondo Theatre

Tuesday - every week

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

Sunday 11th October

7:30 JCU, Smithfield

Sunday 18th October

7:30 Glenoma Park, TBC

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





An enthusiastic group of Cairns Birders headed up to Springvale Road at Wondecla on Sunday for a morning exploring one of the Tablelands' particularly productive birding spots.

Louise, Shane and Sean had gone one step further, arriving the previous day as our advance party to reconnoitre the area.

Part of Springvale Road's appeal is its interesting mix of habitats. Sitting just west of the Wet Tropics, the area combines upland dry eucalypt woodland and forest with agricultural country, all at a relatively high elevation and in a noticeably cooler climate than much of Far North Queensland. The result is an intriguing overlap: familiar Wet Tropics birds occur alongside species more typical of the drier woodland country farther west and south.



Yellow-tinted Honeyeaters

Mia Morriss

A cold, blustery wind greeted us, but neither birds nor birders seemed particularly troubled by it. We began around the meeting area, where the bush was already busy with songs and calls. A trio of **Grey Shrikethrushes** worked through the low shrubs, while flowering eucalypts ensured plenty of activity overhead.

Yellow-tinted Honeyeaters and **Fuscous Honeyeaters** were plentiful, and the ever-present **Rainbow Lorikeets** were joined high in the canopy



Grey Shrikethrush

Jake Moores

by **Scaly-breasted Lorikeets** and **Little Lorikeets**. A short walk back across the creek produced several vocal **White-throated Treecreepers** performing their usual gravity-defying antics on the casuarina trunks.

White-naped Honeyeaters joined the lorikeets above us, while closer to eye level **Fairy Gerygones**, **Rufous Whistlers**, **Eastern Yellow Robins** and **Red-backed Fairywrens** kept everyone busy.

Scott wandered off in pursuit of photographs of the vivacious **Little Lorikeets**, while Jake and Kyden temporarily abandoned ornithology altogether and became herpetologists after finding a Nobbi Dragon beside the road.

We then set off on foot along one of the forestry tracks heading west. Doug had joined us and almost immediately picked up the unfamiliar call of a **Brown Treecreeper**. The bird was soon located low beside the track and proved remarkably cooperative. Calling and bobbing repeatedly — perhaps part of a courtship display — it gave the photographers a wonderful opportunity. Unlike its hyperactive White-throated



Fuscous (Herberton) Honeyeater

Scott Ritchie

cousins, this treecreeper seemed quite happy to stay in roughly the same place for more than a few seconds!

Three **Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos** glided overhead as we continued on, while **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** and **White-cheeked Honeyeaters**, **White-browed Scrubwrens**, **Dusky Woodswallows** and an **Eastern Spinebill** appeared around the lantana thickets. A lone



Eastern Spinebill

Louise Baume

Brown Goshawk then made an appearance, its arrival promptly announced by a chorus of alarm calls from the honeyeaters.

Eventually we returned to the cars for morning tea, although the birds continued to make themselves heard. **Scarlet Honeyeaters, Shrike-tits, Silvereyes** and numerous **Spotted Pardalotes** all called from the surrounding bush while somehow managing to remain largely invisible — reminding us yet again that birding frequently involves listening to birds you are quite certain must be only metres away. 42 species was a good record for the day given the challenges of a noisy, blustery south-easterly.

The morning ended with a deeply concerning discovery. Seven **Rainbow Bee-eaters** were found dead together beside the road. There was no obvious sign of trauma; the birds appeared simply to have settled on the ground and died. In the context of the current concern surrounding H5 avian influenza, any unexplained cluster of dead wild birds must be treated seriously. Dead or visibly sick birds should not be handled. Please follow current biosecurity advice and report unusual bird deaths through the appropriate authorities so that incidents such these are thoroughly investigated.



Black-faced Cuckooshrike, Bridled Honeyeater, Brown Goshawk, Brown Treecreeper, Dusky Woodswallow, Eastern Shrike-tit, Eastern Spinebill, Eastern Whipbird, Eastern Yellow Robin, Fairy Gerygone, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Fuscous Honeyeater, Golden Whistler, Grey Fantail, Grey Shrikethrush, Lewin’s Honeyeater, Little Lorikeet, Noisy Friarbird, Olive-backed Oriole, Peaceful Dove, Pied Butcherbird, Rainbow Bee-eater, Rainbow Lorikeet, Red-backed Fairywren, Red-browed Finch, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Rufous Whistler, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Scarlet Honeyeater, Silvereye, Spotted Pardalote, Straw-necked Ibis, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, White-browed Scrubwren, White-cheeked Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, White-throated Gerygone, White-throated Treecreeper, Willie Wagtail, Yellow-tinted Honeyeater

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.](#)



Golden Orchid

Jake Moores

I missed the previous Tuesday so it was good to get back in the saddle. 30 of us gathered: 20 locals, 5 from other parts of Australia, 1 each from Ireland, UK, and the US, and 2 from Canada. Some of those locals though - I've seen them before, but "what is your name again?" Oh dear, is this what dementia is like??

The day started out with a bang with a **Red-legged Pademelon** feeding on leaves and nuts under the coffee trees. She was there 2 weeks ago too, so maybe she'll be a regular. Then we heard a **Pacific Baza** close by and sure enough, it was found in the **Raintree** above our heads.

We ventured out ticking off the **African Sausage Tree** and **native bees** on our way to the **Aristolochia vine** where we found 4 **Cairns Birdwing Caterpillars**.

They've been hard to find lately, so this was a nice surprise. Nearby we had a couple of other interesting insects too: the **Australian Tiger Crane Fly** and a **Mayfly**. The **Australian Brush-turkey** was busy with his mound, and a pair of **Orange-footed Scrubfowl** were giving us a rendition of their demented chook calls - I love it!



White-faced Heron

Scott Ritchie



Laughing Kookaburra

Scott Ritchie

We stopped at the **Achiote Tree** (aka **Lipstick Tree**). The pods and seeds are just right now for demonstrating the red-orange dye qualities. It stained my fingers nicely, and, taking it to the next level, I applied some to my lips. Based on the comments, though, it is clear I need practice at this as it was a bit wonky! Moments later I was showing the flower of the **African Coral Tree** and quickly posed for Sean's camera - mistake.

Skipping ahead, we slipped down the boardwalk and reached Freshwater Lake. Here we had a **Great Egret** and **Plumed Egret** posing together, giving us a great opportunity to go through the ID tips for these similar birds. We had an **Australasian Darter** and **Comb-crested Jacana** here too, along with the dumped **domestic duck, Moriarty**, but no sign of Holmes. Jake had sent a link from a poultry carers page asking for people who might want to adopt him, so perhaps his brief foray into freedom is over.

Our targets here, though, were **Little Kingfishers**, and we managed to spot 3, though we had a bit of to-ing and fro-ing as they weren't sitting still. During that process, another birder said an **Azure Kingfisher** had just flown off - he even had a pic! It was a bit of a kingfisher morning altogether, with the **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Torresian Kingfisher**, and **Laughing Kookaburra** being added to the list later on.

With the recent rains, the lake was overflowing at the "sushi train" and an adult **Nankeen Night-Heron** was seated at the best table waiting for tasty morsels to spill over. A **White-faced Heron** was hanging around too, which is a treat since they are not commonly seen here.



There was another treat in store for us. At Saltwater Lake, Sean pointed out a distant perched bird. "**Dollarbird**", he called, and indeed it was. Our first for the season.

We had excellent views of the **Green Oriole** at different times of the walk. One was a juvenile with dark eyes and a dark bill, trying to find its voice. The other was an adult with red eyes and a salmon-coloured bill, giving its glorious liquid chortle all the while checking out its reflection in the mirrored walls of the information centre. Link to the respectable bird list of 50 species for the day <https://ebird.org/checklist/S397345353>

Oh, we're here already? It must be time for coffee. I'd forgotten just how wonderful these Tuesday walks could be - is this the positive side of dementia?!!!



A few decades back there was a TV advertisement denoting the quiet achievers of Australia. Lloyd Nielsen worked tirelessly on this second hallmark volume so that others may benefit in understanding our many avian species. Despite his declining health he set himself a personal goal of completing the awesome task.

One evening about a decade ago, Lloyd and I were camped on the Eastern side of Mt. Mulligan escarpment. He had a sense of humour and related an incident when aged eleven years old when the family was visited by a recent new neighbour. Martin, his Dad, said "This is my son Lloyd, he's very interested in birds. The visitor replied, "Don't worry, he will likely grow out of it." Wasn't to be, fortunately.

The only person that he had heard of interested in birdlife was a Sydney journalist named Alec Chisholm. So, he sent him a letter addressed to Alec Chisholm, Sydney, NSW. Lloyd related that he waited for two weeks then gave up on the idea. Then a reply came back which began a friendship of many years and through it he met like-minded people.

Lloyd guided for many years, places like O'Reilly's and Kingfisher Park at Julatten. One of his most valued eras was with Klaus Eulenhut at Iron Range and Pajinka Lodge very near to Cape York.

At Lloyd's wake David (Chook) Crawford related to the times that Lloyd guided west to Winton and the channel country. Dave spoke of his surreal knowledge of habitat along the route chosen. Somewhere short of Winton Lloyd said "Pull over here". "There should be some Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush over on that Mulga ridge with gravel."

Within ten minutes they found a pair of birds.

A couple of hours later Lloyd said we'll stop here, this is the type of habitat that the Hall's Babbler like. He had identified that area by their smaller nests that are used to roost year around. Ten minutes later...

After Dave couldn't take any credit for the knowledge, it was all Lloyd's. He visited Papua-New Guinea, flying to Mt. Hagen and Madang to see increase his knowledge and appreciation of the region. And also South Africa where he went on safari for a time. He didn't relate to the trip too much, only that there was adequate Bundaberg Rum each evening.

Lloyd and I spent a decade trying to work out the habits of his enigma bird, the Buff-breasted Button-quail. Over many years, birders sought out Lloyd and some were able to put it on their list of sightings. About fifteen years back we decided to seek out a sound engineer in Cairns and designed our own call from other recordings. After some years I tried this vocalization on a visit to Iron Range where the species had been recorded previously. We had success in having two birds call back. They are very shy on the ground and wouldn't come within sixty metres. But respond they did.

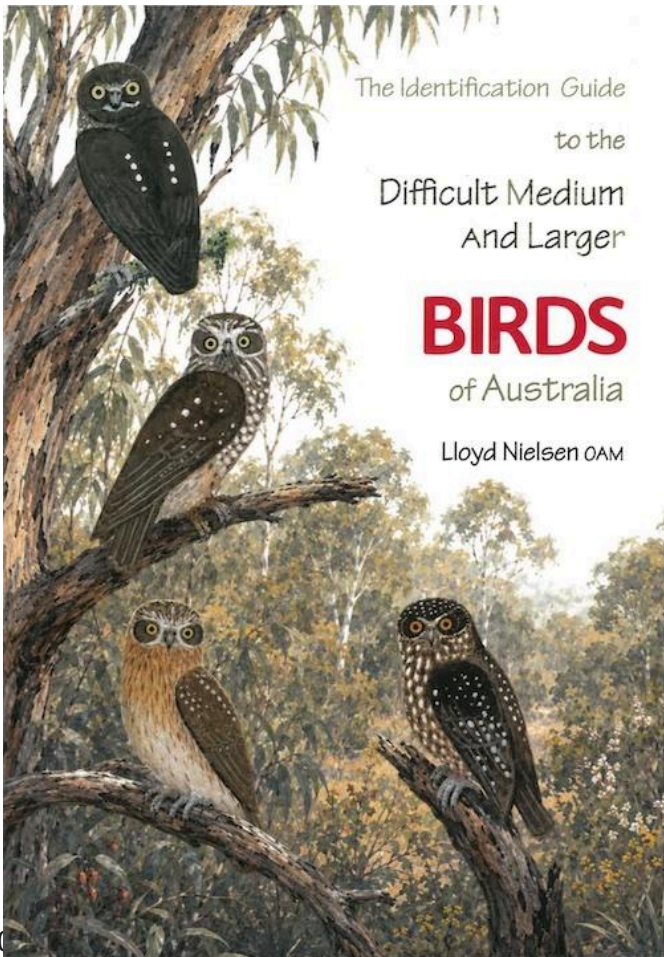
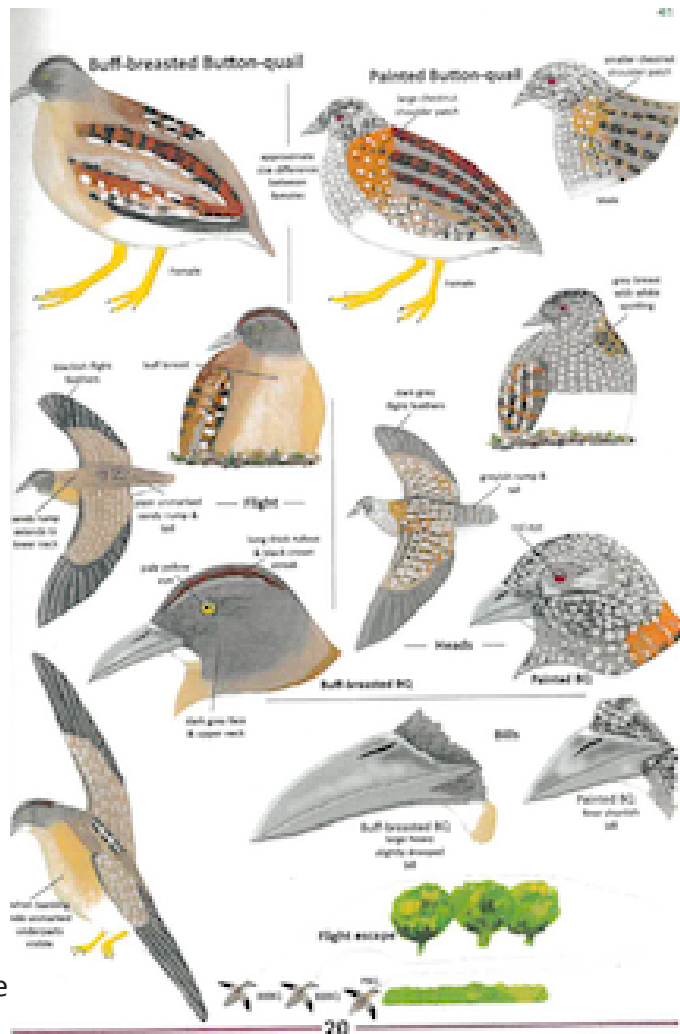
In this volume Lloyd made special mention of his father Martin who managed time away from home for him to travel. In those travels he located a Peregrine Falcon nesting in an outcrop of rocks near Yowah Opal field in SW Queensland. He returned to the same place fifty years later to find that the species was still in residence!

In his Wet Tropics field guide and the two that have more recently followed Lloyd painted more than 3850 images, an incredible human feat in its own right.

He was distinctly proud of his John Hobbs Medal as he was the first recipient of the award in Queensland.

His friend, Del. Richards.

(Ed: details on getting access to Lloyd's latest publication will be included in next week's Newsletter)



The Chowchilla is the only Queensland Wet Tropics endemic bird species that has subspecies.

North of the Black Mountain Corridor we have the bird pictured here, the Northern Chowchilla (*Orthonyx spaldingii melasmenus*). South of Black Mountain is the Southern Chowchilla (*Orthonyx spaldingii spaldingii*). These common names are suggested by the Birdlife Working List of Australian Birds.

The Black Mountain/Kuranda Corridor is the narrowest section of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. In the past, this lower elevation area may have dried out, leading to the separation of the two subspecies.

Indeed much of this area is now developed. All the coastal area has been cleared. 'Kuranda Region is a "pinchpoint" in the Black Mountain Biogeographic Corridor with only 1.1km of protected linkages remaining on steep topography'. Without even worrying about the busy Kennedy Highway, this makes future north/south dispersal of wildlife more difficult.

Other endemic species such as the Kuranda Treefrog also likely evolved due to parts of this area drying out, then becoming wetter again.

All the other Wet Tropics endemic birds seem to have dispersed without difficulty through this gap. Indeed the Chowchilla has one of the largest elevation ranges of them all. I have seen birds near the summit of Bartle Frere and very occasionally down to near sea level at Gordonvale. Perhaps they just don't like to travel.



The Pantanal is a huge wetland (almost the size of Victoria), mainly in southern Brazil. In the dry season the water recedes into the main river channels, oxbow lakes and ponds, making them a magnet for wildlife. I was lucky enough to spend nearly two weeks there in Aug/Sept, and although **Jaguar** were the primary target, we saw many other mammals and birds too.

We spent four nights on a floating Hotel near Porto Jofre. On our seven boat trips, we saw **Jaguar** every time, some at very close range. Additionally, there were five encounters with **Giant Anteaters**, five with **Lowland Tapir**, three with **Ocelot**, and the elusive **Maned Wolf** were all highlights.

**Jaguar**

Randall Lieschke

**Giant Anteater**

Randall Lieschke

**Hyacinth Macaws**

Randall Lieschke

Three species of Monkey and many **Giant River Otters** also kept us entertained.

Oh that's right, this is a bird report!!

Hyacinth Macaw are quite rare, with perhaps just 6000 left in the wild, and we had several good sightings. Herons don't usually get me too excited, but with the eight species found, I had to change my mind; particularly the **Whistling Heron** and **Capped Heron**.



Rufous-tailed Jacamar

Randall Lieschke

Ten species in the Parrot family gave us good views, with the **Nanday Parakeet** perhaps the standout for me. Five species of Kingfisher and the gorgeous **Rufous-tailed Jacamar** waited on the river's edge for a fish to give itself away.

We spent time at three different Lodges in the open Savannah and came across many **Greater Rhea**. A relative of our Cassowary, they are much larger than I expected, very similar to Emu. We spotted many **Jabiru** (the real one), some on their enormous nests.

Many **Yacare Caiman**, a couple of **Yellow Anaconda**, many **Capybara**, **Toco Toucan**, **Chestnut-eared Aracari**, **Pale-crested Woodpecker**, **Blue-crowned Motmot** ... I guess I better stop !



Jabiru (the real one)

Randall Lieschke



Chestnut-eared Aracari

Randall Lieschke

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.

Birdscribe get a good review from a serious birder in the UK - [LINK](#)

The Bird Quiz Louise Baume

What is this ?



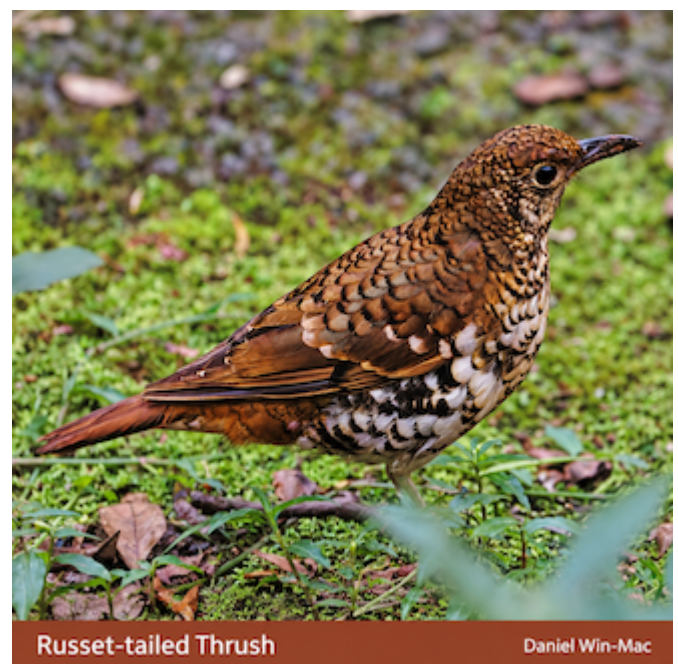
Last week's quiz: Great Crested Grebe



The Tablelands went off this week. Spring birding hit full stride, with one day alone turning up more than two hundred species, and the checklist tally for the week running at nearly double the norm. Plenty of that was visiting birders, tour groups among them, making the most of the season. If you have been putting off a trip up top, this is the time.

The standout of a busy week was a Russet-tailed Thrush at Mount Hypipamee, a genuinely good bird and not one you bump into by accident. A shy, ground-dwelling rainforest skulker, it is easily passed off as its commoner cousin the Bassian Thrush and takes patience and a bit of luck to pin down. One at a well-watched spot like Hypipamee is a treat, and a fine reward for anyone putting in the miles on the rainforest tracks this spring.

And so an era ends. After the better part of a month holding court on the Cairns Esplanade, and hundreds of reports from birders who came from near and far to see it, the Kelp Gull has finally moved on. It was a remarkable stay, the second world-class vagrant to make the Esplanade its home this spring, straight after the Redshank. The foreshore feels a little quieter without it, but what a run it was.



Behind the headliners there was no shortage about. A Spotted Whistling-Duck turned up in the Daintree, a genuine rarity, with a Eurasian Whimbrel up at Lake Mitchell and fresh arrivals coming thick and fast: a White-throated Needletail and an Eastern Whipbird, a Yellow-faced Honeyeater and an Atherton Scrubwren, and Satin Flycatchers now scattered right across the region. On the coast the Sanderling held on at the Barron River mouth. The migration is in full flow and the next few weeks should only build on it.

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

Our flagged picks for the week. 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.



Russet-tailed Thrush - reported at Mount Hypipamee, the pick of the week's rarities.

Satin Flycatcher - reported at several sites across Cairns and the Tablelands.

Sanderling - reported at the Barron River mouth.

That was the week around Cairns and the Tablelands. A rip-roaring week up on the Tablelands, a cracking thrush, and a fond farewell to a famous gull. See you Thursday.

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

Rowdy's Ramblings

Bird song and music: - [Three Little Birds – official Bob Marley site](#)

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 send a postal address to cairnsbirders@yahoo.com.au and Rowdy will get the flash-drive to you.

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 the group coordinator. **Please note there has been a change to the number for our Containers for Change account. CAIRNS BIRDERS GROUP Containers for Change new Account C11810460.**

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](#)

If you have access to UK streaming services, check out the first series of ***"Sam and Ade Go Birding"*** broadcast by Channel 5 in the UK. This delightful program documents eminent English actor Sam West, an accomplished twitcher, as he introduces his mate, comedian and actor Adrian Edmondson, to the world of birding. Beautiful countryside, amazing birds and reflections on life by two good friends. The second series began yesterday. [Sam & Ade Go Birding S01E01](#)

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

Birds on a train - bids in Sydney commuting on the metro

[Common myna birds travelling on Sydney trains go viral on social media - ABC News](#)

The 2026 Birdlife Australia Photography Awards - in pictures - [Via The Guardian](#)

Norty Corner

