



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](#)

Tuesday - every week

07:30 [Friends' House](#), Botanic Gardens, Collins Ave, Cairns

Sunday 25th October

07:00 Warrina Lakes, Innisfail
Meet in the main carpark. Toilets and shelter available
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/sqmcy4bbWaNhrWWA6>

Sunday 1st November

07:00 Cattana Wetlands.

Sunday 8th November

07:00 Chinaman's Creek (end of Spence Street), Bungalow

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/SgohAUrqQzvspzpWA>

Meet at car park opposite Ergon Depot at end of Spence Street

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](#)

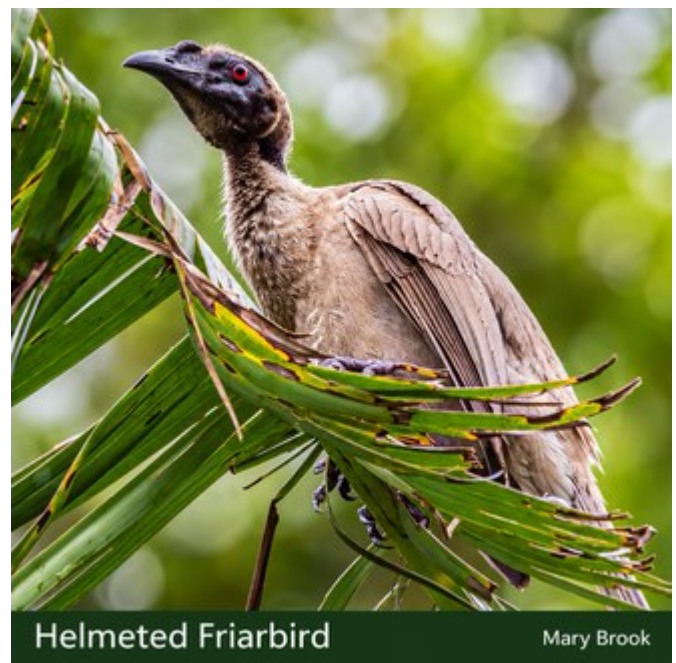


Art by Yorz Trooley



I was expecting to come back from Madagascar to sunny October days but, apparently, the rain has barely ceased in my absence. September and October are not meant to be like this! Nonetheless, 15 brave souls turned up for the annual assessment of Treeforce's planting on our birdlife - five from Treeforce and 10 from Cairns Birders. Boyd Lenne, the energetic and informative Treeforce President, put on a fine morning tea too which we all enjoyed while chinwagging after the walk which took us as far as the plantings at the Radjirr Radjirr peninsula opposite the Cool Waters Caravan Park in Brinsmead.

This is the site of an old Chinese rice farm which was completely denuded until the tree plantings which ended in 2018. We were able to make our way around the site despite the tall grass and the soggy ground. Highlights here were calling **Pale-vented**



Bushhens, a plethora of **Orange-footed Scrubfowl** as well as **Yellow-spotted Honeyeaters**, **Laughing Kookaburra**, **Yellow/Green Oriole**, **Australasian Figbird**, **Varied Triller** and flocks of **Metallic Starling**. Sadly, finches were in short supply in the open areas under the power lines. One of the success stories of the plantings has been the number of **Fairy Gerygone** that now frequent the forested habitat. It was lovely to hear **Fairy** and **Large-billed Gerygone** competing with each other for the most beautiful song of the morning.



Crimson Finch

Daniel Win-Mac



Great White Egret

Patrick Howlett

Back on the open path **Pacific Baza**, **Red-backed Fairywren**, **Golden-headed Cisticola** and **Crimson Finch** were highlights. Daniel also saw **Singing Bushlark** and heard **Tawny Grassbird**, both top records for the area. Unlike last year there were no performing Australian Hobbies or perched Topknot Pigeons despite us willing them to appear. Boyd is a fount of botanical knowledge so we learned much from him about the best trees to plant to maintain an ecological balance in a reconstituted environment.

An advantage of the dreary weather was the unseasonal cool of the morning. None of us broke sweat and the rain spit had little impact on our binocular viewing. Forty three (43) species were recorded despite only two honeyeaters (**Yellow-spotted** and **Cryptic**) appearing on the list.



Yellow-spotted Honeyeater

Mary Brook

Ed. note: ID remains debated. Most consider this Yellow-spotted Honeyeater, though some think it may be a Cryptic Honeyeater. Both species were heard on the outing.

Cairns Botanic Gardens - Tuesday's Guided Bird Walk:

Denis Walls

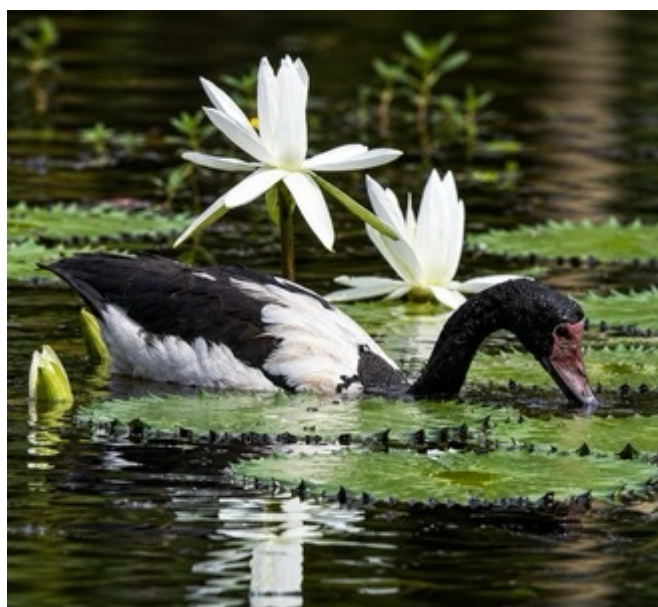
This walk is free and open to all. It is part of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens program of activities. 7:30 Tuesday mornings. [Meet near the 'Friends' office, near the Conservatory.](#)

I asked the Tuesday group of mixed birding aficionados, foreign, inter-state and local, what the answer to Life, the Universe and Everything was. The Swiss and Dutch, out of our 15 strong group, seemed bewildered by the request which is a shame as I thought Douglas Adams and Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy was universal. Anyway, I stipulated that magical number - 42, which Marvin the Paranoid Android eventually churned out, would be the number of birds we would see or hear on our three hour walk. And guess what, that's exactly the number Chief Bird Counter, Roy, produced at the end of the tour to the glorious stupefaction of all concerned! Not a fix Guv!



Torresian Kingfisher

Roy Penney



Magpie Goose

Roy Penney

What were the highlights? Well, since the majority of the crowd were out-of-towners they were easy to please. I love it when that happens - no locals chit-chatting at the back about what they had for dinner. We went the old, traditional, clockwise route which flummoxed the recalcitrants hanging around the Centenary Lakes pagoda waiting to tell us about all the birds that had been there but unfortunately were no longer! (*Ed, this is a joke, we love you guys*). **Mistletoebird, Sahul Sunbird, Helmeted Friarbird, Black Butcherbird, Orange-footed Scrubfowl** all sent the newbies into paroxysms of delight. As did, the native bees around the Kauri Pine, the O-f S mound and the Rainbow Gum, which was showing off its coat of many colours to best effect after the incessant rain showers.

The Paddock was damp but surprisingly quiet and Lerp Corner, aka the Ecotone, was restrained due to a paucity of flowering trees. Across the Saltwater Lake bridge adjacent to the Three Magnificent Melaleucas we had a sudden bird wave with **Torresian Kingfisher** perched perfectly to the south and, across the way, **Varied Triller** and several lekking **Little-bronze Cuckoos** trying to grab our attention. Close to the Ant Plant

lecture area we had a skulking **Little Pied Cormorant** and a contested **Egret** which looked like a **Plumed** but had a black bill. Kazu was insistent that it was a **Little Egret**.



Papuan Frogmouth

Roy Penney

As we came into Freshwater Lake I started scoping the high trees across the water and was delighted to point out a **Papuan Frogmouth** on its nest. It's been a while since we've had one on our tours, so it's a perfect offset and makes up for the recent disappearance of our regular **Little Kingfisher**. I was quite chuffed at seeing it as, having just been in Madagascar, I have discovered that my forest bird pick up skills are rapidly deteriorating. I'm blaming this on my binoculars of course, not my eyesight. Being on home turf does make SUCH a difference, mind. Local knowledge, the expectant eye and all that guff.

Okay, so that is the end of my report. Thank you for reading it. It is so nice to be home after being in faraway parts. The sun even came out, by jingo!



Comb-crested Jacana

Roy Penney

This was Take Two after last year's entry failure due to riots and the take over of the country by the military. Anxiety levels have definitely increased in global travel since then for well known reasons. Would we be stymied again? Wars and fuel shortages tend not to make for happy holidays. In truth, things ran surprisingly smoothly given the appalling state of the roads and random internal flight schedules. (Fuel prices were actually lower than in Australia.) The Routes Nationales (RNs) are little more than goat tracks by our standards so the journey of 550km from Antananarivo (Tana for short) to Mahajanga in the north west takes 15 hours by car! We chose to fly and then drive backwards to Ankarafantsika NP, home of one of Madagascar's most significant, dry, deciduous forests.



It's a hot part of the world and one that is not on most general tourist itineraries. Decent accommodation is scarce and birding is not at the forefront for most punters. That made it fun. We were largely on our own with our guides. Both general and local guides are required for any outing with corresponding woggles of Ariary, as tips, to dish out at the end for the locals, often including a spotter to help you find that elusive bird or lemur. The biggest note of 20,000 Ariary is the equivalent of AUD\$7 which, times two, is usually fine for local guides but learning to hoard the small stuff - 1000, 2000 and 5000 notes - for porters, bar staff and hangers on became a daily challenge. Advice to individual and small group travellers - have big trouser pockets or a substantial bum bag to fit the various currency denominations you are going to need! There is even a 100 Ariary note which I have kept as a souvenir. That's worth 3c and will get you a couple of lollies!

The towns and countryside are crowded; people and especially children, who are considered as riches, are everywhere. 60% of the population is under 25. It is a hand to mouth existence for most although, where we were, there was no evidence of absolute poverty. The towns and markets were full of vegetables and fruit with stands of fly-ridden Zebu meat dangling from hooks. If children bring moral worth and physical support in the fields, then economic wealth is frequently defined by how many of these hump-backed cows you possess. This has its downside as cattle rustling has, for the past 25 years, become an epidemic involving gangs of bandits (*dahalos*) carrying automatic weapons and setting fire to villages. Fortunately the RNs are safe except perhaps from traffic. Walking is the order of the day and our excellent drivers had to be extremely careful to avoid collisions with pedestrians, bicycles and bullock carts. The consequences of any accident would have been severe.

As anyone will tell you who has been to Madagascar there is not much wildlife spotting between protected areas. **Pied Crow**, **Common Myna** or, occasionally, **Madagascar Wagtail** were about as good as it got but there was more than enough to entertain and enthrall with the seething mass of humanity going about their daily business of survival, often with big smiles on their faces. It puts into perspective the daily gripes we all moan about.



Coquerel's Sifaka

Denis Walls

Now that I've set the scene we can delve into the wildlife. The joy of birding for me is also what you stumble into along the way - snakes, spiders, frogs, chameleons and, of course, lemurs, including my favourite family, the sifakas, famous for their dancing gait as they cross open spaces to get to the next tree. Waiting for us at Ankarafantsika, as if on cue, were a group of confiding **Coquerel's Sifaka**. If only birding



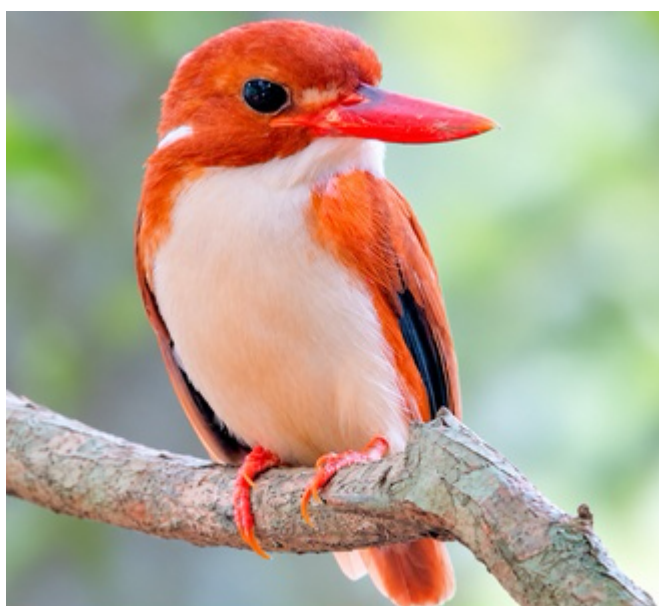
Coquerel's Coua

Denis Walls



Hook-billed Vanga

Denis Walls



Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher

Denis Walls

were that easy although, frankly, dry, deciduous forest is the easiest of the forest types in which to spot birds. **Coquerel's Coua** performed nicely for us. It's one of 10 species of these medium-to-large birds belonging to the cuckoo family (*Cuculidae*) and found exclusively on Madagascar. I fell in love with them and we only missed out on two of the 10 possibles. The **Vangas** are another must-see family of birds and this **Hook-billed** behaved admirably.

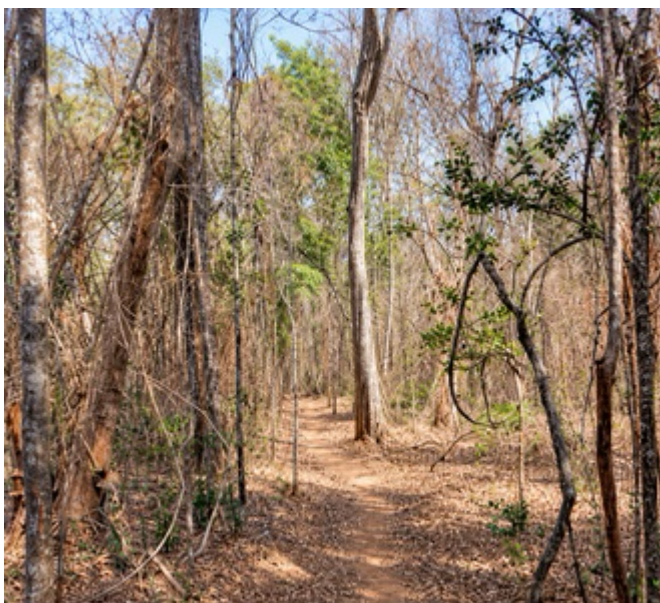
Schlegel's Asity was a humdinger with its exquisite, green caruncle facial patch, although it was too quick for my camera. The **Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher**, another endemic, took us (or rather the guide!) a very long time to find. It's a forest kingfisher, always away from water, but when it's found it can stick around for a long period as this one did. I was quivering with excitement during the whole intimate encounter. I



Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher

Denis Walls

Finally, a word about conservation. This dry forest is more susceptible than most to destruction from fire and clearing for charcoal. Sometimes poor locals will set it on fire to get the 15000 Ariary daily payment (AUD\$5) from the government to put it out! One way of trying to protect forest is through taboo (*fady*). Round the corner from our lodgings was a one hectare forest where a small temple acted as a restraint on clearing. We visited the site and met the Singaporean who was volunteering for a small NGO running



Madagascar dry forest

Denis Walls

don't think I've been to a country where it's possible to see so many critters with heads sticking out of tree hollows. There are two examples in this montage. I also don't think I have ever seen so many **Paradise Flycatchers** in all their morph variations. The **Madagascar** one is its own separate species.



Milne-Edwards' Sportive Lemur

D Walls



Madagascar Scops Owl

Denis Walls

awareness campaigns to educate school children about the importance of protecting their diminishing biodiversity. Despite its tiny size this

small copse contained three species of lemur and three species of chameleon, which we saw, and three species of snake of which we saw two! Astonishing viewing for a one hour night tour. This experience and its community engagement filled me with a sense of optimism after tales of fire and forest destruction.



Letters

Hi Denis, I thoroughly enjoyed the walk this morning with you. Seeing so many birds in Cairns was a big surprise to me after being to the Daintree Rainforest seeing hardly any. Thank you again. Hope to see you sometime in the future. Best wishes **Thomas**.

Good morning editors,

I recently found a dead butcher bird at Cattana, and reported it to Biosecurity Qld.

This email is their reply, and the attachment may be of interest to you for your Newsletter.

Regards, **Geoff McClure**.

Thank you for taking the time to report the deceased butcher bird. I can confirm that collection of the bird is not required in this instance, and the bird can be safely disposed of (if you have the means to do so). I have attached information outlining how to safely dispose of dead wild birds and other wildlife.

Alternatively, if the bird is located on public land, you may wish to contact your local council to arrange disposal. Thank you again for supporting our H5 Bird Flu response; please continue to report any sick or dead birds. Kind regards, Operations Triaging Officer 2026 = H5 Bird Flu, Department of Primary Industries

Hi Team, Marvellous issue of the Frogmouth! I'm back. Looking forward to communing with the faithful (faithful birders) on Sunday. Catch you there. Jeanette

Flagged as unusual by eBird

(Relayed, not verified by us)

Our top three flagged records for the week, by number of reports. These come straight from eBird's automated rare-bird filter, not verified by us, and may be reviewed, corrected or withdrawn. We leave out obvious non-wild records, such as feral or introduced birds, that trip the filter.

1. **Little Curlew** – up to three birds, France Road turf farms, Edmonton.
2. **Ashy-bellied White-eye** – Green Island and Low Isles, offshore cays.
3. **Eastern Yellow Wagtail** – France Road turf farms, Edmonton.

A steady, rewarding week across both regions, with plenty of people out making the most of the spring birding. Cairns logged 135 observers and 532 checklists, the Tablelands another 66 observers and 432 checklists, a healthy turnout and a fair bit to show for it.

The Little Curlew hangs on at France Road

The bird most people wanted this week was the Little Curlew on the France Road turf farms at Edmonton. We flagged it last week as it arrived, and it has settled in nicely, with up to

three birds logged and 18 separate reports, comfortably the most-reported flagged bird of the week. The turf farms are classic habitat for it, short grass and open sightlines, and good access has made this a very twitchable bird. If it is still on your list, this is the week to go and get it.

White-eyes out on the cays

For sheer quality the pick of the week was offshore, an Ashy-bellied White-eye reported from both Green Island and Low Isles. It is a bird of the far northern islands and cays rather than the mainland, so a record out on the reef cays is a proper treat and well worth the boat trip for anyone keen to chase it. Grey below with a clean yellow throat and a bold white eye-ring, it is distinctive once you get a decent look, and the cays are a fine place to be doing the looking.

A Wagtail and a Stint keep the passage going

Spring migration kept ticking over with a couple of good shorebird-season birds. An Eastern Yellow Wagtail turned up on the France Road turf farms at Edmonton, a scarce passage migrant and always a nice one to connect with on the short grass. Up on the Tablelands, a Long-toed Stint was again at Hasties Swamp near Atherton, carrying on from recent weeks; a small, fine-billed stint that repays a patient scan from the hide.



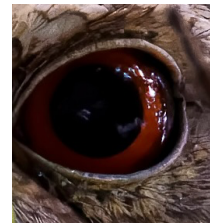
Eastern Yellow Wagtail

Miles Michaud

What is this ?



Last week's quiz: Papuan Frogmouth



Rowdy's Legacy

Following his recent death, Rowdy's commitment to Cairns Birders is remembered here in the Frogmouth by continuing to post bird-related music.

This week's musical selection has a gentle avian theme. Lovebirds by Boyzlife is a sweet, contemporary song about two people drawn together, with the familiar image of lovebirds adding a suitably feathered touch for Cairns Birders.

A pleasant little listen for the week ahead. [▶ Boyzlife - LoveBirds \(Official Lyrics & New Single 2025\)](#)

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 ...

- A Masked Lapwing is nesting on a Launceston cricket ground: [Plover, not a fighter: protected bird 12th man on Tasmanian cricket ground as staff mow around nest | Tasmania | The Guardian](#)
- [Shy albatross colony on remote Tasmanian island to receive bird flu vaccine in complex operation - ABC News](#)
- [What's Behind the 2026 Pinyon Jay Irruption? - American Bird Conservancy](#)
- Some stunning photographs: [The 2026 Audubon Photography Awards: Honorable Mentions](#)
- https://www.calameo.com/read/004107895680820794572?apcid=006a13dbc399d83b658cb710&authid=GPxplOs4FUdk&utm_campaign=emag_2026-spring-edition&utm_content=emag_2026-spring-edition&utm_medium=email&utm_source=ortto (check out Stella Martin's article in the new BirdLife magazine issue (p. 13) on the shoulder tufts of Olive-backed/Sahul Sunbirds)

Norty Corner

