



**ROYAL
AIR FORCE**
ornithological
society



Newsletter 112 - Autumn 2021

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Front cover: Bearded Tit by Dave Thomas, winner of the best novice picture award at the 2021 RAFOS AGM

Contents

Page 2	The Royal Air Force Ornithological Society Committee
Page 3	Contents and Notes from the Editor by Bill Francis
Page 4	Notices
Page 5	Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Peter Harding (1933 - 2021)
Page 6	Ian Brooke - An Appreciation by Dick and Jan Knight
Page 8	Dr W R P (Bill) Bourne (1930-2021) by Ken Earnshaw
Page 10	My Patch (with apologies to British Birds) by John Le Gassick
Page 12	Cape Wrath Range Visit, July 2021 by Richard Somers-Cox
Page 18	Kutini-Payamu by Mike Blair and Sue Fleming
Page 30	Constant Effort Site - Ringing at Five Arches Pit by John Wells and Alan Brimmell
Page 36	Down Under by Mike Blair
Page 44	But Is It a Seabird? SIMMER DIM Expeditions 2018, 2019 and 2021 by Keith Cowieson
Page 52	The RAFOS Newsletter by Bill Francis

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the Autumn 2021 edition of the RAFOS Newsletter. I am sure I am not alone among our older and more vulnerable members who have found their birding strictly limited under the restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic. At the tender age of 82, I no longer feel inclined to go yomping over rough terrain, and have not wandered far from home. One departure has been to renew my involvement with the BTO Garden Bird survey, and that has kept me quiet for a few hours each week.

In the current circumstances, I was concerned that there would be little for you to read in this edition, but I am most grateful to those who have contributed a range of interesting articles on the subject of birding both at home and abroad.

It is sad to record the passing of a past President of the Society, one of the pioneers of the organisation, and a friend to RAFOS from Islay, who helped to make visits there such a pleasant experience.

The first ISLAY MIST expedition was accommodated in a house owned by a colleague of mine at the Gloucestershire County Council, but by the time that we were planning a return, she had sold the property. I was then looking for alternative accommodation for a much larger group than the three of us who made up the original party, and happened upon an advert for the holiday cottages at Kilchoman. This began a long and happy association with the late Ian Brooke and his wife Margaret, who then owned the cottages.

As we get back to some semblance of normality, please see the notices on the next page that give details of future RAFOS activities.

All best wishes for 2022,

Bill Francis

NOTICES

SLIMBRIDGE IN JANUARY 2022

In a return to a RAFOS tradition, a visit to the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust centre at Slimbridge is being planned for **Sunday, 23rd January 2022**. Assemble in the main car park 0930-1000 hrs.

Hoping to see you there, Covid restrictions permitting. If you are coming, please email:

wgfrancis@btinternet.com

Best wishes, Bill Francis

RAFOS AGM 2022

Notwithstanding the success of the last AGM in conducting the official business electronically and by post, a number of members enjoy the social aspects of the traditional AGM as well as the better opportunity to discuss matters with the Committee. Therefore, the Committee has decided to return to the tried and tested format for the next AGM.

The next AGM will be held at RAF High Wycombe on 19 March 2022, restrictions permitting.

We look forward to seeing you there.

EXPEDITION ISLAY MIST 2022

Islay Mist – a subtle and seductive mixture of smoky peat and seaweed.

Robbie's Whisky Merchants

Known as the Queen of the Hebrides, Islay boasts a wide variety of wonderful scenery and habitats, including wild open moorland and hills, unspoiled beaches and cliffs, mixed woodlands and mud flats, all of which offer amazing birding, over 100 species being present on the island all year round. There are so many habitats here that you will never get tired of seeking out and finding birds.

islayinfo.com

In the *spirit* of recycling, we're going for our money's worth on last year's advert.

The next RAFOS visit to Islay is planned for 7 to 14 May 2022, staying at the usual cottages at Kilchoman. The average species count from the previous 6 Spring expeditions is 120 (range 113 to 126). If you fancy some good gentle birding in beautiful scenery then contact Dick and Jan Knight at theknightsat2@gmail.com or on 01243 920289. Our deadline for booking is 6 January 2022. If you are that way inclined, serious yomping is available, but you'll probably be on your own.

Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Peter Harding GCB D Sc FRAeS CBIM

2 December 1933 - 19 August 19 2021

Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Peter Harding, has died aged 87. He served as Chief of the Air Staff before being appointed as Chief of the Defence Staff in 1992. Fifteen months later he resigned, following the exposure by the tabloid press of an affair with the wife of a former Conservative MP.

In a long and varied career beginning as a National Serviceman, he served in a variety of flying and ground appointments before becoming CO of RAF Bruggen in Germany.

After less than two years he was again promoted to return to MoD as one of the directors of Defence Policy. His division dealt with strategy, which covered the whole of UK's defence posture and budget. His success in this appointment led to promotion to air vice-marshal and a posting to Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) at Mons in the key post of Assistant Chief of Staff (Policy and Plans).

He returned to become the AOC 11 Gp, which gave him an opportunity to fly the RAF's latest fighters, including the Tornado. He was also responsible for implementing the plans for a radical re-equipment programme of modern radars and ground control systems for the UK air defence region. He joined the Air Force Board as Vice-Chief of Air Staff in 1982. With the reorganisation of the MoD, he assumed the new post of Vice Chief of the Defence Staff in the MoD central staffs. Shortly afterwards, he was appointed C in C Strike Command.

In November 1988 he took up his appointment as CAS. He travelled widely, both to RAF units and to foreign air forces where he took every opportunity to promote the Royal Air Force and the British aircraft industry. Two years into his time as CAS, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and for the next few months, the RAF involvement in the area and the Gulf War occupied much of his time.

On 1 January 1993, he was appointed Chief of the Defence Staff, simultaneously being promoted to Marshal of the Royal Air Force. Following the publication of an affair with the wife of a former MP in 1994, he immediately offered his resignation. He then removed himself from the limelight and led a quiet life.

He was an outstanding pianist, particularly in modern jazz, and an avid bird watcher – his binoculars and field guides accompanied him on all his many visits. He was president of RAFOS from 1989 until 1992.



Sir Peter Harding (left) presenting the Frank Walker Award to John Le Gassick, 1989.

Ian Brooke – an appreciation

By Dick and Jan Knight

Islay Misters and Mistresses and devotees of the annual Bird Fair will be sad to hear of the death of Ian Brooke.

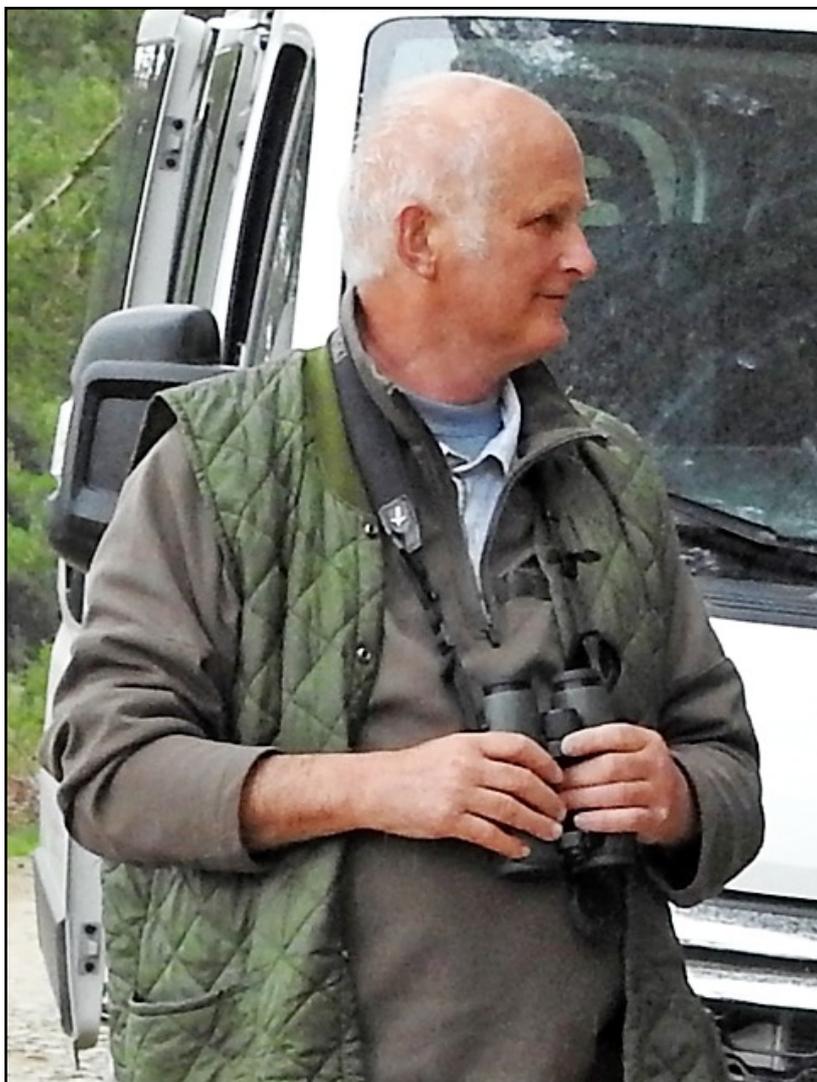
Ian Kelly Brooke was born in Dumfries on 11 April 1949, the youngest of 5 children. He studied farming at Aberdeen University gaining a BSc, and in the USA before taking on a farm near Melrose in the Borders. He married Margaret in 1977 and their son Andrew arrived in 1979. The family took a holiday on Islay in 1989 and fell in love with the island, to the extent that Ian put out the word that he was looking for a property on the island, preferably a “doer upper.” They bought Kilchoman House, the old manse with 5 self-catering cottages and large grounds, in 1999.

Having got renovations of the house in hand and the business of running the cottages under control Ian became a member of the Islay and Jura Tourism and Marketing Group. In 2003 he started Islay Walks, offering daily walks of all grades of strenuousness with the added attraction of lunch at a distillery. He and Margaret became RSPB volunteers and trustees of the Islay Natural History Trust. He discovered that, despite the wonderful bird life on the island, it got very little mention in Birdwatching magazine. He submitted some articles and was soon made the magazine’s Islay correspondent, not missing a monthly deadline. He and James How, the manager of the Loch Gruinart RSPB reserve, were offered a stall at the Bird Fair. With less than 3 months to organize the first one they decided that a wee dram and a chat would attract more people than fancy posters and, with cases of whisky and shortbread supplied by the island’s distilleries, so it proved, such that they won best non-tourism stall one year.

Following the first small RAFOS expedition to Islay organized by Bill Francis in May 2002, Bill booked 3 of the Kilchoman cottages for a return visit in October 2004. This was so successful that Islay Mist has returned every 18 months since then until Covid-19 spoiled things. Ian was always generous with help and advice. His information network of what was happening on the island, birds and otherwise, was superb. One evening in May 2012 the group was preparing supper when Ian burst in to tell us that a flock of Dotterels was in a field at Saligo. Cooking was abandoned and a 4-car convoy dashed off down the single-track road the 2 miles to the field where, sure enough, 10 Dotterels were showing beautifully. We don’t mention that, as the lead car on the dash, a brown bird appeared suddenly out of the roadside ditch and formed 2 feet in front of our left headlight before breaking away left. Just as well it did, as Corncrake is a protected bird! Twenty yards further on a Pheasant also tried to commit suicide under our wheels but also broke away to safety.

Having sold Kilchoman House and the cottages about 5 years ago, Margaret and Ian converted Shepherd’s Cottage, at the top of the hill, into a comfortable home with wonderful views across to the sea. Ian built a shed next to the garage as a bird hide with views down the hill over a field that he planted with 700 trees and shrubs and of the crag that protected the house from the east. The hide was almost open house and it was not unusual to meet RSPB staff, the county bird recorder and Distillery Dave – the well-stocked biscuit barrel and sweetie jar helped.

RAFOS got daily mentions on Ian’s blog, *islaybirds.blogspot.com*, when we were on the island as long as we gave him a daily report. He wrote his last entry on 8 June 2021; he died unexpectedly on 10 June. It is hoped that the blog will continue as a legacy of his work. He left the island on 11 June. Apparently, the route to the ferry was well populated with people paying their respects, the farmers all in their suits. We will miss his advice, information and hospitality.



Ian Brooke
1949 - 2021



Dr W R P (Bill) Bourne (1930-2021)

By Ken Earnshaw

Although I have never met Bill Bourne or corresponded with him, I became aware of him upon joining RAFOS in 1970 and continued to follow his activities. He passed away peacefully on 31 May 2021 aged 91.

The following notes are primarily based on personal correspondence from Mike Blair plus a specific note from Dick Yates, my own notes and the odd snippet from an obituary in 'British Birds'.

In the late 40's and early 50's he studied medicine and zoology at Cambridge, helped to resurrect the Cambridge Bird Club, became interested in Skylark navigation and then continued his studies at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London.

National Service beckoned in 1956 and he joined the armed forces and served for two years principally in Cyprus and the Middle East. In Cyprus he helped to found the Cyprus Ornithological Society, became that society's first recorder and found that birds were detectable by radar systems. After demobilization in 1958 he commenced studies for a D Phil at Oxford in conjunction with David Lack as part of a coordinated programme of the study of migration by radar.

The finest lasting benefit of Oxford was that he met his future wife Sheila there.

For many years he acted as Scientific Advisor to the Royal Navy Bird Watching Society and undertook voyages as a medical officer on board Royal Navy Fleet Auxiliaries, essentially the RN ship-refuelling tanker and supply ship fleet, so that he could record seabirds across the world in remote locations. His work in this field began to unpick the mysteries of pelagic seabirds, particularly shearwaters and petrels. Undoubtedly his pioneering efforts helped lift the curtain on what seemed insoluble questions, which led to mountains of correspondence with ornithological researchers worldwide, which in turn led to a huge number of published papers in the academic and bird watching worlds.

For many years, Bill was a sympathetic geriatrician at Watford General Hospital, yet found the time to help set up the Seabirds Group, enthusing this team of young researchers, whose work was important to the ornithological investigation of the Torrey Canyon disaster and the planning and execution of the Seabird Group fieldwork of Operation Seafarer, as well as the production of "*The Seabirds of Britain and Ireland*" (Cramp, Bourne and Saunders 1974). Through him a global network of seabird groups has become established.

In 1965 he assisted Frank Walker and others in the creation of RAFOS. As stated in its Journals he drafted the initial Constitution, which was generally accepted by the Committee, and was appointed as the first Scientific Advisor to RAFOS. He strongly supported RNBWS, RAFOS and AOS, although editors often had to put on metaphorical armour and refrain from returning undiplomatic fire!

He obtained a post, in 1970, at the Zoological Department of Aberdeen University via a 5-year grant from the Natural Environment Research Council for studies of the ecology and distribution of birds at sea, during which time Bill continued as a geriatrician in Aberdeen.

Bill has been elected to and resigned from numerous ornithological councils but nevertheless has proposed numerous innovations, many of which were pursued. Bill and Sheila late in life joined a RAFOS expedition to Cyprus, which they enjoyed enormously despite old age being a bit of a trial but they were also good company. With advancing years he had largely conceded that the observational skills of others concerning seabirds and the findings of DNA researchers had made some of his ideas on the phylogeny of seabirds outmoded, but he occasionally continued to get into controversy by disparaging the observations and

conclusions of distinguished ornithologists and conservationists. Nevertheless, Mike Blair asserts that he could be astonishingly kind and generous – and that he admired and liked him.

Dick Yates writes: Bill and Sheila joined the 2008 RAFOS expedition to Cyprus.... stating that...“It was a real pleasure to have Bill and Sheila Bourne with us. I had not met Bill but knew of him by repute, as a renowned expert on sea birds. He was also a founder member of COS 57, one of the forerunners of Birdlife Cyprus, and he had not been back for nearly 50 years. His ornithological knowledge and expertise were much appreciated, even if he is a bit vain and won’t wear glasses (He was wearing then in 2009! Ed). He also has a somewhat old-fashioned attitude to spotting the birds: “You keep watch and I’ll go in there and stir them up a bit!” Bill has a widespread reputation and a number of the members of the current Birdlife Cyprus Committee, including their Chairman Melis Charalambides, came from Nicosia to meet him.”



Right to left: Bill Bourne with his wife, Sheila and Daughter, Mary in Cyprus

My Patch (with apologies to British Birds)

by John Le Gassick

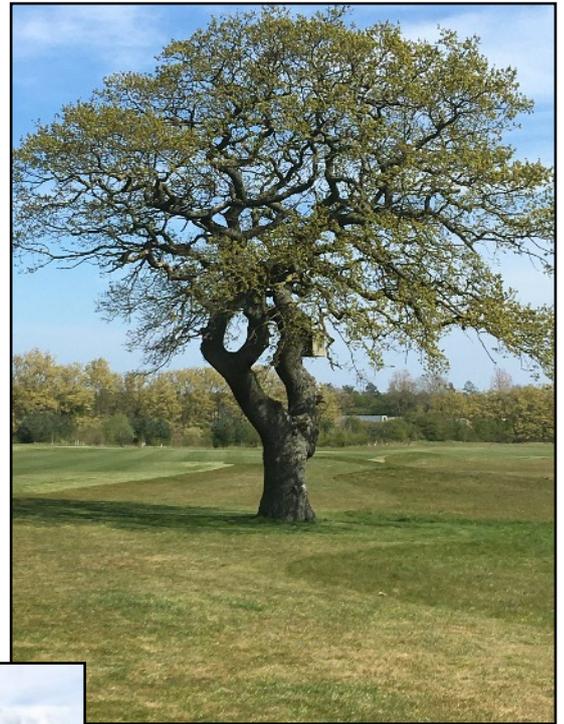
In fact, "Patch" is a bit strong; it is in fact a golf course closer to Needingworth than to St Ives, but nonetheless named St Ives Golf Course. Originally constructed in 1923, the old course was on the edge of the town until in 2010, when it was sold to developers and a new 18-hole course was built on land next to Gifford's Farm, beside the A1123 with the entrance off the roundabout that leads into Needingworth. The original course was only a 9-hole course, overlooking the River Ouse and its flood meadow, that in some Winters resembled a large lake. The course was a woodland course with all the normal passerines, dependant on season. Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Sedge Warbler and Mistle Thrush bred there. Only 7 of the holes were sold for housing, the remaining two being leased for a peppercorn rent, to Huntingdon Council. They are in the process of being made into a pleasant riverside park. This will adjoin the Thicket, a lovely piece of mature woodland beside the path between St Ives and Wyton and Houghton villages. I was happy at the "Old Course" and was in a tiny group that were not excited by the thought of an 18-hole inland links style golf course. Still, onwards and upwards as we used to say on the Mk 3 Shackleton, 4 turning 2 burning, If it was the other way round it was time to panic!!

I discovered that the new course is an excellent place for birds. It is approximately two miles from the Needingworth Lakes section of the RSPB Ouse Fen Reserve. This Reserve is eventually going to stretch from Earith to Needingworth. It is the Hanson-RSPB Wetland project, a 30-year project started in 2001 and once completed will cover 2.5 square miles of peat Fen. A further mile away as the Marsh Harrier flies there is the RSPB Reserve at Fen Drayton - extremely popular, especially during the various "Lockdowns" with dog walkers, joggers, walkers and cyclists and sometimes you come across a fellow birder! But for me, the icing on the proverbial cake is the magnificent untouched hedge all the way down the eastern boundary of the course. This was once alongside the railway line built to bring fruit, vegetables etc from Somersham to St Ives. The line was closed in 1967 and I do not think that the hedge has been trimmed since, making it an excellent habitat for many species of bird. We re-located to the new course in May 2010 and prior to this there were organised visits to see the work in progress. On the diggings for the new lakes, I recorded some interesting species, the most notable amongst them being Shelduck and Avocet. I decided to include these earlier sightings into the "List of Birds recorded at St Ives Golf Course (Gifford's Farm) to April 2021".

The List has been of interest to quite a few members and I often get queries of for instance: how many species are currently included, or whether a particular bird has been recorded on or from the course. On the list there are 93 species recorded over the 11 years. Birds that have bred, or in the case of Turtle Dove, possibly bred, as every Spring there are two "purring males" singing from either end of the old railway line hedge. The rest of the breeding list is: Pied Wagtail, Lapwing, Mallard, Mute Swan (7 cygnets in 2021), Meadow Pipit, Yellowhammer, Coot, Kestrel, Little Grebe, Reed Bunting, Sedge Warbler, Barn Owl, Little Ringed Plover (LRP) and Egyptian Geese (5 goslings in 2021). I was fortunate enough to see the Barn Owl pullus ringed and the LRP was identified when one of the groundsmen, whilst strimming, came across a hollow in the ground containing four eggs. Being unable to identify it, he concealed his mobile phone on video in the grass nearby, which recorded the return of the adult and shortly after that, the eggs hatching and the family departing. The Little Grebes built their nest on the lily pads in full view of the Club House and three young successfully fledged. The other species that appears to coexist happily with the golfers is the Skylark, that holds at least three to five territories every Spring and is often seen in the Winter months.

I cannot really call it my "Patch" as I do not visit regularly, unlike Fen Drayton where I have bird watched and recorded for 40 years. Listing is a habit and I have eleven illustrated notebooks from every holiday, cruise or birding trip. It is just addictive. At least I have held back from subjecting members to the full list! One final record of note was of a pair of Jack Snipe that would never have been recorded if I had not hit a recalcitrant drive into one of the many "marshy areas" and in the search for my ball, I very nearly stood on them! I hope

that this short piece in defence of golf courses illustrates that they are not always unattractive to the natural world and with sensitive management can often be helpful to many species.



Above: Mighty Oak

Left: Resident Mute Swans

Below: Skylark



CAPE WRATH RANGE VISIT JULY 2021

By Richard Somers Cox

The Cape Wrath Weaponry Range is one of the most remarkable and least known of the MoD Ranges. It extends to 3100 hectares of moorland with hills rising to 457m and surrounded on the northern and western sides by around 15km of sea cliffs that are internationally important for breeding seabirds. In 1971 the coastal area was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest and in 1993 the area became a Special Protected Area. With no road access from the Durness side, the only way for most visitors to see this area is to use the passenger ferry service across the Kyle of Durness and then to travel on by foot, cycle or minibus to the lighthouse at the Cape. Even today, with the rise in “staycations” and the popularity of the North Coast 500, very few people visit the Cape Wrath peninsula.

For over 30 years members of RAFOS have been conducting site visits to the range area as part of the conservation group in order to monitor the breeding status of a number of bird species including raptors, divers, seabirds and waders. We normally try and visit mid June to coincide with the peak of the breeding season, but range activity this year necessitated a delay until 9-15 July. However, most of the birds that we normally see were still present, and the delay had the added advantage of giving us a fine display of wildflowers and insects which we don't usually see during the June visit. Our main focus was to look at the Schedule 1 birds, as well as monitoring breeding success of other species across the range area. NatureScot had also asked us to assess how the seabird colonies were faring and to look at the habitat in terms of pressure from people and red deer.

Schedule 1 Birds. Seven species of Schedule 1 birds were noted on the range, most of which were breeding:

- **White-tailed Eagle.** There has been an Increasing number of sightings of White-tailed Eagles compared with a few years ago. A group of 3 were seen on a couple of occasions and a recently fledged juvenile was by the coast on the range impact area. With several other sightings of single birds, it was probable that at least 5 different birds were involved. The 2019 eyrie was only observed from a distance, but no adult birds were present around the eyrie and no sign of recent use was seen. The juvenile was in the immediate area, so it is probable that it had hatched nearby even if the 2019 eyrie was not used.
- **Golden Eagle.** Despite the increasing number of White-tails, there are still Golden Eagles present and we recorded at least 2 sightings from the Fashven area. Two of the known eyries were checked, but there were no juveniles present, although they may have already fledged.
- **Peregrine Falcon.** There are two regular areas where we see Peregrines and this year a juvenile was seen at Cape Wrath lighthouse and 3 birds (adult and 2 juveniles) were flying on the coast east of Clo Mor. Further single sightings were recorded south of Kearvaig and just west of Sgribhis-bheinn, both of which probably relate to the Clo Mor birds.
- **Merlin.** We often see Merlin on the lower reaches of the Dail River, but this year there was only a single sighting just west of Fashven.
- **Red-throated Diver.** Red-throated Divers have regularly been seen breeding on some of the smaller lochans, and this year we found two sites with actual or potential breeding. On one site there was an adult and 2 juveniles, and at another there were 2 adults with one on a nest. We had several other sightings of birds resting or fishing on non-breeding lochs.

- **Black-throated Diver.** Black-throated Divers tend to favour larger lochs for breeding and although we have regularly seen them in recent years, no breeding has been recorded. Like previous years a bird was present on Loch Airigh na Beinne, which is the largest loch on the range. In 2019 we had seen 2 birds beside a small island on the loch and so we had a closer look at it this year with a view to making a potential breeding site on the island. Further work will be undertaken to prepare the site later this summer and we will keep our fingers crossed for 2022.
- **Greenshank.** A juvenile was present by Loch Inshore and a family of 2 adults and 2 juveniles were seen by Loch Bad an Fheur-loch on the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) count which we undertook. Another adult was seen to the west of Fashven, but given the timing of the visit it is quite likely that some Greenshank may have already departed their breeding grounds.

Other Birds. The range provides a variety of habitats for a number of other birds to breed.

- **Ptarmigan.** We were very encouraged to find 10 Ptarmigan (2 adults and 8 juveniles) on the plateau just south of the summit of Fashven at an altitude of around 420m. This was the first record of successful breeding we had noted for several years, and is probably the most northerly and the lowest altitude breeding site on the mainland.
- **Arctic Skua.** There appeared to be a minimum of 3 Apparently Occupied Territories (AOT): one about 2 km southeast of Inshore with 1-2 breeding pairs and another area about 2 km west of Kearvaig with 2-3 pairs. This was similar to the observations from the last visit in 2019. The most seen together this year were 8 birds, but given the number of sightings there are probably 20+ birds on the range. Pellet samples were collected at several sites which have been sent off for further analysis. Based on the findings from previous years it would seem that Common Frogs are an important part of their diet. Two of the birds were colour ringed and these have been reported. It will be interesting to see their histories in due course.
- **Great Skua.** No known breeding sites on the range although some of the southwestern parts may hold some birds. Regular sightings were made of birds flying through the area.
- **Common Sandpiper.** These sandpipers were one of the most common waders on the range with nearly all the sizeable lochs and lower river courses holding breeding populations.
- **Golden Plover.** On the higher slopes of Fashven there were at least 4 pairs breeding, and on Sgribhis-bheinn at least 6 pairs.
- **Dunlin.** A few breeding birds were seen, including on Sgribhis-bheinn, but some of the breeding birds may have already departed.
- **Curlew.** It was disappointing not to see any Curlew on the range this year, and although some may have left, it is likely that juveniles would still have been present. The only 2 birds seen in the area were on the sands of the Kyle of Durness.
- **Kittiwake.** Good numbers were still on the breeding colonies of the cliffs along the north coast. At least 580 were resting on the beach and rocks at the mouth of the Kearvaig during the WeBS count. The breeding colony at Faraid Head was also still present with at least 270 counted.
- **Auks.** Overall, the population looked to be doing reasonably well with many of the ledges along the cliffs in the Clo Mor area almost completely full. A really spectacular sight. The majority were Guillemots with some Razorbill mixed in with them. There were also lesser numbers of Puffins and Black Guillemots observed on the sea under the breeding sites. Sizeable sea passage was also seen at Cape Wrath with many birds heading east towards the breeding colonies having been fishing on the west coast.



Cape Wrath and Clo Mor Seabirds



Juvenile Cuckoo and Common Sandpiper



Golden Plover and Golden Eagle



Peregrine Falcon and Ptarmigan

- **Cuckoo.** Two juvenile Cuckoos were seen on the Dail River. The surrogate parents were Meadow Pipits which were seen accompanying and feeding the cuckoos.
- **Short-eared Owl.** A single bird was seen flying past our accommodation at Inshore one evening.
- **Other Species.** Skylark and Meadow Pipit were common throughout the range, and the former species has increased in recent years, possibly as a result of vegetation improvements following sheep exclusion. Wheatears look as though they had done well with numerous juveniles seen at various locations. There were also 8-10 Stonechat pairs seen and 2 pairs of Spotted Flycatcher just east of the range towards the ferry point at the Kyle of Durness.

Bird Surveys. We had a longer stay this year which gave us some time to conduct a number of surveys and counts.

- **WeBS Count.** WeBS counts were carried out at 8 sites on the Cape Wrath peninsular and at 9 sites in the Durness area. We cover most of these sites during WINTER DUCK but they are rarely counted in summer, which is not a core count period, so this is a useful record of what these sites hold at this time of year. These counts did reveal the number of Common Sandpipers present with 32 counted on the sites from the Cape Wrath side. Several of the sites also had divers resting and numbers of Kittiwake recorded were encouraging. All the data has been submitted to BTO through the RAFOS account.
- **Daily Species List.** As usual we kept a daily record of what we saw which after a week totalled 77 species. Not a record, but a pretty good number considering the habitat. These lists are also submitted to BTO under their BirdTrack scheme.
- **Cape Wrath Sea-watch.** We had paid a short visit to the lighthouse late afternoon on 10 July and noted that a large number of auks were on passage past Cape Wrath. So the next morning we returned and carried out a 30 minute sea-watch, which we just managed to complete before the haar rolled back in. The passage was still taking place in similar numbers and once again most birds were heading east back to their colonies on the cliffs of Clo Mor. Over 1600 auks were counted in 30 minutes with the majority being Guillemot, although Razorbills and a few Puffin were also mixed in with them. There were also over 460 Kittiwake.

Animals and Habitat Condition. Although no formal deer count was being conducted on this visit, numbers and locations of deer were recorded. Likewise, when sheep and other animals were encountered on the range these were also noted.

- **Red Deer.** There was a group of 122 stags high on the northeast slopes of Sgribhis-bheinn, which is one of the highest counts we have ever recorded. A further group of 14 stags was near the summit of Fashven, and four were seen elsewhere. Stags gather in groups at this time of year before dispersing in Autumn and moving to territories which in some cases will be outside the range area to the south. Around 120 hinds and 25 calves were widely distributed on the lower ground through the range. These sightings are passed on to the Deer Management Group to help them manage the deer population.
- **Sheep.** Sheep were removed from the range a number of years ago and a stock fence erected along the south and east boundaries of the range. This has been largely successful in keeping them out, and away from the eastern boundary none were seen on the range. However, along the eastern side a certain number have got past the fence and at least 20 were counted around the summit area of Fashven.
- **Other Animals.** A badger was seen on the road south of Sgribhis-bheinn in broad daylight on 9 July and a fox on the eastern slopes on 12 July. A rare sighting of a Mountain Hare was made near the summit of Sgribhis-bheinn on 13 Jul. There are very few hares on the range and they are seldom seen.

• **Habitat.** For the most part the habitat on the range looked to be reasonably healthy. This was readily apparent along the stock fence on the east of the range where the lush habitat on the range contrasted quite sharply with the heavily sheep grazed land east of the fence. The high montane habitat is a fairly sensitive environment on summits like Sgribhis-bheinn, and so the impact of a large group of stags might need further assessment by an ecologist. It was also exceptionally dry underfoot this year, but that hadn't kept the midges away!

Plants. As the range visit was later this year the flora on the moorland was much more advanced than it usually is in June. Bog Asphodel was one of the most common and widespread flowers forming drifts of yellow in places. Bell Heather and Cross-leaved Heath were also widespread, with plenty of Heath Spotted Orchids scattered around. The high summits are also interesting, with many of the species of arctic flora typical of what you would expect on the Cairngorms plateau at twice the altitude, with species like Dwarf Juniper and a small montane form of Goldenrod. At lower altitudes the flowers at Kearvaig were impressive and here species like Ragged Robin, Eyebright, Northern Marsh Orchid and the elegant Grass of Parnassus were growing on the turf at the back of the beach.

Insects and Reptiles. Several species of butterfly were seen, with Large Heath and Meadow Brown the most common on the inland moorland. On the coast, Common Blues were present where Bird's-foot Trefoil was growing, and a few specimens of Dark Green Fritillary were around at Kearvaig and further east on the coast. A number of day-flying moths were also noted with Magpie Moths being quite widespread. A couple of specimens of Wood Tiger Moths on Sgribhis-bheinn was an interesting sighting. Common Frogs were widespread and a few Common Lizards were also seen.

Overall, a very successful week with much accomplished and our drive home was rewarded with a fine sighting of a Black-throated Diver on Loch Stack south of Durness. The next planned visits to this area by RAFOS will be AUTUMN and WINTER DUCK - Covid permitting. In the meantime one to two of us will try and get up there to build the diver nesting site!



Common Blue, Black-throated Diver, Bog Asphodel and Golden Rod.



Red-Throated Diver (above) and Juvenile White-Tailed Eagle (below)



Kutini-Payamu

By Mike Blair and Sue Fleming

I concede that the title is not catchy or memorable in the English language, but that is precisely the point. The Aboriginal Traditional Owners of Kutini-Payamu National Park are the Kuuku Ya'u people, including the Kungkay and Kanthanampu peoples. That indicates that this is no ordinary Australian National Park, but it is far from alone, for since 2015, it is one of 21 CYPAL National Parks managed by 11 Aboriginal landholding bodies. (CYPAL = Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal Lands.) This is but one outcome of the Australian Government's process of recognition of Aboriginal rights (Australian Government website). In 2012, Sue and I had driven all the way up to the tip of Cape York as part of our six-month, 30,000 km circumnavigation of Australia. We had been in no hurry, but still the urge to explore the side roads and tracks had to be suppressed so as not to fall behind on our travelling schedule. It was not until 2019 that we were able to return to Cape York specifically to visit Kutini-Payamu. From Cairns, it was close on 900 km by road and track to Kutini-Payamu, or Iron Range in English.

Iron Range holds many restricted-range endemic bird species, many northern-hemisphere migrants wintering during Australia's summer, many migrant breeders that come for the rainy season and many Australian species that spend the austral winter here. The topography is contorted and hilly, ruggedly so, but the main habitat in the National Park is tropical rainforest. That means that the track from the Peninsula Developmental Road – that is the one that goes right up to the top of Cape York – to Iron Range, though graded twice per year - is subject to flooding at the many river-crossings. A high clearance 4WD is essential, but even then the twisting 100 km track is not guaranteed passable throughout the 'dry' season, but is usually impassable in the wet. Our return to the Cape York Peninsula was by a means of a guided tour, the time in Iron Range forming but a 3-night part of an 11-day package, yet it was a stunning experience.



Chilli Beach at dawn © Tourism and Events Qld

Kutini-Payamu (Iron Range) National Park (CYPAL)

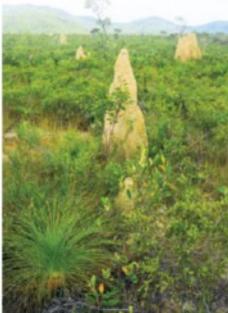
Unwind and immerse yourself in nature in this exceptional park famed for iconic wildlife, rich in Aboriginal cultural significance and with a unique war history.

Featuring the rugged heath-clad Tozer Range, lush lowland tropical rainforest (part of the largest remnant in Australia) and long sweeping beaches, this park provides a refuge for wildlife found only in northern Cape York Peninsula and New Guinea. The area is rich in Aboriginal cultural significance with story places, ceremonial sites and occupation places dotted across the landscape. The park is jointly managed by the Northern Kuuku Ya'u Kanthanampu Aboriginal Corporation Land Trust and QJWS.

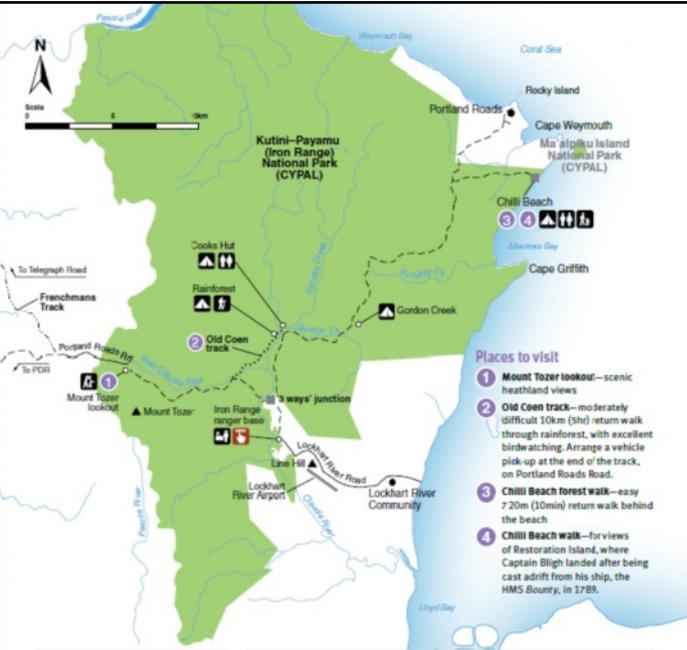
Must Dos

- Find hidden meanings in the heath-clad landscape of Mount Tozer through the Aboriginal story of Kutini (cassowary).
- Let the sea air revive you as you wander along the white quartz sands of wind-swept Chilli Beach, relishing the remoteness of this ancient coastline.
- Feel the thrill of wildlife-spotting for the 'big four'—cassus, green python, eclectas parrot and palm cockatoo—in their lowland rainforest refuge.
- Enjoy the evening spectacle of metallic starlings flying overhead at Chilli Beach (September to April).

Severe Tropical Cyclone Tivo or made landfall here in mid-March 2019. Damage to the landscape was extensive—recovery may take many years.




Heath-clad foothills of Mount Tozer (left), Old Coen track (right), Chilli Beach starlings (opposite page). © Tourism and Events Qld (left), © John Augusteen, Right and opposite page



Places to visit

- Mount Tozer lookout**—scenic heathland views
- Old Coen track**—moderately difficult 10km (sh) return walk through rainforest, with excellent birdwatching. Arrange a vehicle pick-up at the end of the track, on Portland Roads Road.
- Chilli Beach forest walk**—easy 7-20m (10min) return walk behind the beach
- Chilli Beach walk**—for views of Restoration Island, where Captain Bligh landed after being cast adrift from his ship, the HMS Bounty, in 1788.

Safety
Take care if driving on the beach near creek mouths and between the tides where quicksand can develop.

Be crocwise
Think twice—you're in croc country (see page 27).

Did you know?
The Iron Range airbase was constructed in 1942. American 90th Bomb Group, known as the 'Jolly Rogers', described it as the worst airfield they were ever posted at during the war. Difficult conditions were made worse during the monsoonal rains and possibly contributed to several military aircraft crashes in the area. 'The strips were a disaster... muddy and flooded most of the time.' W. Rollins, 197th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment.

Distances

'3 ways' junction to Iron Range ranger base	2.5km via Lockhart River Road
'3 ways' to Lockhart River community	11km via Lockhart River Road
'3 ways' to rainforest camping areas	3.9km (Rainforest), 4.8km (Cooks Hut), 5.5km (Gordon Creek) via Portland Roads Rd
'3 ways' to Chilli Beach camping area	23km via Portland Roads Rd to Chilli Beach turnoff then 6km to the camping area
Chilli Beach turnoff to Portland Roads township	6km via Portland Roads Road

At the time of European colonisation, there were some 500 different clan groups or 'nations' around the continent, many with distinctive cultures, beliefs and languages (Source Australian Government website), but most of them had been isolated from any contact with other lands for probably up to 60,000 years. The exceptions were the peoples whose lands reached the northern coast, where traders from Indonesia were fairly regular from at least the 15th century, and probably much earlier. The peoples of the Cape York Peninsula are of mostly indigenous aboriginal stock, but those in the north have links to and share ancestry with the Torres Islanders who occupy the 'stepping-stone' islands to New Guinea.

This connection between three distinct sets of peoples has been a continuous one, a minor oddity being that the northern Cape York communities until the end of the 19th century practised ritual cannibalism. This became a major issue when European colonists sought to clear indigenous peoples from land that was mineral-rich and a serious local guerrilla war began, indentured Chinese labourers being an easy target for the warlike indigenous people. Extensive mining of iron, gold, other metals and minerals occurred in Kutini-Payamu, and to transport the excavated material to the Pacific coast, many miles of extremely narrow-gauge railway tracks were built virtually contouring their way past the tropical rainforest-covered hills. The locomotives were tiny and could haul only a few hand-built wagons; some 'trains' were horse-drawn. The working conditions were hellish and fatalities were common; tropical diseases flourished and little medical care was available.

This mining boom came to an end when vast deposits of minerals were found further south in Queensland, deposits that were relatively easy to work and where the landscape permitted full-size railways to be laid. On top of that, prices of minerals fell worldwide. Nowadays, apart from the odd rusting stationary steam engine used to pump water out of the mines, the tropical rainforest has swallowed everything up. The principal concern of the Queensland and Australian Government's concerns in Cape York devolved to maintaining the telegraph line and maintenance tracks (The Old Telegraph Road) more or less through the centre of the peninsula to the top. However, in December 1941, Pearl Harbour changed everything. In the intervening period, naturalists had documented the land and the reefs in considerable detail, relating that to earlier geological surveys, and for the first time the endemism of the flora and fauna of Iron Range was recognised.

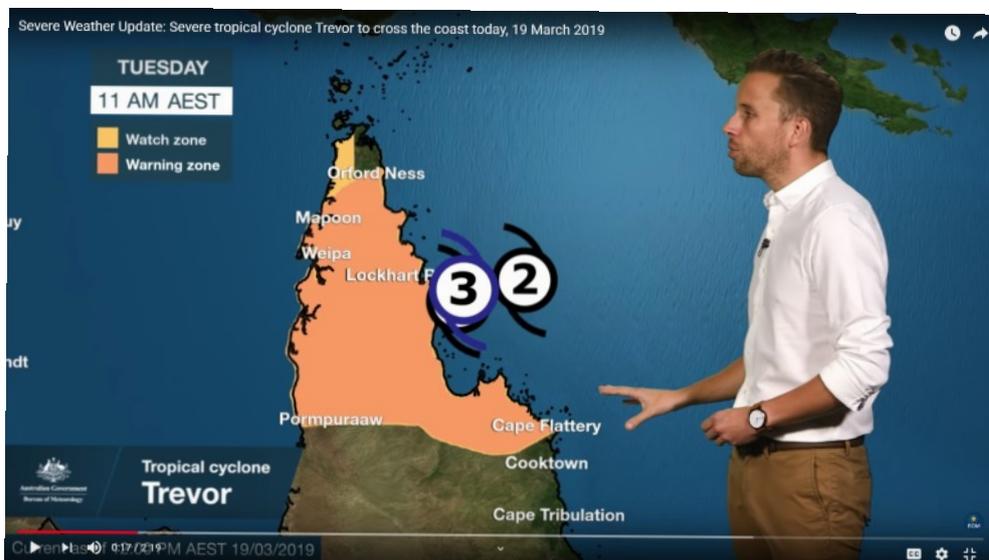
Darwin, then a township of about 5000 people (today, it is 150,000 plus 40,000 in suburbs and adjoining expanding districts) was first bombed by the Japanese on 19 February 1942, but such attacks were not confined to Northern Territory, raids over the next two years hitting as far west as Exmouth, Western Australia and as far east as Townsville, Queensland (Some detail in my other article). The RAAF established a listening and radar post north of Cape York on Horn Island, which was often bombed. Bear in mind that at this time, the whole of New Guinea was an Australian Protectorate, most of which fell to the Japanese, but not all, because the Australian Army held the Kokoda Pass despite being outnumbered by about 20 to 1. Even more remarkable is that most of the soldiers were Australian Territorials called up for the war. The major factor in their favour is that being mostly stockmen and from rural areas, all could already shoot to marksmen standard. I strongly recommend the books *The Spirit of Kokoda* by Patrick Lindsay and *Kokoda* by Peter Fitzsimons. Why is this monumental achievement so little known? When Douglas MacArthur eventually got US Army reinforcements into New Guinea to relieve the Australians, he placed a news embargo on the campaign until eventually the Japanese were pushed back, and then declared it a US Army victory.

Another effect of the arrival of American Forces in vast numbers in Australia was that scores of airfields were built, and all existing airstrips were hardened, one of those being at present-day Lockhart, from which the USAAF flew reconnaissance and bombing sorties against Japanese-held islands and their sea transport. Nowadays this is Lockhart Airport on the southern border of the Kutini-Payamu National Park. Incidentally, the Lockhart River community was an amalgam of tribes that had forcibly been settled in 1924 at the mouth of the Lockhart River by Government decree, the settlement being run by the Anglican Church. The war saw a drift away by the indigenous population to work on military base construction, and by the early 1950s the

community was in dire straits. A new settlement retaining the Lockhart name was built further north near the Iron Range airstrip and residents were relocated to the new site in 1970.



It was here, in comfortable cabins beside the airfield, that we were based for three nights. Unfortunately, the bombing raids on this airfield were not the last disaster to hit it and the southern part of Iron Range NP. In March 2019, long after we had booked the trip and the flights, Cyclone Trevor hit Lockhart and the tropical rainforest. Now cyclones have hit the area before, typically crossing the coast and heading inland while diminishing in intensity. Trevor was different; it stayed for 80 hours in one place, the winds averaging 125 km/hr... It dumped metres of rain, too. This was the first recorded occasion in Australia of a cyclone stalling without losing intensity. Our Cape York trip was booked for mid-October. It was not certain until mid-August that the track would be open to non-essential travel, or that the accommodation would not be required for emergency workers.



The extraordinary skill and determination of those clearing thousands of tons of fallen trees from the access roads, bearing in mind that flood damage to roads throughout the Peninsula was extensive, remains impressive by any yardstick. However, the downside is that almost all mature trees were felled, or snapped at about 10 metres, and the debris blocked all trails and tracks, to a depth of 5 to 8 metres. The long-term effect on the National Park's bird life is probably very serious for many species. Many are frugivorous or dependent on nectar; the cyclone had stripped flowers and fruit everywhere, although some patchy regeneration had been triggered. The insect and arthropod canopy communities, also dependent on fruit and nectar, may take some time to recover.

Birds of the under-storey may fare much better if they can raise broods, because the tangle of fallen vegetation will be good protection against larger predators, although it will be to the liking of snakes. Some of the restricted-range birds occur in areas now impassable for bird survey work, and so the long-term effect will remain unknown for some time. Worst hit are the large restricted-range bird species, such as Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus* ssp *mcgillivrayi* and Palm Cockatoo *Probosciger aterrimus* ssp *mcgillivrayi*, because these depend heavily on suitable nest-holes in mature trees, some 15 to 25 metres above the ground. Suitable habitat beyond the confines of Iron Range National Park is already occupied. The situation is more critical for the Cape York Eclectus Parrots, for although there are 6 other extant subspecies, none are in Australia. I note that BirdLife Datazone has split the complex, placing the *mcgillivrayi* ssp under Papuan Eclectus Parrot *E. polychloros*. We could not get decent images, despite seeing them behind trees several times, and so please enjoy this YouTube video on full screen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mHHUuMuwMg>. The Palm Cockatoo does range more widely across Cape York than the Eclectus Parrot and has adapted to nesting across the northern third of the Peninsula; subspecies *mcgillivrayi* also occurs in southernmost New Guinea. However, we had our best views from the bus as we got back to the cabins, but the wind was about 40 knots and there was heavy overcast and so I had to be satisfied with dim images! There are good videos online of Palm Cockatoo drumming, using carefully selected bits of wood as a drumstick!

From UK, we had booked 17-27 October 2019 with Close-up Birding Adventures owned by Chook Crawford, (see <https://www.closeupbirding.com.au/>), a larger-than life-character, who spent his younger days working in Cape York and learning from the local Aboriginal people whose boss he nominally was. 11 days of travelling in a leased 4WD air-conditioned bus with 21 seats but a maximum of 14 people gave us plenty of space. There were many birding stops and many side trips. Chook carries out a reconnaissance each year before the trip, which because of his field knowledge and his contacts results in you seeing almost every rarity. You are picked up from your Cairns hotel, but you return to Cairns by air from Weipa on the Cape York west coast. It was a stunning experience: great food, great accommodation, superb birding trips where having a knowledgeable guide is essential. We booked another of his trips for 2020, this time to the Channel Country of southwestern QLD, but the pandemic stopped that and also the replacement 2021 trip. Even 2022 is looking dodgy, but if Iron Range does become our last visit to Oz, it was our most memorable birding adventure in that country! Before we reached Queensland, we had spent 10 splendid days birding in Perth and the land to the south, all the way to Albany and Cape Leeuwin, but more on that in a separate missive! Our Cape York adventure began with finding Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides*, an Australian endemic and Double-eyed Fig-Parrot *Cyclopsitta diophthalma* ssp *macleayana*, in Cairns before setting off on the climb up to Mareeba on the Atherton Tablelands. We added our first lifer at one stop, Australian Swiftlet *Aerodramus terraereginae*, a recent split of a sedentary population of White-rumped Swift *A. spodiopygius*, now confined to islands from the Bismarck Archipelago to Samoa. Chook's keen eyesight had spotted them high above us, but he found a place to stop. We arrived at our accommodation in Cooktown mid-afternoon some 360km from Cairns. The restaurant where dinner was booked was closing for the rainy season soon after we left, and so our helpings of superb food were huge!

Other bird-rich stops had been near Mount Molloy, Mount Carbine and Lakeland, which is where the Peninsula Development Road (much of it still a graded track) up to Cape York itself begins. Incidentally, few of the settlements with 'Mount' in their names in this part of the world are anywhere mountains or sizeable hills.



Eclectus Parrot by Doug Janson



Palm Cockatoo



Air-conditioned Bus, Cairns



Tawny Frogmouth



Black-breasted Buzzard



Lotus Bird Lodge Hound (Spotted Whistling Ducks behind)



Gouldian Finch (left)

Golden Honey-eater (right)



When 19th-century surveyors had mapped out all the places where minerals were being extracted, they gave them the title of 'Mining Towns', but abbreviated that name on the published maps to 'MT'! Cooktown birding was good, the tree-filled bay side park, the bay shores and the ocean coast holding many of the locally common species: Blue-winged Kookaburra *Dacelo leachii* is quite common in town! We had two nights in Cooktown, giving us an evening, a full day (150km of local driving) and an early morning exploring the local bird life: Sue and I had spent some time in Cooktown in 2012, and found many of the species we had seen then in the same locations. Pacific Reef Heron (Eastern Reef Egret) *Egretta sacra*, Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* and Black-breasted Buzzard *Hamirostra melosternon* obliged as did the strange Beach Stone-curlew *Esacus magnirostris*; amongst the passerines, Fairy Gerygone *Gerygone palpebrosa*, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater *Meliphaga notata*, Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica* and Common Cicadabird *Edolisoma tenuirostre*.

The trip began in earnest by taking the back roads for 250km to Lotus Bird Lodge in a remote area of Lakeland National Park, the route offering many birding opportunities. We began to think that Chook had a kind of magnet that attracted interesting species to wherever we stopped in seemingly unbroken habitat! Amongst the en-route Honeyeater species were White-gaped *Stomiopera unicolor* (endemic to northern Australia), White-throated *Melithreptus albogularis* and Rufous-throated *Conopophilus rufogularis*; other species were Pheasant Coucal *Centropus phasianus*, Wompoo Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus magnificus* and Australian Boobook *Ninox boobook* (This owl was formerly considered part of Southern Boobook, but molecular research showed it was the only member of the genus *Ninox* in that designation).

Next to Lotus Bird Lodge where we we stopped for two nights is a sizeable billabong that holds water year-round, which we scanned each morning and evening, but we also had 150km of side trips on our full day. The best sighting here was of all 3 Whistling Duck species found in Australia, Wandering, Plumed and Spotted, *Dendrocygna arcuata*, *eytoni* and *guttata* respectively, the last being a very recent known coloniser, although probably overlooked for some time. In and around the Lodge, we were, attended by a fierce-looking massive hound that was as soft-natured as could be! We were the last guests before the rainy season started: after our departure, the cabins and the dining/administrative complex, which all are on 2-metre stilts, are cleared of beds. Basic furniture is hoisted into the roof space because the entire Lodge area sees 3.5 metre floods each year. It takes 3 weeks after the floods subside to clean out and ready the cabins for the new season. Next to the Lodge is a sizeable billabong that holds water year-round, which we scanned each morning and evening, but we also had 150km of side trips on our full day. At the Lodge billabong, we found Australian Tern *Gelochelidon macrotarsa*, recently split from Gull-billed Tern *G. nilotica*. It breeds from September to May, and so apart from immatures that do not breed in their first calendar year, adult identity in October is straightforward.

One bonus for those on guided tours that visit Lotus Bird Lodge is that nearby (by Australian standards) is the captive breeding programme for Gouldian Finch *Chloebia gouldiae*, which recent research found to be only distantly related to any other Australian Finch species. This programme once was located at Mareeba Wetlands, but disputes within the Board caused problems with day-to-day management and so the Gouldian Finch programme was transferred. The Mareeba Wetlands closed in 2018 for a complete reorganisation. One problem with the breeding programme was that the young Gouldies learn everything from their parents and so aversion to dangers must be taught by humans. The result is that releases no longer are wiped out by the birds hopping up to predators to 'ask', "What's for breakfast?" Incidentally, in previous decades, Chook and his wife Tracey had acted as rainy season caretakers at Mareeba Wetlands (and at several roadhouses in Cape York). Many wallaby species come to drink at the billabong, some coming every night for supplementary feeding. The bird life around the Lodge is simply stunning. It is definitely a location we would want to revisit. See <http://www.lotusbird.com.au/index.html>.

280km later we overnighted in Coen, which is on the Peninsula Development Road, but had a good evening's birding nonetheless, but in the morning the yellowest subspecies of Yellow Honeyeater *Stiompera flava*, a north Queensland endemic, awaited us to be photographed in adjacent blossoming trees: we had now seen



Magnificent Rifle Bird



Marbled Frogmouth



Yellow-billed Kingfisher



Yellow-legged Flyrobin (Flycatcher)



Black-winged Monarch



Double-eyed Fig-Parrot



Fawn-breasted Bowerbird



Trumpet Manucode

both species in that genus! We then headed for Iron Range, about 250km of which over half was along the only track open after Cyclone Trevor. Fortunately for us, the track grading teams had almost finished the first post-cyclone basic grading, and so we had a much less difficult trip than we had expected. The river and creek crossings were child's play for our high-set bus, but a couple of crossings would have troubled any 4 x 4 that didn't have a high-level air intake and a tarpaulin spread across its nose to prevent water passing through the radiator stripping off the plastic fan blades that nowadays are standard!

The track to Iron Range twists, turns, climbs and descends a fair bit, but that does allow good views of the topography. En route, Chook found for us Lovely Fairy-wren *Malurus amabilis* (a northern Queensland endemic), Tropical Scrubwren *Sericornis beccarii* (a New Guinea species with two subspecies in Cape York) and the first of many 'megas', Magnificent Riflebird *Ptiloris magnificus* (A New Guinea bird of paradise with subspecies *alberti* in northern Cape York). Finding birds in rainforest is difficult enough, but the deep shadow makes photography very difficult. Fortunately, digital cameras provide much more flexibility in image enhancement than film! Incidentally, why is it and others named 'Riflebird'? You'll have to Google 'Ptiloris' to find out. The rainforest becomes denser as you cross the ridge from the rain-shadow, becoming true wet rainforest, but the feeling of being almost enclosed evaporated as we reached the edge of Cyclone Trevor's impact. The hill slopes were deep in a tangled mass of broken branches seemingly draped evenly and consistently over the whole landscape.

Although we had 3 nights in the Lockhart cabins, the next two days saw only 120km on the roads, we found most of our target species around the accommodation and at locations close by, many of them endemic to Iron Range or the northern Cape York Peninsula, and many whose main distribution was in New Guinea, but which had tiny populations in Cape York. There are a number of New Guinea species that come to Cape York (and beyond) in their non-breeding season. One nocturnal trip when snakes and leeches are active but invisible brought us the tiny Marbled Frogmouth *Podargus ocellatus*. Amongst the gems were Yellow-billed Kingfisher *Syma torotoro* (The two black dots on its nape make predators reluctant to attack thinking they are eyes), Yellow-legged Flyrobin *Kempiella griseiceps* (rare and usually skulking), Black-winged Monarch *Monarcha frater*, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot *Cyclopsitta diophthalma ssp marshalli* (may be a full species), Fawn-breasted Bowerbird *Chlamydera cerviniventris* (seen from out cabin), Trumpet Manucode *Phonygammus keraudrenii* (distant and in half a gale) and in dim undergrowth, White-faced Robin *Tregellasia leucops* all of which we managed to photograph, with varying degrees of detail!

Some others which we managed to see, with Chook's endless patience (He is good at bollockings, though!) but for which obtaining images was too difficult were Frill-necked Monarch *Arses lorealis*, White-eared Monarch *Carterornis leucotis*, Spectacled Monarch *Symposiarchus trivirgatus*, Yellow-breasted Boatbill *Machaerirhynchus flaviventer* (that genus is a proper tongue-twister), Red-cheeked Parrot *Geoffroyus geoffroyi* and Rufous (Little) Shrikethrush *Colluricincla rufogaster* (The Little Shrikethrush complex has been split into multiple species, many of them island endemics). We would happily have spent days revisiting some of the locations that Chook had found for us, even though this area was officially dry at the request of the Traditional Owners, who have supported strategies to diminish the disastrous effects of alcohol on their people who have no genetic ability to break it down in their bodies. Birdwatchers are officially most welcome, but anyone with permission to enter this region (easily obtained through compulsory application) should be aware of the very steep fines for bringing in alcohol of any kind!

Our final road trip took us 360km to Weipa for two nights, a modern opencast mining town that nevertheless still has excellent adjacent birding despite the appalling vast scars (behind huge levees, admittedly) on the landscape. However, we had several splendid species en-route, Squatter Pigeon *Geophaps scripta*, Black-backed Butcherbird *Cracticus mentalis* and Golden-shouldered Parrot *Psephotus chrysopterygius* (Year-round supplementary feeding to keep them in a safe area has been done for years by Sue Shephard of Artemis Station: Chook donates a significant percentage of his earnings to conservation causes, one of which is run by Sue, who is seen kneeling as she receives the cheque. Chook tells every prospective client that the cost of a trip includes this supplement: if you do not want to pay this supplement, he tells you to go elsewhere!



White-faced Robin



Iron Range Welcomes Birders!



Squatter Pigeon



Black-backed Butcherbird



Golden-shouldered Parrot (by Chook Crawford)



Red Goshawk



Left: Presentation of cheque to Sue Sheppard.

Right: Blue-winged Kookaburra catching a lizard



See also <https://capeyorknrm.com.au/people/shephard-sue>). On top of this Chook found us a family of Red Goshawk *Erythrotriorchis radiatus*!

At Weipa, we had some excellent birding, one Blue-winged Kookaburra *Dacelo leachii* being incredibly confiding, catching prey at our feet, but the highlight was the stream of Great and Lesser Frigatebirds *Fregata minor* and *ariel* going to roost. From there, we flew back to Cairns.

At Cairns, we had a few days to decompress, but it had a surprise in store for us on the Cairns Esplanade shore, for amongst the abundant Silver Gulls *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae* and the endangered Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* was an uncommon vagrant from southern Siberia from Chelyabinsk in the west to Ussuriland in the east, Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*. You can just see the semipalmations in the image! It wandered unconcerned among regular visiting waders as the crowds sauntered along, the only interest and excitement being in the lucky birders present. It is nice to get a lifer just before you set off on the long journey home!

And so it's goodnight from us and goodnight from him!

Selected Species from the Trip List (Chook's list: largely follows the anticipated sequence of observations)

Brown Quail *Coturnix (Synoicus) ypsilophora*. Like most quail, usually difficult to see.

Spotted Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna guttata*. Seemingly a recent & expanding colonisation of N Australia.

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*. N of Weipa, occupies & shares a mainland, not island, colony.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*. N of Weipa, occupies & shares a mainland, not island, colony.

Pacific Reef Egret *Egretta sacra*. Dark morph was predominant

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*. Presumably from the Heilongjian-Ussuriland population.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes*. Many small non-breeding flocks.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*. **Endangered** through loss of migration stopover sites & declining rapidly.

Australian Swiftlet *Aerodramus terraereginae*. NE Australian endemic.

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*. Native non-breeding species from SE Siberia, N China.

Yellow-billed Kingfisher *Syma torotoro*. Cape York endemic subspecies.

Oriental Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*. Mostly resident in N Australia: others migrate to breed further South.

Lovely Fairy-wren *Malurus amabilis*. Australian endemic from Cape York S to Townsville.

Red-backed Fairy-wren *Malurus melanocephalus*. Australian endemic in N & E (S to Newcastle).

Tropical Scrubwren *Sericornis beccarii*. 2 endemic ssp Cape York Peninsula.

Fairy Gerygone *Gerygone palpebrosa*. Endemic ssp Cape York Peninsula, another S to Brisbane.

White-throated Gerygone *Gerygone olivacea*. Oz near-endemic: ssp *cinerascens* also occurs Port Moresby.

Graceful Honeyeater *Microptilotis gracilis*. Cape York, Torres Strait, New Guinea**

Yellow Honeyeater *Stomiopera flava*. Australia endemic Cape York (bright yellow) S to past Mackay (duller).

Yellow-tinted Honeyeater *Ptilotula flavescens*. N Australia near-endemic; small are in New Guinea.

White-streaked Honeyeater *Trichodere cockerelli*. Endemic to N Cape York & Lakeland NP.

Tawny-breasted Honeyeater *Xanthotis flaviventer*. Endemic ssp *filiger* Cape York.

Rufous-banded Honeyeater *Conopophila albogularis*. N Australia & S New Guinea.

Magnificent Riflebird *Ptiloris magnificus*. Endemic ssp *alberti* N Cape York.

Trumpet Manucode *Phonygammus keraudrenii*. Endemic ssp *gouldii* N Cape York.

Fawn-breasted Bowerbird *Chlamydera cerviniventris*. Monotypic, Australian population in N Cape York.

Masked Finch *Poephila personata*. Endemic to N Australia.

Black-throated Finch *Poephila cincta*. Endemic to NE & E Australia.

Crimson Finch *Neochmia phaeton* ssp *evangelina* (New Guinea white-bellied ssp: tiny Australian distribution).

Golden-headed Cisticola *Cisticola exilis* ssp *diminutus* in NE Australia.

Pacific Baza *Aviceda subcristata*. Nominant endemic to N & NE Australia.

Black-breasted Buzzard *Hamirostra melanosternum*. Australian endemic, widespread but often elusive.

Red Goshawk *Erythrotriorchis radiatus*. Endemic, enigmatic, peripatetic: mostly N & E Australia.

Swinhoe's Snipe *Gallinago megala*. Taiga-breeding species, non-breeding season in Australia.

Little Curlew *Numenius minutus*. Eastern Siberia tundra-breeder, non-breeding season in Australia
 Brown Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia phasiensis*. Post-splits, is now Australian endemic, ssp *quinkan* Cape York
 Pacific (Brown-capped) Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps longirostris*. Resident N & E Australia & points N & E
 Squatter Pigeon *Geophaps scripta*. Oz endemic, ssp *peninsulae* Cape York (Further N than DataZone map)
 Eastern Superb Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus superbis*. New Guinea & E Australia.
 Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus regina*. Nominate endemic Cape York.
 Wompoo Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus magnificus*. Endemic ssp *assimilis* Cape York.
 Palm Cockatoo *Probosciger aterrimus*. Only Oz ssp *macgillivrayi* shared with S New Guinea.
 Double-eyed Fig Parrot *Cyclopsitta diophthalma* ssp *marshalli* (N Cape York) & *macleayana* (NE Australia)
 Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus*. Endemic ssp *macgillivrayi* Cape York.
 Red-cheeked Parrot *Geoffroyus geoffroyi*. Endemic ssp *maclennani* Cape York: 13 other ssp N of Oz.
 Pale-headed Rosella *Platycercus adsitus*. Australian endemic, nominate Cape York.
 Golden-shouldered Parrot *Psephotellus chrysopterygius*. Endangered Oz endemic; 2 small enclaves Cape York
 Pallid Cuckoo *Cacomantis pallidus*. Oz endemic: resident in N, summer breeder in S
 Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo *Cacomantis castaneiventris*. New Guinea resident: 4 enclaves NE Oz, incl Cape York
 Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*. Nominate endemic breeder in N & E Australia.
 Australian Boobook *Ninox boobook*. Resident Australia, New Guinea.
 Marbled Frogmouth *Podargus ocellatus*. Endemic ssp *marmoratus* Cape York.
 Green-backed Honeyeater *Glycichaera fallax*. New Guinea species, endemic ssp *claudi* NE Australia.
 Red-headed Myzomela (Honeyeater) *Myzomela erythrocephala*. Nominate endemic to N Australia & islands
 Yellow-legged Flycatcher (Flycatcher) *Kempiella griseiceps*. Endemic ssp *kempi* NE Cape York.
 White-faced Robin *Tregellasia leucops*. Endemic ssp *albigularis* NE Cape York
 White-browed Robin *Poecilodryas superciliosa*. Australian endemic thinly along Cape York coasts S to Mackay
 Brown (Grey) Whistler *Pachycephala (simplex) peninsulae*. Endemic N Cape York & Cooktown-Mackay
 Rufous (Little) Shrikethrush *Colluricincla rufogaster*. Oz endemic ssp *normani* S Carpentaria to Cape York
 Yellow-breasted Boatbill *Machaerirhynchus flaviventer*. Nominate endemic in N & E Cape York.
 Frill-necked Monarch *Arses lorealis*. NE Australia endemic.
 White-eared Monarch *Carterornis leucotis*. NE Australia endemic
 Black-winged Monarch *Monarcha frater*. Endemic ssp *canescens* Australia & Torres Strait Islands.
 Spectacled Monarch *Symposiarchus trivirgatus*. Endemic ssp *albiventris* Australia & Torres Strait Islands.
 Black-backed Butcherbird *Cracticus mentalis*. Cape York.
 Common Cicadabird *Edolisoma tenuirostre*. Nominate in Cape York.
 Varied Triller *Lalage leucomela*. Cape York ssp *yorki*.
 Storm-Petrel sp. Distant views of 5 birds in flat lighting, no white distinguishable. Geographically, Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* and White-faced Storm Petrel *Pelagodroma marina* are the most likely candidates, but many of these pelagic species wander widely.

**Population in Cooktown area through Cairns S to Townsville is now Cryptic (Imatatrix) Honeyeater, *Microptilotis imatatrix*. The BirdLife DataZone map for Graceful Honeyeater *M. gracilis* incorrectly confines it to New Guinea: its southern distribution stretches from the tip of Cape York as far south as Lakeland.

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Addendum

BirdLife International have split the Eclectus Parrot into 4 species, at the same time reviewing the status and distribution of all taxa involved. This results in the Cape York population becoming part of Papuan Eclectus Parrot, as *Eclectus polychloros mcgillivrayi*, the scientific name change being required on priority grounds. IOC so far has not followed this decision.



Kutini-Payamu: Great Lesser Frigate Birds appear late afternoon.



Kutini-Payamu: Great Lesser Frigate Birds assemble then head for their mainland roost, N. of Weipa.

CONSTANT EFFORT SITE – RINGING AT FIVE ARCHES PIT – WITH ALAN BRIMMELL

By John N Wells and Alan Brimmell

Background.

RAFOS Ringers have long been associated with assisting their local county bird ringing teams or working in smaller friendship groups, as well as supporting any Local or National Nature Reserves (NNR) in the locality. In Cambridgeshire we have a local site that will become a 'jewel in the crown' of Beds/Cambs/Northants (BCN) Wildlife Trusts: Woodwalton Fen and the expansion of local land that has been acquired as part of The Great Fen project.

In this article, I am going to explore work done on Bedfordshire/Cambridgeshire and Northants Wildlife Trusts (BCN WT) Nature Reserve at Five Arches Pit, near the village of Woodwalton and south of Woodwalton Fen NNR in Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire.

For those who do not know Alan Brimmell, he is a RAFOS ringer, birdwatcher and surveyor who has taken part in bird study since the early 1990s. I first met Alan on the Caerlaverock WWT visit in 1996, but he was also instrumental in the early days, assisting Vic Couzens and RAF Wyton OS (RAFWOS) and their quest to ring and study birds in warmer climes on the Akamas Peninsula, Cyprus. Also other RAFOS projects by keen birders and ringers of the Society back in-the-day.

Alan is involved in other local projects at nature reserves such as Nene Park (Ferry Meadows) LNR where he surveys flowers, bees and butterflies as well as birds at BCN WT reserves. Alan is the BCN WT volunteer warden for the small LNR called Five Arches Pit near Woodwalton village. He rings birds on the reserve through the spring and summer as part of the BTO Constant Effort Site (CES) program. I am also a BCN member, and I accompany Al on some of his CES ringing. Other ringers in RAFOS do similar study work.

For those like myself who have never been involved in this work, the commitment is by no means small! Under CES rules, 12 ringing visits are required between May and August. In addition to maintaining the ringing area, as the Warden he liaises with BCN WT management to advise regarding broader reserve issues. I tend to join Alan early in the morning after he has unfurled the nets. But for Al, it is usually a 4a.m. start to get to the site and get it ready for ringing work.

Here's an accompanying link to their site: Five Arches Pit – Website Link:

<https://www.wildlifebcn.org/nature-reserves/five-arches-pit>

About the reserve [courtesy of the BCN website]

The water-filled pit was created when material was quarried in order to build the adjacent railway embankment and Five Arches bridge. The pit and the area surrounding it developed a rich variety of wetland features, from mature willows and dense scrub to reedbeds and open water. From the footpath there are views of the open water and reedbed through the branches of the willows. Along the stone surface of the path grow collared earth star fungus.

Many birds call this site home, including warblers and water rail. A long running recording scheme regularly records more than 30 breeding bird species. Occasionally, marsh harrier and grey heron have been known to breed in the reedbed and willows. To maintain the wetland, the BCN WT coppice and pollard areas of willow on rotation.

RRinging Nets here for the season and the nets are positioned in the main to the South of the workings that form a border between the reserve and arable land. Gradually the pit has become filled with both reedbed and willows. Reserve access is via a Public Footpath along the lower embankment of the East Coast rail line. The footpath is kept clear by the BCN WT with a flail cutter. The WT maintains an info board at the Five Arches entrance.

Why do we maintain Wetlands? Here is another knowledge-based link; from the BCN Website:

Wildlife-rich wetlands

The rain-drenched lands of the UK offer perfect conditions for the formation of wetlands. These places where water and dry land meet are home to a wide range of species, from dragonflies and damselflies, to wading curlew and snipe; from carnivorous plants to flitting butterflies. Wetlands are fantastic places to spot a huge variety of birds, so make sure that you take your binoculars along with you.

A natural solution to climate change

Plant matter steadily decays and accumulates in the waterlogged conditions of wetlands, meaning they are hugely important for holding carbon. However, the ability of a freshwater wetland habitat to capture carbon varies according to the condition of the wetland. Good management is critical to ensuring that the habitat can store more carbon for years to come. It is also vital that our remaining high-quality wetlands are protected, as it can take decades for restored wetlands to be able to draw down carbon at the same rate as natural wetlands.

Nets Locations – Five Arches Pitt.

Habitat improvement has assisted ringing, including a reduction in the boundary hedge height. This has both enriched the habitat value and lowered the height birds move around the southern end of the reserve. The capture of a Kingfisher in the net adjacent to an agricultural drainage ditch was one benefit witnessed on my last visit in May.

Net Sites.

One of the nets is located inside the reed bed and requires the wearing of waders to extract bird. I feel the first walk-in must have been slightly nervy, but Al seems untroubled by most things. The other nets are all 'land based' and my skills amount to bag carrying and a little element of net up-keep, with guy line tensioning and recording the birds for Al when he is busy or just needs some company. I hope he enjoys me tagging along, as it has expanded my bird identification skills, as well as allowing me to see a greater variety of birds close-up. It certainly opens your eyes to species you would never see so close, such as juvenile Bullfinch, Reed Bunting, all usual Warbler and Whitethroat species in the 5 or 6 times I have popped along to help on the site. At the time of its peak juvenile ringing (July to August), I hope it fills in an interesting piece in the Newsletter for you.

The one trait knowing Al as I do, he is the quiet guy who in the background just gets stuck-in and goes about his business without any fanfare. Hence my purpose in exposing this small piece of conservation work to a wider audience: the members of RAFOS.



Five Arches Pit Nature Reserve



Whitethroat (left) and Sedge Warbler (above)



Woodwalton Church



The Five Arches

Summary Bird Totals rung at Five Arches Pit by Alan Brimmel [and occasionally the BCN WT Staff]:

SPECIES	2009	2010	2011	2012	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	202
TAWNY OWL	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPARROWHAWK	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
KESTREL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
WOODPIGEON	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
CUCKOO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
KINGFISHER	3	1	0	0	0	2	3	1	0	0	2
GREEN WOODPECKER	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	3	0	1	0
GT SPOTTED WOODPECKER	0	0	3	0	1	1	0	4	3	1	0
WREN	19	20	28	18	20	23	28	27	12	17	20
DUNNOCK	4	5	23	10	5	8	7	10	8	5	10
ROBIN	16	18	30	15	11	31	28	24	10	12	16
REDSTART	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
BLACKBIRD	3	4	4	7	3	5	8	4	7	5	7
SONG THRUSH	0	4	1	1	0	3	2	8	4	8	6
CETTI'S WARBLER	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	2	0
SEDGE WARBLER	6	18	24	15	7	5	5	2	6	3	20
REED WARBLER	91	99	115	33	39	33	50	31	30	37	54
LESSER WHITETHROAT	0	0	1	2	0	2	1	5	1	0	1
WHITETHROAT	22	10	54	9	15	12	6	8	4	28	34
GARDEN WARBLER	1	0	3	0	3	2	2	1	5	0	8
BLACKCAP	12	16	48	35	19	44	21	50	43	72	67
CHIFFCHAFF	7	8	21	12	8	22	35	33	16	50	45
WILLOW WARBLER	7	5	16	11	5	10	3	8	9	17	19
GOLDCREST	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	2	0	0
SPOTTED FLYCATCHER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
LONG-TAILED TIT	7	6	24	0	12	19	6	10	9	13	4
MARSH TIT	1	2	3	0	1	0	1	2	1	6	1
COAL TIT	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
BLUE TIT	47	29	74	16	23	109	30	73	61	156	45
GREAT TIT	9	11	33	7	10	21	7	17	31	31	21
TREECREEPER	1	9	13	3	6	8	4	5	4	6	2

JAY	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
HOUSE SPARROW	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
CHAFFINCH	1	7	4	3	12	6	7	3	3	3	2	2
GREENFINCH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GOLDFINCH	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
BULLFINCH	2	5	9	1	7	11	16	2	14	2	5	1
REED BUNTING	1	9	12	4	3	3	2	0	3	0	1	1
YELLOWHAMMER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	260	289	547	209	387	269	355	276	491	396		

Highlighted Peak and notable counts
Table of records; updated by Alan Brimmell



Alan Brimmell, net extraction



DOWN UNDER



Oz troops at Albany, WW1 (City of Albany News)



Nullabor Line



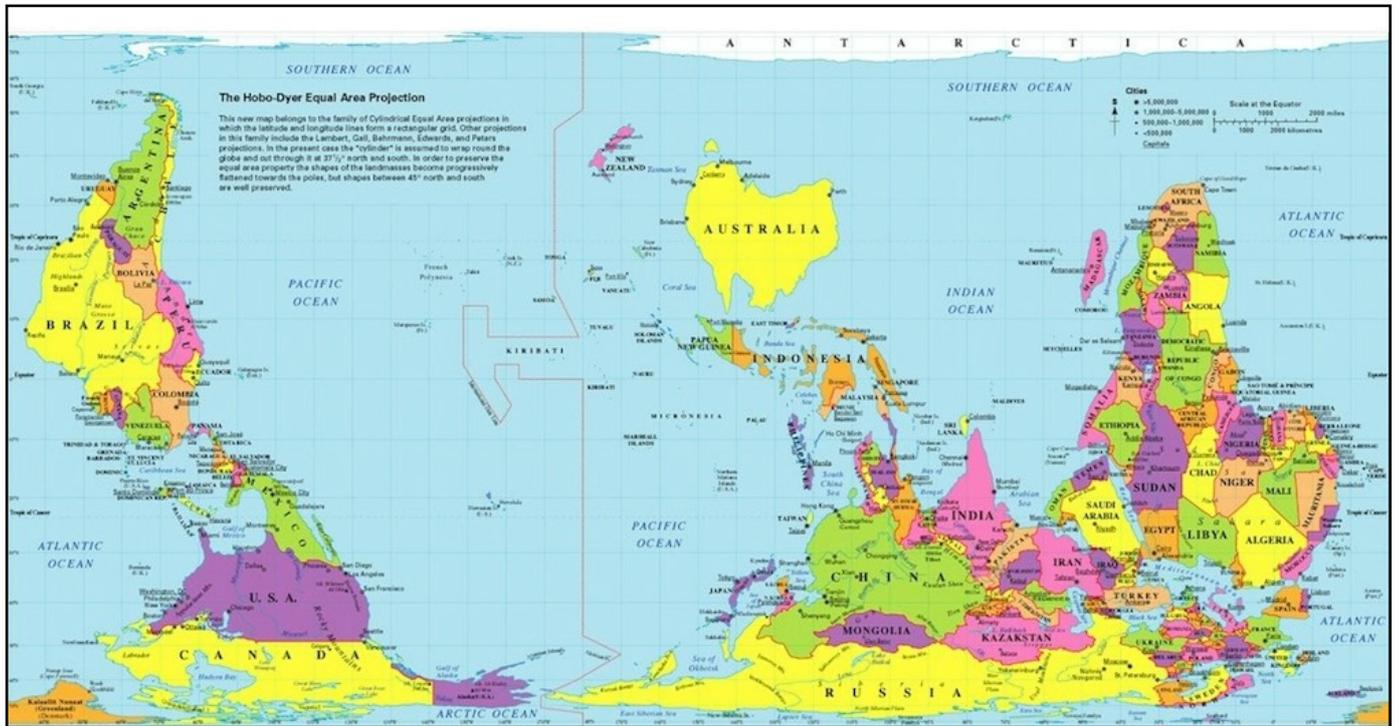
The deadly Southern Cassowary

DOWN UNDER

(That's not always how the Aussies see it)

By Mike Blair

A brief account of my love affair with the English speaking (allegedly) part of Meganesia



My list of Australian iconic places began when I was very young and had been given as presents books about the British Empire just before the concept of the British Commonwealth was formulated. Before my eyes were images of Sydney Harbour Bridge, expansive deserts, Shoal and Frenchmen Bays, Albany Western Australia, where in World War I 30,000 Australian and New Zealand Empire troops embarked for France, the longest straight railway line in the world across the Nullarbor, Ashes Test Matches that required the MCC team to sail for six weeks before they could play and the mysterious Blue Mountains, but all in monochrome, of course. However, it was the map of Australia in one of my books that set my imagination racing, for it wasn't the dry-as-dust political or primitive topographical map of children's atlases, but an exciting, annotated map of the continent. Better still, it preceded maps of the individual states and territories similarly annotated. Most mysterious of all was the map of the vast spear-shaped peninsula designated as Cape York. Quite daunting was the idea of the Cassowary which apparently stalked human beings in order to disembowel them with a well-placed fierce kick! It was not until decades later that I discovered that there are 3 cassowary species, but only the Southern Cassowary *Casuarius casuarius* inhabits Australia, and very little of it at that.

Of course, my list grew longer as I devoured books about Australia – the Scottish public library system was a superb resource in the pre-computer era of the 1950's – especially because printed material rationing had slowly been relaxed after 1945. This allowed limited colour printing of a few high-quality books that only libraries could afford, but the spread of television meant that most movie-style imagery I saw (except for Hollywood Technicolor films in the cinema) was still in black-and-white. Only in 1953, probably because of the Coronation, did British newspapers return to the initial 16 pages permissible minimum of 1939 (It had gone down to 8 during the war), yet it was not until the 1960s that newspapers were printing more than 16 pages regularly. So, published information on Australia (or on any one of the myriad of subjects that were of interest to me) was sparse and fitful. However, there was one source that was a mine of information. Jimmy Black and his wife, long-time friends of my parents, had emigrated to Australia in 1946.



Galah (above)

Goliath Heron (right)

Image is by Steve Garvie Wikimedia
Creative Commons



They had settled in an outback town in New South Wales, where Jimmy's skill as a carpenter (he had worked on the wartime production of the De Havilland Mosquito aircraft, the 'Wooden Wonder') quickly brought him business success. Unfortunately, his wife was bombarded by letters from her mother who painted a picture of being unable to cope back in Scotland with bringing up her other younger children, having a sick mother and the desertion of her husband. Jimmy and his wife returned to Scotland in 1951, having sold the business for a song to purchase passage back to UK, discovering on arrival that Granny had been dead for some time and father-in-law had long had custody of Jimmy's wife's siblings! His wife's mother had deliberately launched a campaign of misery letters to spite her daughter's insistence on emigrating and crowed about it when eventually her daughter and Johnny returned. As will be familiar to many would-be Australians, the story did not end happily there.

Jimmy set out to earn enough for him and his wife to return to Australia, but they had a child soon after returning to UK, the infant being sickly for many years. Their hopes of a return were finally dashed when Jimmy developed an asthmatic condition from wood dust inhalation. It is a measure of the man that he remained a kind and generous person despite these crushing blows to his aspirations, always telling me about the wonderful few years he spent in Australia amongst a welcoming society. His tales about flocks of hundreds of Galahs *Eolophus roseicapilla* helped plant a seed in my mind. He and his wife remained in correspondence with their many Australian friends, but he died in his early fifties.

I joined the RAF in 1961, my first posting being a year at RAF Muharraq in Bahrain. No trace remains of any buildings or roads on that base, for now is it part of the town of Busaiteen. Furthermore, the coast on which the Officers' Mess had stood is now some 2 km further north due to land reclamation. No longer do flocks of waders and feeding herons haunt the mudflats opposite what the maps of the day called 'Turd Point'! Reputedly, the RAF Muharraq was built on top of the millennia-aged Arab drainage system which archaeologists considered as one of the wonders of the Middle East, first laid down in the Tylos era when Muharraq was known as Arad. After all that time, it did get a bit whiffy around the Mess (The tidal range was just 1.5 metres), but it was worth it when the occasional Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* appeared. Nowadays it is but an occasional breeder in the Gulf, mostly along the Iran coast.

I then spent a year in Aden at RAF Khormaksar, where one of my friends was an Australian, 'Goose' Turgoose, a captain of the crew of one of the anti-submarine Shackleton aircraft of 37 Squadron. This is where my Strine vocabulary grew very quickly, because Goose would log aircraft defects in that unique form of English, quite baffling the engineering technicians whose job it was to repair the defects. I became the unofficial translator of such entries as 'No 2 donk's juice-feed is crook' (The fuel-flow regulator on No 2 engine is functioning improperly). Goose was on an exchange tour, and originally had been promised a posting to 8 Squadron in Scotland where his job would have been to track Russian submarines, but the posting authority had sent him to Aden. We reckoned that the powers that be thought that Aden was near enough to Australia to prevent Goose from being homesick, but Goose insisted that RAF Pom Penpushers threw dice to allocate postings. That disagreement with Einstein aside, Goose was a marvellous raconteur, something that seems prevalent amongst Australians, and so told me much about the people, including their propensity for tall tales. Being just a casual birdwatcher then, when off-duty I would cadge a helicopter ride in Belvedere training flights and anchored by monkey-belt, would take photos of birds feeding in the water between the causeway to Sheikh Othman and the 08 threshold. The most striking image I remember was a flock of about 200 Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor*.

In 1966, I first visited Australia, courtesy of the RAF, but essentially by accident. RAF radio and signals code-changes were coordinated on specific dates and times worldwide, which meant that in advance of the changes, hard-copy code-change information had to be sent out to RAF stations and detachments abroad, so that all changes happened simultaneously. These sealed canvas bags of code-change books were escorted by a Queen's Messenger or by a serving RAF member possessing the required security clearances. At RAF Lyneham in Wiltshire, I was responsible for the secure safe storage of these bags to be sent abroad. The bags would arrive by military courier, and the day before the flight, the escort would turn up and sign for the bags, which would be loaded on to the aircraft under his supervision. Wherever the aircraft night-



Laughing Kookaburra
(above)

White-winged Chough
(right)

Lesser Flamingo (below)



stopped en route, these bags would be signed into secure storage and then signed out again by the escort for the next leg of the journey.

On this occasion, the bags for the Australia flight arrived, but the escort failed to turn up on schedule. This was a major security incident. The panic was palpable. With only 8 hours to go before the Britannia took off with a 'hot load' for Woomera, because it was a weekend a replacement escort Queen's Messenger could get to Lyneham in time to check and supervise the bags being loaded on to the flight.

Being explosives-qualified for 'hot loads' and security-cleared to handle and store the material, I volunteered to act as escort, promising to sign off the correct bags for RAF units in Cyprus, Aden, Gan and RAF units in Australia. It took my Wing Commander 5 minutes to make it official with the powers-that-be, it took me just an hour to dash back to fill my bag with my khaki tropical and my UK blue uniforms (and toothbrush), and another hour to take the Station Security Officer through the procedures to hand over the bags that were going on other aircraft in my absence (The powers-that-be insisted that he did this personally while I was away, my immediate boss being on leave somewhere on the Continent), and soon I was on my way. While were night-stopping in Khormaksar, we received information that the missing QM had been found in his car in a ditch, seriously injured but still alive.

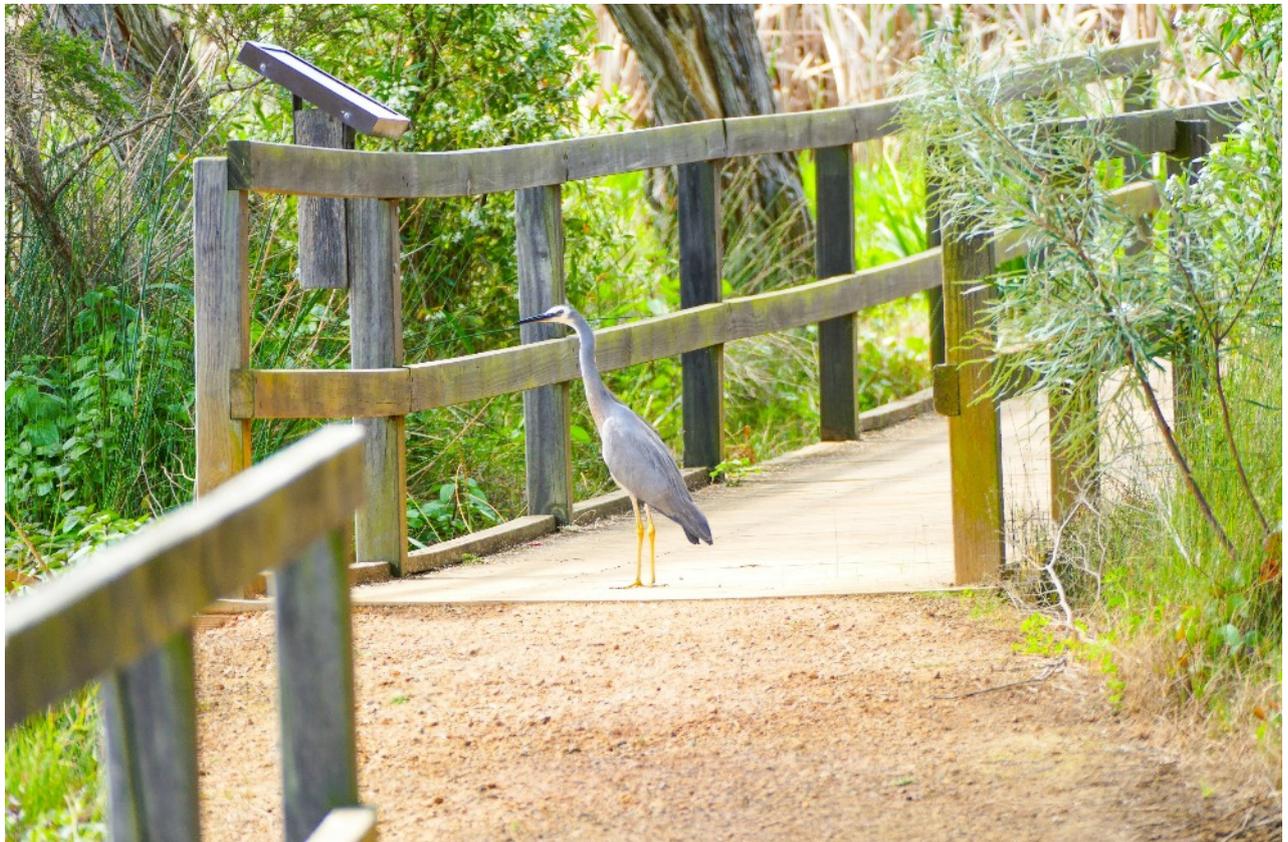
Our Australian stops were RAAF Pearce, just north of Perth, for two nights (I saw my first Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguineae* here, where it is actually an introduced species), and RAAF Edinburgh Field, just north of Adelaide, for four nights. On the return trip, we overnighted at Pearce. The Edinburgh Field stop produced another iconic Australian experience – Barossa Valley wines! The outbound Pearce stop had produced another – a rodeo, but not the rodeo itself. When we got there with our RAAF hosts, we entered a tent where all the males went to one tent for beer and all the wives went to another for sherry. Needless to say, all we RAF went into the sherry tent where we were made most welcome! I don't remember much about birds there after that...

In the Barossa Valley, we took up the standing invitation for RAF visiting personnel to visit the Hoffmann winery. Old Man Hoffmann (a common vintner surname locally) spoke Strine with a pronounced German accent and had been interned at the beginning of WWII as an enemy alien, although he was native to Australia, being born in the late 1880s, some 40 years after the first vineyards had been planted by German immigrants. His accent came from the fact that the first language spoken by the family up to his generation was German. However, all his sons became RAAF aircrew in WWII! He was philosophical about the first and intensely proud about the second. He was released from internment in mid-1941 on a monitored basis and was highly amused to find that the monitor appointed was one of his biggest wholesale customers! It would need Peter Ustinov to do justice to his accent and his sense of humour! The only species I can recall from here were the White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae* stood around the ponds that supplied the winery's irrigation water, and the White-winged Chough *Corcorax melanorhamphus*.

Apart from the RAAF authorities at Edinburgh Field, every single Aussie we encountered was welcoming, helpful and entertaining company. The problem at Edinburgh Field was that at that time it was also where recruits went for basic training, and the regimented daily discipline and routines came straight from the 1920s or earlier. Recruits went everywhere at the double. 'Casual' civilian dress for breakfast in the RAAF Officers' Mess was short-sleeved shirt with ironed creases, long shorts, long socks, brown polished shoes, but most important, ties were compulsory. Tommy Thompson, our aircraft captain, was sent back to his room to dress properly or he would be banned from the station except in full uniform! This didn't quite align with my father's description of Aussie aircrew in WWII nor with my friendship with Goose in Aden! It was another 35 years before I was able to visit Australia again. In 2000, Sue and I, having first met Roy and Helen Sonnenburg at the 2000 British Bird Fair, after which they had a few days to spend in UK before returning to Oz, invited them to stay with us in Norfolk to go birding. We were fortunate that on a calm windless and warm sunny day, we had a large passage of 3 skua species just offshore at Cley (Only Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* was absent) and a massive flock of European Golden



As a treat and a taster, I include a very distant image of Gibberbird taken in 2016 on an excursion from Coober Pedy SA. The bird is just above centre, slightly to the right...



White-faced Heron

Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* in a field near Langham. Roy & Helen had about 30 lifers that day! They invited us to visit during our Australian part of our 2001 round-the-world trip that made a severe dent in my bucket list and given that they lived in Nundah in north Brisbane and offered to help us rent a small motor-home, it was a no-brainer that after a few days with them, our six-week sojourn in Queensland now had a splendid starting point! Roy held a position at the University of Queensland and was the conservation adviser to the Queensland Government, but was also very much a birder and ringer.

We were fortunate that the main inland north-south QLD road that roughly parallels the Bruce Highway part of the round-Australia route had just become blacktop, and so our semi-coastal leg north to Cairns and the Daintree could be complemented by a southbound inland leg ending at Toowoomba. It was on this leg that the landscape seemed to get under my skin and become part of me. Perhaps, in a tiny way, that is an insubstantial and tenuous parallel with the Traditional Owners' core belief that the land does not belong to them, rather they belong to the land.

It was at that point that we realised that travelling slowly south on this inland route emphasises just how straightforward so much birding in Oz can be. If you see movement, you can stop on the bordering vegetation-cleared broad area of roo-viz (named thus because you can get early warning of kangaroos' straight-line attempts to cross the road), but there was little traffic anyway, and most birds displayed few signs of alarm. Where parrots and cockatoos are content to ignore you, smaller birds seem to follow their example. We covered around 5000km on that trip, a long drive by UK standards, but a modest one to Aussies! The remainder of our time in Oz that trip was the Sydney to Perth Indian Pacific rail journey, which featured years ago in the RAFOS Newsletter, although we had just over a week south of Perth as far as Albany on the Great Southern Ocean and return.

The next Oz trip was the 2003 OzEx Recce, then OzEx04 of course the next year, but all these formed the precursors to our 2012 6-month, 30,000km, road circumnavigation of Australia in a purchased 2nd-hand V8 Toyota Landcruiser (Stories yet to be told!). It was quite an experience coming to terms with that strange bird, the Beach Stone-curlew *Esacus magnirostris*!

In 2016, we combined a road trip from Alice Springs to Darwin with the Ghan rail journey from Darwin to Adelaide, then flew to Tasmania to complete our collection of Australian States and mainland territories. We saw all the Tassie endemics bar the Orange-breasted Parrot *Neophema chrysogaster*, which required a private plane trip with no guarantee, but we had seen it in the Adelaide Zoo's breeding programme. In 2017, I did a 4WD birding trip with the amazing birder that is Pete Colston. We set off from Darwin to explore the north of Northern Territory including Kakadu National Park and then went west to Broome Observatory via Kununurra, the Gibb River Road, Mitchell Falls and AWC Mornington Wilderness Camp (see <https://www.australianwildlife.org/>), returning via the Windjana Gorge, Purnululu and Parry's Lagoons; seven weeks and 9000km! My highlight was the Kimberley Honeyeater *Territornis fordiana*, whose known range near Mitchell Falls is tiny, mostly in a narrow valley of intermittent forest between two rock ridges less than 300 metres apart. Pete got about 30 lifers to add to his 8000 plus total...

In 2019, Sue and I went on a guided tour of Iron Range, Cape York, a hotspot for restricted-range and rare breeding or visiting species, with Close-up Birding Adventures owned by Chook Crawford, (see <https://www.closeupbirding.com.au/>). The details are in a separate article.

Unfortunately, the bonanza of trips we had planned for 2020 all had to be cancelled because of the pandemic, including another guided tour with Chook and Tracey Crawford to the Queensland Channel Country, looking for such mouth-watering rarities such as Orange Chat *Epthianura aurifrons*, Gibberbird *Ashbyia lovensis*, Hall's Babbler *Pomatostomus halli* (first identified as a new species in the 1960s by Pete Colston), Eyrean Grasswren *Amytornis goyderi*, Rufous-crowned Emu-wren *Stipitura ruficeps*, Inland Dotterel *Peltohyas australis* and possibly even Night Parrot *Pezoporus occidentalis*! Chook offered us first dibs on the 2021 trip, but the pandemic ruled that out and may rule out either of the two 11-day trips he has planned for May and June 2022. Currently, because of the pandemic, Chook hasn't planned any of his

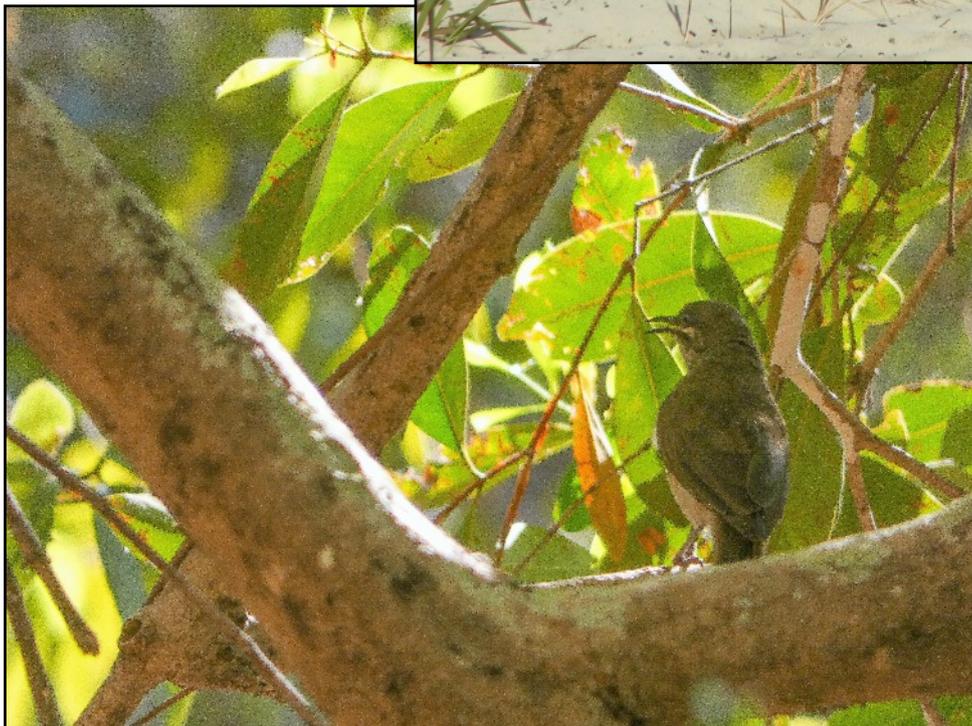
other itineraries that previously adorned his website. One aggravating factor we face is that by then, most rental firms won't deal with drivers over 78 and so our getting around before and after the Channel Country will be restricted somewhat...



Orange-bellied Parrot (above)

Beach Stone-curlew (right)

Kimberley Honey-eater
(below)



“BUT IS IT A SEABIRD?”

Expeditions SIMMER DIM 18, 19 & 21 by Keith Cowieson

For those who have laboured under my strict instructions that the SIMMER DIM (SD) series of expeditions were all about seabirds, and that everything else was very much secondary, this will come as a bit of a shock. However, now that it is all over, and I will no longer be asking pointedly of others keen to do a bit on non-seabird watching/twitching or whatever - ‘But is it a seabird?’ - the beauty of visiting the northern islands of Scotland is that they also awash in many other fascinating species not belonging to the ‘seabird’ grouping. And many of those species that are relatively common in Orkney and Shetland, are not common south of the Watford Gap, or Hadrian’s Wall for that matter.

Let’s start with the first of the SD series, in 2018, on the northern Orkney Isles of Eday and Stronsay. Thanks to the Vikings, many Orkney Isles are home to the Orkney vole, an endemic species that is plumper and more substantial eating than the common field vole found in most of the UK mainland. What this means on Orkney, where there are no native, and very few introduced, mammalian predators, is that avian predators dominate, and thrive. As witnessed by the lucky souls on Eday in 2018. From the very start, on our first day, it was a commonplace sight to see graceful short-eared owls flapping and drifting in their languid way over the tundra-like, short heather and lichen rich moorlands of the island, or sitting on roadside fence-posts waiting for doomed Orkney voles to put in an appearance.



Short-eared owl – Keith Cowieson

Hen harrier and buzzard were a common sighting too, often in the most incongruous settings with one harrier regularly hunting by the onshore element of the European Marine Energy Centre’s experimental wave & tidal power installation - <https://www.orkney.com/life/industry/energy/emec>. A further hen harrier was flushed from its nest of 4 eggs during the expedition, unusually nesting within 10 metres of a microwave aerial complex’s buildings at the end of a well-used vehicle track. The nest was in a clump of rosebay willowherb of all things, there being little of the harrier’s usual favoured nesting habitat of deep heather on the island. When food is plentiful, disturbance and persecution low, and mammalian predators scarce, ground-nesting birds will use marginal nesting sites such as this, and become relatively tolerant of the occasional human being who happens to wander by.



Female hen harrier & nest & eggs – Keith Cowieson & Brian Lyon¹

It was not only short-eared owl and hen harrier, but also buzzard, kestrel...and even a majestic adult male snowy owl that we stumbled upon, literally! And who was to be present right in the middle of our survey area for the following 2 days as well, allowing all to have wonderful views of this high Arctic specialist. On our final day in that particular survey area, Wellsy and I could see the bird on one its regular roosting spots about 1000 yards away across the valley as we were tramping along a skua transect on the opposite ridge. The ridge we were surveying had been where the bird had landed and roosted, 2 days before, when we had flushed it during skua surveying in the neighbouring grid square. It had landed by a prominent and isolated boulder on that occasion, and I had mentally stored the location away to visit if I got the opportunity, on the off chance that we might be able to recover a snowy owl 'pellet' for subsequent analysis.



Snowy owl – Keith Cowieson

¹ Breeding hen harrier, merlin, red-throated diver & whooper swan are all specially protected species under Schedule 1 of the W&CA 1981, whose nest or dependent young may not be disturbed or photographed without Licence. RAFOS teams on the SIMMER DIM series of expeditions operated under SNH/Nature Scot Licence

And so it turned out. By the boulder was a large, day-old casting of fur and bones, undoubtedly from one of the owl's recent meals. This was dutifully collected and carefully stored in my 'piece'² bag. On return home, I contacted Will Miles (of the Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group) through a mutual friend, to see if he would be prepared to dissect and analyse the pellet for us. Will had co-authored a Paper for *Scottish Birds*³, the journal of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, on the analyses of several snowy owl pellets collected during his sojourn on St Kilda during the period May to August 2007, on a CASE studentship funded by NERC and NTS. Will willingly agreed to do this and his results were very interesting. The remains of our pellet were exclusively of rabbit, and this tallied with the numerous bunny remains and skins that we had observed around the owl's home range. We had also discovered a recently dead adult oystercatcher, very close to where Wellsy, Maggie and I first flushed the bird, 3 days prior, but none of that had made it into the pellet. Fascinating nevertheless, as the only snowy owl breeding records from Scotland, of a pair that nested on Fetlar from 1967-75, and only 120 miles distant as the snowy owl flies. The records revealed that their diet in the initial couple of years consisted almost exclusively of rabbit too, with the odd oystercatcher thrown in, until an epidemic of myxomatosis forced them to rely heavily on waders as prey until the rabbit population recovered in later years⁴.



Snowy owl pellet complete, 5p piece for scale ... and unpacked – Will Miles

Turning now to wetland birds, and starting with the red-throated diver (RTD), although a red-listed 'Schedule 1' species and scarce breeder in UK, it is locally common in northern Mainland Shetland. Indeed a large chunk of the Northmavine peninsula is an SPA designated in part due to the relatively large and dense RTD population there. RTDs are ridiculous birds in many respects. So evolved for a life on the ocean wave are they, that they have extreme difficulty on dry-land when breeding. With feet set far back on the body, it is about all they can do to push themselves along on their stomachs up relatively flat grassy and peaty banks of the numerous dubh lochans to make their simple nesting scrapes - normally within a foot or two of the lochan's shore. Indeed, the population is so great on northern Mainland Shetland, that virtually every second small dubh lochan or puddle had a resident pair of RTDs.

² 'Piece' is the Scots vernacular for sandwich –originally referring to a slab of cold porridge from the previous day's breakfast allegedly, that was poured into a kitchen wooden drawer where it solidified overnight, and could then be carved into muesli bar-like portions to supplement farm-labourers' lunches.....

³ Miles, W. T. S. & Money, S. (2008) *'Behaviour and diet of non-breeding Snowy Owls on St Kilda'* *Scottish Birds* 28: 11-18.

⁴ Robinson, M. & Becker, C. D. (1986) *'Snowy Owls on Fetlar'* *British Birds* 79: 228-242.



Red-throated diver family – Keith Cowieson

And this can lead to some comical situations. Like swans and some other waterfowl, the RTD needs a decent, into-wind, take-off run to power itself into the air with wings that are adapted for a life lived mainly on or under water. On one occasion this year, I crested a peat-hag dominated ridge, virtually on top of a small dubh lochan. I heard a distinct plop in the water and saw the snake-like silhouette of an RTD that had clearly just left its mini-island nest, propelling itself away from where I had arrived down-wind on the horizon. Having reached the far shore of what was essentially a large back-garden sized pond, the bird immediately attempted a down-wind take-off with predictable results – a squawk and crash into the reed-fringed edge of the lochan. It shook itself down, with as much dignity as it could muster, turned around and made a perilously low but successful take-off, this time into wind.

Indeed the birds were so numerous this year that some very sub-optimal breeding sites were in use. On another occasion, Dave Thomas and I were ploughing our way towards further inland grid squares to survey, when we came across a typical RTD-style dubh lochan. I mentioned to Dave that I wouldn't be surprised if this held a breeding pair too, and on scanning the lochan, sure enough there was a diver with neck outstretched on its nest trying to make itself as inconspicuous as possible. Having failed, it promptly left its nest, again slithering away virtually submerged, like some prehistoric reptilian creature and slunk to the end of the lochan and took-off.



Red-throated diver take-off – Keith Cowieson

We pressed on round the lochan, recording the nest with its single hatching egg in the process, for input into the BTO's NRS and RBBP databases. When well clear, and having turned to watch the bird return to its nesting lochan, we broached the next ridge a hundred or so metres further on and there in front was another tiny dubh-lochan, this time really back-garden paddling pool sized. I pontificated to Dave that even the most desperate RTD would find this puddle too small for breeding. Dave gave it a quick scan with his binos and replied, "check out the opposite bank". And sure enough, there was another neck-outstretched incubating RTD. How on earth the bird managed to get airborne from such a small pool when there was anything less than a small gale blowing was beyond me. This time we were far enough removed and had noticed the bird soon enough, to be able to box round the lochan without disturbing it and putting its aerodynamic prowess to the test.



Red-throated diver incubating (highlighted), Dave in foreground – Keith Cowieson

Other waterfowl abound too. While checking out another RTD pair, nesting on a lochan a mere quarter of a mile from our accommodation, Lee Lappin (RNBWS) and I flushed a brood of 4 ducklings from the reeds, who behaved in classic duckling fashion by pattering away across the water in a great explosion of flapping and cheeping. Ducklings are notoriously difficult to identify when on their own, and I would have written these off as mallard, had it not been for the appearance of the duck, who had until then remained skulking in the vegetation. We were very pleased to note that it was a beautiful female wigeon, a species that is now Amber-listed in UK, due to recent population declines, with only around 200 breeding pairs in the UK.



Female wigeon and ducklings – Keith Cowieson

Meanwhile, on another loch not too far away, Wellsy, Iain MacKenzie and John Hughes (AOS) had come across another high Arctic breeder, a nesting pair of whooper swan with the incubating female quite visible from the minibus. Whooper swans have been slowly colonising Shetland over the last decade or so, and around a dozen pairs breed in Shetland every year now. We had seen 3 pairs of

whoopers incubating or with cygnets on the 2019 Shetland exped too, as well as another tantalising find by Wellsy and Mike Hayes - a breeding pair of barnacle geese in an apparently wild state (See Wellsy's article documenting the find in the RAFOS Spring 2021 Newsletter). Local expert opinion remains divided as to whether or not these 'barneys' were feral, and we will probably never know, but it is worth noting that over recent decades, barnacle geese have rapidly colonised both Iceland and the Faeroes, so it may be that their finding is the first pioneering element of a further shift southwards by the core Arctic breeding populations in Greenland and Svalbard.



Whooper swan + cynet and incubating barnacle goose – John Nigel Wells & Mike Hayes

For those old enough to have lived in wader-rich environments in mainland UK, and who have despaired as lowland pastures and wetlands have been 'improved' and drained, respectively, travelling around both Orkney and Shetland is like stepping back in time to the 1960-70s. The dawn chorus in Orkney and Shetland is not dominated by blackbird, song thrush or other songbird, but by the abundant waders that live and thrive there. To be awakened in the mornings by a medley of piping oystercatchers, yodelling redshank, hoarsely alarm calling lapwing, drumming snipe, trilling whimbrel & dunlin and mournful peeping golden plover is to be at one with the gods. Venture onto any of the glorious white beaches there and it is the abundant ringed plover that flit to and fro, calling and piping to one another and their chicks. Yomp into the vast peat and moorlands, and it is the golden plover, dunlin, whimbrel and curlew whose plaintive calls and vibrant songs dominate. There are many reasons for this of course, the lack of modern industrial development (with the exception of the oil and gas installations at Sullom Voe), urbanisation, intensive farming and the near complete absence of mammalian predators – foxes, badgers, stoats & weasels – that allow ground-nesting species in general, and waders in particular, to survive and thrive. Where else in UK, would it be commonplace to slow down for lapwing, oystercatcher and curlew chicks crossing the road? Where else can you spot, and then photograph, incubating curlew from the minibus, nesting within 2-3 metres of the road verge? Where else can you venture onto the unfenced moorland bordering main, albeit 'B' class, local thoroughfares and have dainty whimbrel chicks running around and their devoted, confiding parents hovering in butterfly-like flight overhead, or running almost under your feet while trilling continuously in attempts to lead you away from their youngsters?



Incubating curlew by roadside....and whimbrel chick (ringed by George Candelin)

Keith Cowieson & Dave Thomas

Furthermore, where else can you pull into a layby with gravel for frosty winter road treatment, and find yourself face-to-face with an incubating oystercatcher? And all within a 10-15 mile radius of your accommodation. Such is the magic and attraction of both the Orkney and Shetland Isles. For all those hankering after a soul-refreshing, post-Covid lockdown staycation next year, you could do much, much worse than spend some time on Scotland's northern isles, soaking up the abundant wild life that you find on the doorstep there, literally, while enjoying that wonderful relaxing island tempo of life, away from the hustle and bustle of mainland UK.

And there are songbirds too, the ubiquitous meadow pipit and skylarks are everywhere on the islands, as are wheatear, rock pipit, stonechat, starlings and the ubiquitous Shetland wren. More starling this year than I have seen in many a year too, with raucous family parties whizzing and chattering around virtually every isolated croft, and many cliffs and foreshores as well. These are all testament to the abundance of insects that thrive in the absence of reliance on insecticide, herbicides and cattle worming treatments. Traditional crofting eschews such methods, so meadows are cut late, and infrequently; cowpats are covered in flies and peppered with dung beetles; fallen stock rots in many hidden dips and folds in the landscape, and no one particularly cares or bothers. Even the mighty Scottish midge doesn't cause too much bother to the peatland wanderer, as the islands are subject to almost constant wind or breezes.



Wheatear and Shetland wren (ringed by George Candelin) – Mike Hayes & Keith Cowieson

This rich harvest sustains the island songbirds which in turn sustain Shetland's nationally important population of dainty merlin. And it was with a warm glow of recognition that Martin Alabaster (RNBWS) and I heard the unmistakable high-alarm call of a merlin when plodding into one of our designated survey grid squares. We were following the course of one of the many small burns and associated ravines that scour the landscape, leading off the low peaty plateaux of the interior. These burns often have deep heather banks on the surrounding steep slopes, and low and behold within a few steps a female merlin flushed off a nest, virtually over my head, on a steep heather bank. The nest contained 5 recently hatched chicks, and we quickly recorded and photographed them, before continuing rapidly on our way to allow the female to return to brood her family. On reviewing the photos later that night, I was amused to see a couple of the young merlin chicks defiantly staring at the photographer with open, threatening, mini hooked beaks, despite the disparity in our sizes.



Defiant merlin chicks – Keith Cowieson

The merlin is a dashing, beautiful little falcon, and a welcome addition to any of the banks and braes of bonny Shetland. Later on in the expedition, Martin and Stephen Chapman (RNBWS) were again to hear the high alarm call of the merlin, as they pushed into the interior of another rocky and peatland dominated area. One exposure to the merlin's calls is enough to imprint it on any surveyor's mind for future reference – sounding like a high-pitched, high-speed peregrine falcon alarm, and much more wild in character than the kestrel's altogether gentler chatter.

And of course, there were masses of seabirds in all their noisy and glorious clamour too, but that is another story, and will be related in a further article in the next Newsletter.....

The RAFOS Newsletter

PLEASE READ THIS

The Editor will be most grateful for pictures and articles to grace the next edition. Letters to the Editor to raise any issues, birding book reviews and details of goods for sale are always welcome too.

Please remember the following:

Brief contributions are always welcome.

Illustrations (photographs or art work) are always welcome

Please send written work as soon as you can. If pictures are included in word processed documents, please send them separately from the text.

.pdf files can be imported as they are received, including related pictures. Please include the author's name after the article's title and use the font Calibri.

Please try avoid footnotes and tables – they are difficult to import with my software!

Articles can be submitted either as attachments to emails, or on a CD, DVD, memory stick or card. Sticks and cards will be returned!

Digital images should be in .jpg format.

The closing date for inclusion in Newsletter No. 113 is 21st January 2021 and any contributions received after that date will be held over for Newsletter No. 114.

Please address contributions to:

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