

Bird Trails

TROPICAL QUEENSLAND



All the best birding sites,
guides and places to stay

Cairns Region

Including Daintree,
Cairns Highlands, Mission Beach

Rainforests, mountains, dry country, swamps, lakes, mudflats and reef

It is no wonder that so many birds call the Cairns region home. With the variety of habitats such as mountain, coastal, riverine, mangrove, wetland, woodland, grassland, rainforest, rural and urban parkland, this area has the largest avifauna of any region in Australia. It is home to over 450 species of birds and 12 of these are local endemics:-

Tooth-billed Bowerbird - easily seen when displaying in mid to high altitude rainforest.

Golden Bowerbird - best seen at bowers during breeding season (Sep-Jan), chance sightings out of this period, generally at higher altitudes.

Fernwen - generally seen in the higher altitude rainforests.

Atherton Scrubwren - higher altitude rainforests.

Bridled Honeyeater - common, some altitudinal migration in winter, found in rainforest and adjacent woodlands.

Macleay's Honeyeater - common at lower and mid altitudes in and around rainforest areas

Chowchilla - easiest when calling in the early morning, usually in higher altitude rainforest.

Bower's Shrike-Thrush - fairly easy to find in higher altitude rainforests, some altitudinal migration.

Pied Monarch - throughout rainforest and adjacent woodlands, except at highest altitudes, but can be elusive.

Victoria's Riflebird - throughout rainforested areas and adjacent woodlands, but can be elusive.

Grey-headed Robin - common in rainforest, generally at higher altitudes.

(Lesser Sooty Owl has now been lumped with Sooty Owl and is no longer a "Wet Tropics" endemic.)

Names and Taxonomic order taken from:- *Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds*

Christidis L & Boles W E (CSIRO, Melbourne 2008)

Additionally many distinct subspecies occur including:

Double-eyed Fig-Parrot

Crimson Rosella

Southern Boobook

Masked Owl

White-throated Treecreeper

Satin Bowerbird

Yellow-throated Scrubwren

Brown Gerygone

Yellow Thornbill

Eastern Spinebill

Yellow-faced Honeyeater

Grey Fantail

Pale-yellow Robin

Bassian Thrush

Whatever time of year you decide to visit there will always be plenty of birds to see. October – April may be our

hotter and wetter months, but it is the time when the migrant species arrive from Papua New Guinea including the beautiful Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher, Channel-billed Cuckoo and Eastern Koel. Many birds such as Noisy

Pitta are also breeding at this time of year and are easier to observe as they search for food.

During our cooler, drier, winter months (May-Sept) the Victoria's Riflebirds are displaying and winter breeders such as White-eared Monarch can be easier to see.

Tips on the Daintree River are good for riverine and mangrove species such as Great-billed Heron, Little Kingfisher and Shining Flycatcher.

To supplement your birding there is also a whole host of other wildlife and environmental related activities available in the region. Go out for a day on the Reef to visit the seabird breeding colony at Michaelmas Cay off Cairns where you can also snorkel, dive and go reef viewing. Take the Skyrail cable car from Kuranda or Cairns over the rainforest canopy and view the birds from above.

Trails

Go wildlife viewing both day and night, either on your own or with one of the local expert guides. North Queensland is home to a variety of interesting animals such as Platypus, Echidna, Tree Kangaroo, several bandicoot species, a variety of possums, the iridescent Cairns Birdwing and Ulysses butterflies, the Giant White-lipped Tree Frog and Boyd's Forest Dragon to name but a few.

To help you find your way around to see the best birds, we have suggested some bird trails which will take you to some of the diverse habitats found in the Cairns region.

1 Stone Curlew Trail – Cairns & northern beaches

Experience shorebirds, lowland species such as Rose-crowned Fruit-Doves and Pied Imperial Pigeons (Aug-April) and both Bush and Beach Stone-Curlew.

2 Kingfisher Trail – Mossman & Daintree

All nine of Australia's kingfisher species are found in this area including the Buff-breasted Paradise-kingfisher which nests in termite mounds during the summer months and returns to New Guinea in the winter.

3 Honeyeater Trail – Julatten & Mt Lewis

20 species of honeyeater have been recorded in this area including the endemic Macleay's and Bridled which are found on Mt Lewis with the other 10 Wet Tropic endemics.

4 Bustard Trail – Mt Carbine to Mareeba

The Australian Bustard can be found along this dry country trail, but especially at Maryfarms. An excellent variety of bush and water birds found throughout.

5 Catbird Trail – Kuranda to Mareeba

Mid-altitude rainforest and drier woodland give a huge variety of species including the Spotted Catbird.

6 Riflebird Trail – Cairns Highlands (Atherton Tablelands)

A number of days can be spent exploring the wide variety of sites on this trail. Victoria's Riflebird may be found in any of the many rainforest areas.

7 Cassowary Trail - Cairns south to Mission Beach

Mission Beach has long been the stronghold for Southern Cassowary which may be encountered on walking tracks in the rainforest along with many other lowland species.

Cassowary artwork by Ellen Terrell

Tours and Guides for Birders

F Alan's Wildlife Tours

Personable and experienced, Alan knows the area and birds well. Also natural history and mammal tours from 2 hour nocturnal to customised multi-day packages.

Ph: 07 4095 3784 www.alanswildlifetours.com.au

G Chris Dahlberg's Daintree River Tours

Since 1992 Chris Dahlberg has been taking birdwatchers out at dawn with spectacular results by finding and getting close to the hard to see birds.

**Ph: 07 40987997 www.daintreerivertours.com.au
www.daintreewildlife.blogspot.com**

H Daintree River Experience

"Sauce" is a knowledgeable and enthusiast birder & photographer who operates a cruise on Barratt Creek and the Daintree River.

Ph: 07 40987480 www.daintreecruises.com.au

I Fine Feather Tours - Mossman

Del Richards offers a range of half and full day birdwatching tours from the Daintree River to Julatten, Mt Lewis and the hinterland.

Ph: 07 4094 1199 www.finefeathertours.com

J Birding Naturally

Based at Jabiru Safari Lodge at Mareeba Wetlands, David 'Chook' Crawford guides an "Early Birders" tour and private guiding at the Wetlands Reserve and ventures further afield with small groups to Cape York and around Tropical North Queensland.

Ph: 1800 788 755 www.jabirusafarilodge.com.au

K Sicklebill Safaris

Day tours of Cairns and the Highlands and fully accommodated small group tours of Tropical North Queensland, Australia and overseas.

Ph: 07 4093 7318 www.sicklebillsafaris.com

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www.birdingtropicalaustralia.com.au
Check the website for more information,
sites, directions and bird lists.

Stone Curlew Trail – Cairns & northern beaches



Beach Stone Curlew - Keith & Lindsay Fisher

- 1 Cairns Foreshore (Esplanade)**
Offers close-up viewing of many migratory waders (shorebirds), egrets, gulls and terns, unsurpassed anywhere in the world. Main season for migratory waders is August-April.
- 2 Centenary Lakes**
Parkland with fresh and saltwater lakes, lowland swamp forest, Melaleuca Wetlands and boardwalk provide varied habitat. Look for Little Kingfisher and Black Bittern.
- 3 Flecker Botanic Gardens and Mt. Whitfield Conservation Park**
Gardens and walking tracks which ascend the Whitfield Range through rainforest and eucalypt woodland.
- 4 Pioneer Cemetery – James Street Cairns**
The best site to see Bush Stone-curlews.
- 5 Jack Barnes Bicentennial Mangrove Boardwalk – Cairns Airport Drive**
Two boardwalks within the mangroves allow easy access to mangrove species such as Collared Kingfisher, Black Butcherbird, Shining Flycatcher and Mangrove Robin.
- 6 Redden Island**
Road access via Machan's Beach. Contains a high diversity of habitats in a small area attracting a good species range including shorebirds at the Barron River mouth.
- 7 Yorkey's Knob Lagoon**
Small lagoon alongside road by the golf club which allows good close up views of waterbirds including: Green Pygmy-geese, Wandering & Plumed Whistling-Duck, breeding Australasian Darter & Little Black Cormorant.
- 8 Yule Point**
Extensive sand flats with a fringing reef which is exposed at low tide. Many migratory shorebirds found here including Sanderling. Also Beach Stone-curlew and Little Tern.
- 9 Michaelmas Cay National Park – Great Barrier Reef**
Important seabird breeding site for Common Noddy, Sooty Tern, Lesser Crested Tern and Crested Tern. Frigatebirds and boobies often seen. Access with commercial tour companies.

Kingfisher Trail – Mossman & Daintree



Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher - Keith & Lindsay Fisher

- 10 Mossman Gorge - Daintree National Park**
Dense lowland rainforest. Use 2.7km loop walking track to avoid the crowds in the picnic area. Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Noisy Pitta, Pied Monarch and Yellow-breasted Boatbill are present.
- 11 Newell Beach area**
Area is known for Red-rumped and Barn Swallows in summer months, check powerlines. The beach at the Mossman River mouth also good for waders and Collared Kingfisher in mangroves.
- 12 Wonga Beach**
This is a reliable Beach Stone-Curlew location and is also a good place to find Double-eyed Fig-Parrots in open vegetation
- 13 Daintree Village**
Tiny township on the Daintree River surrounded by rainforest and grassland. The river is accessed by bird tour boats from the village jetty and from Barratt Creek Landing. Well-known for Great-billed Heron, Black Bittern, Little Kingfisher and Papuan Frogmouth.
- 14 Stewart Creek Road**
A short walk, or drive the 8km from Daintree Village. Traverses different forest types, farmland, wetlands and creeks. Lovely Fairy-Wren, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, Fairy Gerygone, kingfishers and raptors.
- 15 Jindalba Boardwalk - Daintree National Park**
North of the Daintree River. Provides easy access to the rainforest and species such as Southern Cassowary, Victoria's Riflebird, Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher, Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Superb Fruit-Dove and Noisy Pitta.

Honeyeater Trail – Mt Lewis & Julatten



Macleay's Honeyeater - Keith & Lindsay Fisher

- 16 Mt. Lewis**
The road winds up 10km to 950m where upland rainforest species such as Golden Bowerbird, Chowchilla, Fernwren, Atherton Scrubwren and Blue-faced Parrot-Finch (Nov-April) are found. The road is gravel so check the conditions before you go.
- 17 Abattoir Swamp Environmental Park**
A bird hide overlooks the swamp. The woodland area around the car park is often productive and when the paperbark trees are flowering large numbers of lorikeets and honeyeaters are attracted to the area.
- 18 Mowbray National Park**
Walking track through rainforest, which can turn up some of the more difficult to see rainforest species. Has an isolated population of Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo.

Bustard Trail – Mt Carbine to Mareeba



Australian Bustard - Alan Gillanders

- 19 Maryfarms**
East and West Maryfarms roads provide a reliable location for Australian Bustard, other species recorded include, Squatter Pigeon, Brown Goshawk, Red-tailed Black- Cockatoo, Galah, Red-winged Parrot, Pale-headed Rosella and Blue-winged Kookaburra,
- 20 Mount Molloy**
Township is good for Red-winged Parrot, Pale-headed Rosella, Great Bowerbird which are common, Blue-faced Honeyeater and Double-barred Finch. Other species in area include Square-tailed Kite and Little Eagle.
- 21 Lake Mitchell**
Waterbirds, with Brolga, Black Swan, Green Pygmy-geese, whistling-ducks, Black-necked Stork and some shorebirds when the water level is low. Also Grey-crowned Babbler Apostlebird, and Red-backed Fairy-wren. Eastern Osprey is regular.
- 22 Mareeba Wetlands**
Dry country species such as, Squatter Pigeon, Brown Tree-creeper, Lemon-bellied Flycatcher, Weebill, Grey-crowned Babbler, and Black-throated Finch. The lagoons can hold Brolga and both pygmy-geese, Comb-crested Jacana and some ducks.

Catbird Trail – Kuranda to Mareeba



Spotted Catbird - Keith & Lindsay Fisher

- 23 Black Mountain Road – Kuranda National Park**
Rainforest habitat close to Kuranda, with a good chance of Cassowary, Red-necked Crake, Wompoo and Superb fruit doves, Double-eyed Fig Parrot, Lovely Fairy-wren, four species of monarchs, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Victoria's Riflebird and Spotted Catbird.
- 24 Tinaroo Creek Road**
Driving the length of this road near Mareeba gives a good chance of Squatter Pigeon, Pale-headed Rosella, Yellow Honeyeater, Brown Tree-creeper, Great Bowerbird and possibly Black-throated Finch.
- 25 Davies Creek National Park**
Davies Creek flows over massive granite boulders surrounded by eucalypt forest. Excellent habitat for dry country birds.
- 26 Emerald Creek - Dinden State Forest**
Riparian forest and wet-sclerophyll, good for Pale-headed Rosella, honeyeaters including Bridled (in winter), Yellow and White-naped, White-browed Robin, Weebill and a chance of Rufous Owl.

Riflebird Trail – Cairns Highlands



Victoria's Riflebird - Ian Montgomery

- 27 Henrietta Creek - Woorooroonan National Park**
Camping site and access area to walking tracks through low-mid level tropical rainforest (300-600m). Many rainforest species recorded.
- 28 Tully Gorge and Tully Falls National Parks**
Tully Falls Road traverses rainforest and wet sclerophyll forests before reaching Koomboolomba Dam 34km south of Ravenshoe.
- 29 Kaban area**
Dry sclerophyll forest and forestry plantations providing habitat for dry country species such as Common Bronzewing, Painted Button-quail, Brown Treecreeper, Red-browed Pardalote, northern form of Fuscous Honeyeater, Varied Sittella and Crested Shrike-tit
- 30 Mt Hypipamee National Park**
Offers good viewing of several endemics, including: Fernwren, Bridled Honeyeater, Grey-headed Robin, Chowchilla and is habitat for Golden Bowerbird. Keep a lookout for the occasional Southern Cassowary.
- 31 Wongabel State Forest**
A special piece of remnant rainforest attracts many rainforest birds including Emerald Dove, Wompoo Fruit-Dove, White-throated Treecreeper, Fernwren, Tooth-billed Bowerbird and Bower's Shrike-thrush along the 1 hour walk (2.6 kilometre circuit).
- 32 Hastings Swamp National Park**
A tiny national park also known as Nyleta Wetlands has recorded more than 220 bird species. The two-storey bird hide is the perfect place to spot wetland species.
- 33 Bromfield Swamp**
This extinct volcanic crater is a roosting site for hundreds of Sarus Crane and Brolga in winter (June – October). Best viewing is early morning or dusk when the birds fly in for the evening after feeding in the nearby paddocks.
- 34 Curtain Fig National Park**
Touristy but spectacular, in fine Mabi rainforest and a great spot for Wompoo Fruit Dove, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Bower's Shrike-thrush, Grey-headed Robin, Pied and Black-faced monarchs, White-throated Tree-creeper and Eastern Whipbird.
- 35 Lake Eacham and Barrine - The Crater Lakes National Park**
Walking tracks around these scenic lakes give good opportunities for most of the local endemics and a range of other species including waterbirds.
- 36 Pelican Point**
20ha of revegetated woodland, rainforest and grasses on the shores of Lake Tinaroo has 193 species recorded. Sarus Crane may roost here (June-October).

Cassowary Trail – Cairns south to Mission Beach



Southern Cassowary - Robert South

- 37 Goldsborough Valley - Wooroonooran National Park**
Campground in lowland rainforest along Mulgrave River. Kearneys Falls track (1.6km return) traverses rainforest and is a good lowland site for Victoria's Riflebird and fruit-doves.
- 38 Eubenangee Swamp National Park**
One of the most important wetlands between Ingham and Cooktown - home to waterbirds, grassbirds and forest dwellers. Black-necked Stork, egret, herons and ibis feed in the swamplands.
- 39 Ettby Bay**
Small picnic area with camping and caravan park. Reliable for Southern Cassowary and Beach Stone-curlew.
- 40 Lacey Creek and Licuala - Tam O'Shanter National Park**
Lacey Creek (1.5km circuit) and Licuala Fan Palm Walk (1.3km circuit) with link walk of 9km between them. Look for Southern Cassowary, Rose-crowned and Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Red-necked Crake, Chowchilla and Yellow-breasted Boatbill.

