



Black-throated Finch
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Bird watching in Townsville

The Townsville region of north Queensland is Australia's best-kept bird watching secret with over 350 species of birds recorded. This is about half of the bird species recorded in Australia. Although officially within the dry tropics region we are in close proximity to the wet tropics and so are able to have access to the best of both worlds. Townsville may have periods of drought followed by a series of good wet seasons. This relatively dry climate allows inland birds to reach the coast. From diverse river systems, mangroves, wetlands, grasslands, open woodlands to tropical rainforests, the Townsville region

boasts them all. Birds in Townsville very throughout the year. Some are resident in all seasons but there are also summer and winter migrants. Small bush birds such as fantail and flycatchers migrate from southern states in winter. In summer shorebirds or waders arrive on our beaches from the northern hemisphere and Koels and Pied Imperial-Pigeons return from PNG and south eastern Asia to breed.

WETLANDS

The **Town Common Conservation Park** is a must for all birdwatchers visiting Townsville. Only 6km from the city's centre, 'The Common' is home to a large variety of birds due to the diversity of habitats it contains. Water birds are most prolific after a good wet season. When other wetlands start to dry up, from April onwards, egrets, ibis, spoonbills, ducks, cormorants, herons and Brolga congregate on swamps and deeper waterholes.



Black-necked Stork

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Lake Ross, 25km from the city, is the major water supply for the twin cities of Townsville and Thuringowa. Both the dam and borrow pits provide ample habitat for many birds such as

Magpie Goose, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Eurasian Coot and Great-crested Grebe.

Serpentine Lagoon, is a cattle grazing property located 45km south of Townsville. As a nature refuge it also provides important wildlife habitat and links to the adjoining Mount Elliot. The wetland supports many waterbirds including Green Pygmy-goose, Brolga, Magpie Goose, Black Swan, Coot and both Plumed and Wandering Whistling Ducks.

The **Cromarty** area is one of the more accessible part of the coastal wetlands systems of the region. Brolgas and Magpie Geese are found in large numbers during the wet season and through to July in some years. Access is via Cromarty Road, 9km south of the AIMS turnoff (ie 40km south east of Townsville), then right onto Reed Beds Road and right back to the Bruce Highway. Red-backed Kingfisher, Golden-headed Cisticola, Rufous-throated Honeyeater, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, Black-necked Stork and many finch species.



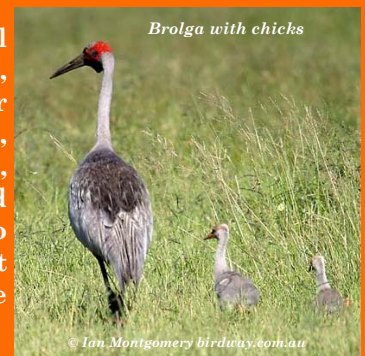
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin

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~ NQ Annual Crane Count ~

The annual Crane Count is a research activity supported by Birds Australia North Queensland Group and held in the afternoon of the first Saturday of October. Any interested people are invited to join in the count of Brolgas and Sarus Cranes as they fly to their roosts at wetlands across north Queensland: Atherton Tableland, Upper Herbert, Townsville - Giru, Ingham, Gulf Plains and Cape York. This year the count is on Saturday 7th October 2006. Please contact Elinor Scambler on (07) 4095 3296 before 8pm.

Ozcrane is for all crane enthusiasts, bringing together researchers, farmers, other land managers, bird watchers and crane counters. To learn more about cranes visit the Ozcrane website.



Brolga with chicks

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Ozcrane is celebrating its first 12 months on the web with updated news, articles and a new Cranes in Flight Gallery, with outstanding images from participating photographers.

Contact Elinor Scambler
PO Box 59, Atherton QLD 4883
Phone (07) 4095 3296 before 8pm.
Email: cranesnorth@austarnet.com.au
<http://ozcranes.net/>



Beach Stone-curlew
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WADERS

The **Ross River** may be followed for many kilometres, from its mouth in Cleveland Bay, through the city to the Lake Ross. At its mouth there are extensive tidal mud and sand flats which support a large number of migratory waders. Of particular interest is the extensive colony of Australian White Ibis, possibly the largest in tropical Australia, with over 600 nests. Great, Intermediate, Little and Cattle Egrets also breed here.

Bushland, Toomulla and Balgal Beaches are a short drive north west of the city (17km, 45km and 50km respectively) and provide some excellent vantage points for viewing waders. Of particular note are Beach Stone-curlew, Little Tern, Great Knot, Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers and Ruddy Turnstones.

Cungulla is 40km south east of Townsville and can be readily accessed by taking the Cape Cleveland Road (AIMS turnoff) from the Bruce Highway. Eastern Curlew, Bar and Grey Plover, Terek Sandpiper and Pied Oystercatcher are some of the highlights.

SEABIRDS

The 20 minute ferry trip to **Magnetic Island** provides an ideal opportunity to look for seabirds. Regulars include the Brown Booby, Pied Cormorant, Osprey, Crested and Lesser Crested Terns. Trips to the **Great Barrier Reef** also produce an array of seabirds, such as Great and Lesser Frigatebird and Wedge-tailed Shearwater.

OPEN WOODLAND SPECIES

On the city's western outskirts you can easily find open woodland birds. Ideal birding locations include the road to **Mount Stuart, Woodstock-Giru Road, Oak Valley, and Hervey Range Road**. Key species for the region include Black-throated Finch, Squatter Pigeon, Square-tailed Kite, Owlet Nightjar, Barking Owl, Great Bowerbird, Lemon-bellied Flycatcher and numerous honeyeaters including Yellow, Brown and Rufous-throated.

Alligator Creek, part of Bowling Green Bay National Park, includes the southernmost extension of the tropical rainforests on Mount Elliot, while the lower slopes are clad in open woodland with creeks lined by melaleuca forests. These include White-browed Robin Scarlet, White-throated and Dusky Honeyeaters with Lewin Honeyeaters in winter.



Golden Bowerbird
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RAINFOREST

For a cool change visit the rich lush tropical rainforest high on the ridges of the **Bluewater and Paluma Ranges** about one and a half hours drive north of Townsville. Walks in the rainforest through the Bluewater and Paluma sections of Paluma Range National Park are a great way to see iconic wet tropics birds as well as escape the coastal heat. These include Golden Bowerbird, Victoria's Riflebird, Spotted Catbird, Chowchilla, Macleay's Honeyeater and Topknot Pigeons.

Paluma Dam also offers excellent vantage points to see these rainforest species as well as provide a great place to camp. Species to look out for include Wompoo Pigeon, Satin Bowerbird, Tooth-billed Catbird, Noisy Pitta, Grey-headed Robin and Large-billed Scrubwren. Some excellent wet sclerophyll forest on the road to Hidden Valley is home to some high altitude birds such as Grey Shrike-thrush, White-naped Honeyeater, Crested Shrike-tit, Glossy Black-Cockatoo and Eastern Yellow Robin.

~ Black-throated Finch ~

The Black-throated Finch is a small seed-eating bird which once occurred from New South Wales to the tip of Cape York Peninsula and across the Gulf Plains to the Northern Territory border. It has, however, largely disappeared from southern areas and Townsville remains the last stronghold population of the southern form of the species.

The Black-throated Finch is listed as endangered under Commonwealth legislation. A community-based recovery team has been formed and is working with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to implement a recovery plan. The recovery team maintain a database of sightings and conducts an annual waterhole survey. This year's count will be held on 14-15th October 2006.

Please contact the Black-throated Finch Recovery Team for more information on this year's survey.

c/o Townsville Region Bird Observers Club
PO Box 756, Townsville QLD 4810
Phone Rosemary Payet TRBOC (07) 4728 7402
or Phil Bourke QPWS (07) 4796 7793



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Are you interested in the birds?

Birds Australia North Queensland Group
PO Box 37, Belgian Gardens QLD 4810

Keep an eye on our new website: www.birdsaustralianq.org
If you want to join Birds Australia visit their website
www.birdsaustralia.com.au

Thanks to Jo Wieneke for information on this fact sheet taken from her book

'Where to Find Birds in North Queensland'



Kindly supported by Townsville City Council

