

Bird Trails

TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND

All the best
birding sites,
guides and
places to stay



Cairns Wet Tropics Region
Cairns, Daintree, Atherton Tablelands, Julatten, Kuranda, Mission Beach

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

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 of which 15 of these are local endemics. The higher altitude rainforests that some of these species occur in, is usually above 600m.

Wet Tropic Endemic Species

Lesser Sooty Owl – In and around rainforest, heard more often than seen.

Tooth-billed Bowerbird – easily seen when displaying in mid- to high-altitude rainforest between August & December.

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

Fernwen – generally seen in the higher altitude rainforests.

Atherton Scrubwren – higher altitude rainforests.

Mountain Thornbill – 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.

Spotted Catbird – in and around rainforest, often heard more than seen.

Cryptic Honeyeater – Very common, previously called Graceful Honeyeater.

Additionally many distinct subspecies occur including:

- Double-eyed Fig-Parrot
- Crimson Rosella
- Southern Boobook
- Masked Owl
- Satin Bowerbird
- White-throated Treecreeper
- Yellow-throated Scrubwren
- Bassian Thrush
- Pale-yellow Robin
- Grey Fantail
- Yellow-faced Honeyeater
- Eastern Spinebill
- Yellow Thornbill
- Brown Gerygone

Whatever time of year you decide to visit there will always be plenty of birds to see. October – April may be our warmer and wetter months, but it is the time when 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 Riflebird are displaying and winter breeders such as White-eared Monarch can be easier to see.

Trips on the Daintree River are good for riverine and mangrove species like Great-billed Heron, Little Kingfisher and Shining Flycatcher. Enjoy the tranquil experience of an early morning trip watching birds and wildlife start their day or a late afternoon trip ending with a tropical sunset. All these options provide great opportunities for wildlife photography.

Join a wildlife tour with any of our experienced guides to fully appreciate the huge diversity of birds and other wildlife in our region and learn about the habitats they live in.

Apart from birding there is also a whole host of other wildlife and environmental related activities available in the region. Have a day on the reef at the seabird breeding colony of Michaelmas Cay off Cairns, where you can also snorkel, dive and view the reef. Take the Skyrail cable car from Kuranda or Cairns and observe the birds from above the rainforest canopy.

Other interesting animals occurring in North Queensland include Platypus, Echidna, Tree Kangaroo,, a variety of possums, the iridescent Cairns Birdwing and Ulysses butterflies, Giant White-lipped Tree Frog and Boyd's Forest Dragon.



Great-billed Heron - Jun Matsui



Lesser Sooty Owl - Patrick De Geest

Accommodation for Birders

H Red Mill House
 Boutique birdwatchers B&B in the Daintree Village. Large gardens, decks for relaxing including natural frog & turtle pond. Perfect for exploring Daintree River & surrounds. Guided tours and packages available.
Ph: 07 4098 6233 www.redmillhouse.com.au

I Thala Beach Nature Reserve
 A deluxe eco retreat & birdwatcher's paradise with over 195 bird species documented, Thala's guests enjoy complimentary guided nature walks surrounded by Wet Tropics Rainforest and Great Barrier Reef.
Ph: 07 4098 5700 www.thalabeach.com.au

J Sweetwater Lodge
 Two outstanding self-contained private lodges in Julatten set on 160 acres bird-watcher's paradise. Habitats include rainforest, woodland, grassland and riparian. 5 minutes to Mt. Lewis National Park.
Ph: 0427 773 060 www.sweetwaterlodge.com.au

K Cassowary House
 Naturalists guest-house within World Heritage rainforest at Kuranda above Cairns. Ideal base for exploring coast and highlands. Cassowaries and Riflebirds are frequent visitors. Expert guides are available.
Ph: 07 4093 7318 www.cassowary-house.com.au

L Crater Lakes Rainforest Cottages
 "Where the wildlife comes to you". Self-contained cottages nestled in rainforest. Walking distance to Lake Eacham. Victoria's Riflebirds amongst the many visitors. Great location close to World Heritage Rainforest.
Ph: 07 4095 2322 www.craterlakes.com.au

M Atherton Tablelands Birdwatchers' Cabin
 Modern self-contained, well-appointed cabin, secluded in ecotone of tall sclerophyll forest and rainforest at 1000m elevation. Private walking trails, creeks. Great wildlife diversity, species lists on website.
Ph: 07 4201 0993
www.athertontablelandsbirdwatcherscabin.com.au

V Villa Marine Holiday Apartments
 Villa Marine Holiday Apartments Cairns, great location 15 min from Cairns at Yorkeys Knob Beach. Stay next to rainforest, 50m to beach and 5 min to great birding.
Ph: 07 4055 7158 www.villamarine.com.au

Cover photos: Jun Matsui, Keith & Lindsay Fisher, Phil Gregory

Trails

Tours and Guides for Birders

A Daintree Boatman Nature Tours
 Renowned birdwatching & photography cruises on the Daintree River. 2 hour personalised cruises conducted at dawn & dusk. Unique hybrid vessel with both outboard & electric motor used. 10 passenger max.
Ph: 0417 651 929 www.daintreerivertours.com.au

B Daintree River Wild Watch
 Decades of experience providing small personalised tours on the Daintree River. Excellent sunrise & sunset birdwatching & photographic opportunities. 10 swivel seats. Specialised photography tours available.
Ph: 0447 546 926 www.daintreeriverwildwatch.com.au

C Birdwatching Tropical Australia
 Doug Herrington (20 years local experience, SATOUR trained guide) offers day and multi-day birding and photographic tours of the Wet Tropics and Cape York. Small groups. Variable itineraries. Private tours.
Ph: 0418 757 288
www.birdwatchingtropicalaustralia.com.au

D Great Northern Birdwatching Tours
 Experienced North QLD birding guide, David Mead, specialises in small group, ½ day to multi-day adventures. Destinations include Cairns, Atherton Tablelands, Cape York and Queensland's North West.
Ph: 0411 348 120 www.greatnortherntours.com.au

E Cassowary Tours
 Expert guides offer a wide range of bird and natural history day trips or fully accommodated tours around Tropical North Queensland and Cape York Peninsula. Customised & photographic tours a speciality.
Ph: 0413 661 213 www.cassowarytours.com.au

F Alan's Wildlife Tours
 Half to multi-day private tours with a natural history generalist whose passions are birds and nocturnal mammals. Knowledgeable and personable, Alan can find those special birds at your pace.
Ph: 0408 953 786 www.alanswildlifetours.com.au

G Seastar Cruises (Cairns Pier)
 Seastars express cruise arrives at Michaelmas Cay first before other boats arrive to disturb the nesting birds. It offers a circumnavigation of the island where 38 species of seabird have been observed.
Ph: 07 4041 6218 www.seastarcruises.com.au

W Eyes on Wildlife
 Half day to multi-day birding & wildlife tours guided by naturalist and Wet Tropics specialist Patrick De Geest. Specific bird & mammal target tours all over Tropical Queensland.
Ph: 0439 817 214 www.eyesonwildlife.com.au

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-Dove and Pied Imperial Pigeon (Aug-April) and both

Bush and Beach Stone-Curlew.

2 Kingfisher Trail

Mossman & Daintree

Eight of Australia's nine species of kingfisher maybe found in

this area including the Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher.

This species can be found in northern Australia during the

summer months (November-April) where they nest in

arboreal termite mounds before returning to New Guinea

for the winter.

3 Honeyeater Trail

Julatten & Mt Lewis

20 species of honeyeater have been recorded in this area.

Wet Tropic endemics, Macleay's and Bridled Honeyeater,

found on Mt. Lewis.

4 Bustard Trail

Mt Carbine to Mareeba

The Australian Bustard can be found along this dry country

trail, especially at Maryfarms. Open woodland and several

wetlands ensure an excellent variety of bush and waterbirds

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. Ety

Bay is another reliable location for Southern Cassowary.

Stone Curlew Trail – Cairns & northern beaches



Beach Stone-curlew - Doug Herrington

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 Cattana Wetlands
Opened in 2009, this rehabilitated cane field and quarry is now a Nature Conservation Park and provides habitat for a great variety of bush and water birds. Accessed by either Yorkeys Knob Road or McGregor Road, Smithfield.

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 - Doug Herrington

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. 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



Bridled Honeyeater - Doug Herrington

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 - Patrick De Geest

19 Maryfarms
East Mary and West Mary Road, Maryfarms 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 Pickford Road
Dry country species such as, Squatter Pigeon, Brown Tree-creeper, Lemon-bellied Flycatcher, Weebill, Grey-crowned Babbler, and Black-throated Finch.

Catbird Trail – Kuranda to Mareeba



Spotted Catbird - Doug Herrington

23 Black Mountain Road – Kuranda National Park
Rainforest habitat close to Kuranda, with a good chance of Cassowary, Red-necked Crake, Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Superb Fruit-Dove, 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. For the fit and adventurous, a hike up into the hills behind the falls offers a wide range of mid- to high-altitude birds including Scarlet Honeyeater and even Golden Bowerbird.

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 - Atherton Birdwatchers Cabin

27 Henrietta Creek - Wooreooroan 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, 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 Hasties 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 Crater Lakes National Park – Lake Eacham and Lake Barrine
Walking tracks around these scenic lakes give good opportunities for most of the local endemics and a range of other species.

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



Cassowary - Patrick De Geest

37 Goldsborough Valley – Woorenooran National Park
Campground in lowland rainforest along Mulgrave River. Kearneys Falls track 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, egrets, herons and ibis feed in the swamplands.

39 Etty 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) & Licuala Fan Palm Walk (1.3km circuit) with link walk of 9km. Look for Southern Cassowary, Rose-crowned & Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Red-necked Crake, Chowchilla & Yellow-breasted Boatbill.

