



### Northern Giant Petrel, Twinnies Pelican and Seabird Rescue

Paula and Bridgette Powers have been rescuing sick and injured birds in south-east Queensland for more than 16 years, helping thousands of birds of 187 species. On 19th June, a Northern Giant Petrel was found exhausted on the beach at Tangalooma resort on Moreton Island. Paula and Bridgett at Twinnies Pelican and Seabird rescue arranged to take the bird into care. Nicknamed 'Lulu' by the finder, the petrel was underweight and in severe distress.

With expert care over the coming weeks, the bird recovered and gained weight. It was released on 11 Sep off Cape More-

ton. The bird flew strongly out to sea, a happy ending to a story that could have ended so differently. Twinnies is a 24-hour rescue and rehabilitation centre for sick, injured or orphaned birds located at Landsborough. It is run on a donation basis, and currently there is an urgent appeal for funding, so please consider donating to keep this source of help for distressed birds available in Brisbane. To donate, please visit [www.twinnies.com.au](http://www.twinnies.com.au). This is the first eBird-documented record of this species in Brisbane.

*Story by Richard Fuller*



*Northern Giant Petrel in care on 19th June. Note the reddish hue to the bill tip, separating it from the similar Southern Giant Petrel. Photograph courtesy of Twinnies Pelican and Seabird Rescue.*

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#### Highlights:

- Northern Giant Petrel on Moreton Island
- Documenting rare bird sightings
- Contributing to the Atlas of the Birds of Brisbane
- Identify the mystery bird
- Go birding at Koala Refuge!
- Australian Brushturkeys

### Bird news, July 2019

July continued a moderate winter in the Brisbane city environs, with a number of nice birds turning up throughout the month complemented by the usual suite of winter migrants and rare residents.

Perhaps the best bird of the month was a one-off sighting of a Red-winged Parrot by Leigh Burgess in Anstead on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Red-winged Parrots are very rare vagrants to the city from inland, with only a handful of



*Northern Giant Petrel in care on 19th June. Photograph courtesy of Twinnies Pelican and Seabird Rescue.*

## Bird news, continued

records scattered around the city. There is, as with most parrots, a chance that such birds are escapees but this is hard to confirm – so if you see one, be sure to document it as well as possible!

Winter-visiting Double-banded Plovers have been rather scarce this year. A few were at the Manly Wader Roost on the 19<sup>th</sup> (BW), but none were reported anywhere else in the city this month! This species is perhaps overlooked along the Brisbane foreshore, and they are much more common on Moreton Island than the mainland since they generally seem to prefer the sandier ocean beaches than the mudflats of the bay. Also at Manly Wader Roost, Brad Woodworth had 6 Lesser Crested Terns on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Australasian Gannets, another typical winter visitor to Brisbane were seen off Shorncliffe and Nudgee by several observers, as well as out off Moreton Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> (WM). A Brown Booby was also seen off Cape Moreton on the 12<sup>th</sup> (GN).

An Australian Spotted Crake was found at Kedron Brook Wetlands on the 28<sup>th</sup> (GDa, EL), another record of this nomadic species around Brisbane for the year. It is hard to discern if they are a rare resident or irregularly visiting the area. Lewin's Rails, a species that is definitely resident in a number of areas, were detected at Tinchi Tamba (GT), Banks Street Reserve (MGr), and Rickertt Road at Ransome (JCo), although as usual were difficult to see. A Black-necked Stork was at Oxley Creek Common on the 28<sup>th</sup> (JAS, WS) but the species was seen nowhere else this month.

Cotton Pygmy-Goose continued its strong year, and one wonders if this species is slowly becoming commoner in Brisbane. There



*Australasian Gannet off Shorncliffe Pier on 5th July. Photograph by Stephen Murray.*

were several birds present at Dowse Lagoon throughout the month, although none were seen anywhere else in the city. Dowse is easily the most reliable location in the region for this somewhat elusive species, although the Brisbane Entertainment Centre lagoons are also reliable, and much less frequently visited by birders. Similarly, Australasian Shovelers were also at Dowse Lagoon throughout the month, as well as a single bird found at the Port of Brisbane on the 7<sup>th</sup> (T&AB).

The month was somewhat lacklustre for diurnal birds of prey, although the usual species were out and about. A Little Eagle was at Banyo on the 5<sup>th</sup> (GT) and the airport on the 23<sup>rd</sup> (TH). One Black Falcon was at Oxley Creek Common on the 27<sup>th</sup> (GG). A Spotted Harrier was at Kedron Brook Wetlands on the 28<sup>th</sup> (JC), as well as a widely-twitched individual at Oxley Creek throughout the month.

Sooty Owls were observed on Mount Nebo Road on the 9<sup>th</sup> (CPu, TB) and 17<sup>th</sup> (LI, TP), as well as at Lawton Road on Mount Glorious on the 27<sup>th</sup> (EL, CB). An Australian Masked-Owl was also seen

on Mount Nebo Road on the same night. Likewise, Australasian Grass-Owls were at their usual haunt at Kedron Brook Wetlands throughout the month and were seen by several observers. A White-throated Nightjar was at JC Slaughter Falls on the 20<sup>th</sup> (TT). Although often thought of as a summer migrant, there are records of this species all year in Brisbane, and one wonders if it might actually be resident, albeit quieter in the winter and hence less detected.

Moving on to passerines, a Spotted Quail-thrush was at Gap Creek on the 6<sup>th</sup> (SP), a rare record of this species outside its known strongholds in the city, as well as Hawkesbury Road on the 16<sup>th</sup> (RG). It is presumably quite widespread through the eucalypt woodlands in the western portion of Brisbane, but birding coverage of this habitat is rather patchy and it is probably fair to say our understanding of the distribution of this species (and others such as Buff-rumped and Striated Thornbills) is incomplete. Little Grassbirds were at Sandy Camp Wetlands on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> (AN, CA), and Tinchi



## Bird news, continued

Tamba throughout the month by several observers.

Dusky Woodswallows appeared in small numbers in the west of the city, with birds present at Lake Manchester on several days throughout the month; this species appears to be a regular winter migrant to the very western edge of the city, with occasional birds being vagrants further east. The increased coverage of the Lake Manchester area since 2017 has resulted in a number of species being discovered to be regular visitors or scarce residents. Conversely, a Jacky Winter was seen at Gold Creek on the 15<sup>th</sup> (SP), but this species was interestingly not seen at any of its usual haunts further west around Kholo this month.

A Red Wattlebird was seen by Stephen Murray at Lake Manchester on the 8<sup>th</sup>, continuing the exceptional year for this species in the city. Birds have now been seen at more than half a dozen locations this year - a fascinating run of records! Black-chinned Honeyeaters were at their usual haunt in Lake Manchester on the 21<sup>st</sup> (SK, CP), as too were Fuscous Honeyeaters, seen throughout the month—the latter is another species that ranges quite widely, although patchily in the western woodlands, and would repay further study. A Fuscous Honeyeater was also seen at Enoggera Reservoir on the 6<sup>th</sup> (anon). On the other side of the city, Wayne Schulz had a White-cheeked Honeyeater at JC Trotter Memorial Park on the 14<sup>th</sup>, an unusual record of this species in mainland Brisbane.

All in all, an interesting, but not jaw-dropping winter month – hoping for an eventful spring!

*Round-up by Louis Backstrom, Richard Fuller and Sandra Gal-*

*lienne. Note that sightings reported here may or may not be confirmed, and records of rarities are pending acceptance by relevant rarities committees.*



*A Fuscous Honeyeater along Kholo Break to the east of Lake Manchester on 14th Jul (RAF). This species is widespread in the western woodlands, but curiously patchy in its distribution. It would repay further study to better understand its habitat requirements.*



*This pair of Long-billed Corellas were at Dowse Lagoon on 19th Jul (Upper photo: SM), a species that appears to be increasing in Brisbane. Look out for them, and be alert for apparent Little Corella hybrids (Lower photo: RAF).*

## eBird skills: Documenting a rare bird sighting in eBird

Documenting a notable bird sighting is exciting, but it can also be daunting. Sometimes it is difficult to know exactly what to write in the comments box, or what to give when you're asked about a bird sighting.

There are three key elements to documenting a rare bird sighting for Brisbane. Recognise it is rare, Describe the bird, and Eliminate confusion species.

- **Recognise.** If you browse sightings in eBird, you may have noticed notations like “\*\*Very rare,” “\*\*First Brisbane record!” or “\*\*MEGA!!!”. eBird encourages observers to indicate they

why a sighting is significant.

- **Describe.** This is the heart of bird documentation: what did it look or sound like? If you realize it is a rarity at the time of the sighting, take some time to make mental, if not physical, notes. A photo is obviously helpful, but not essential. See this helpful [article](#) by Dave Irons.

- **Eliminate similar species.** What could you confuse your species with? How did you know your bird was a Hoary-headed, not an Australasian Grebe? Some analysis of how similar species were eliminated will go a long way.

Finally, please ensure to submit official descriptions of any Queensland or national rarities to the appropriate rarities committee. This is in addition to eBird documentation to ensure the record is officially accepted.



*Hoary-headed Grebe at Kedron Brook Wetlands Reserve on 1st May 2013 (SM).*

### Mystery photo



*Can you identify this bird? The picture was taken in Brisbane. Answer next month.*

Last month's challenge was a somewhat drab passerine, the stuff of nightmares! The sharp bill and yellowish underparts point to a thornbill of some kind, but which one? The unstreaked underparts rule out Brown and Striated, and the pale iris is noticeable. This really only leaves Yellow-rumped and Buff-rumped. The former should show a black-and-white speckled forehead, and a clear white supercilium. This is a Buff-rumped Thornbill.



*Buff-rumped Thornbill at Kholo Break, Lake Manchester on 14th July 2019 (RAF).*

## Contributing to the Atlas

If you can, please donate your time and expertise to help make the *Atlas of the Birds of Brisbane* the best it can be. For full details, see the [Contributing](#) section of the *Atlas* website—<http://brisbanebirds.com>. Here are some of the key things you can do to help create this landmark resource.

Go birdwatching in the Brisbane City Council area and enter your observations on eBird, a free tool for recording bird observations. All eBird records in Brisbane will be automatically includ-

ed in the *Atlas*. If you have old records stored away on notebooks and such, you can enter them into eBird too!

Write some text for the *Atlas*, or edit and improve the existing text. Full instructions are in the [Contributing](#) section of the *Atlas* website, or contact an administrator for a Word document that you can edit.

Contact the *Atlas* administrators with any questions or suggestions: Louis Backstrom

*“All eBird records in Brisbane will be automatically included in the Atlas”*

(louis.backstrom@gmail.com) or Richard Fuller (r.fuller@uq.edu.au)



# Undersurveyed Atlas Square: Koala Refuge

Brisbane is divided into 2 x 2 km Atlas squares. Each square has a target of 12 birdwatching visits in each of the four seasons.

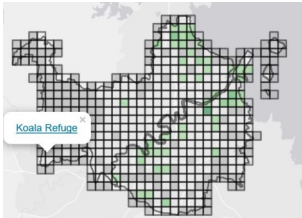
Lots of semi-pristine open woodland here in the extreme south west of Brisbane. Try birding on the



Only 29 species known from this square so far.

north side of the river from the road, or walk through the woodland if you can get access, then bird on the south side, which has a couple of tracks running through it. Huge po-

tential here, so there's no excuses. Some night birding could also be very productive here. Download the survey sheet [here](#).



	Complete checklists	Total minutes	Total km		Species	Complete checklists	Incomplete checklists
Summer (Dec–Feb)	2/12	10/120	0/1	Fiona and Glynn Jackwitz	24	1	0
Autumn (Mar–May)	1/12	60/120	2.6/1	Richard Fuller	12	2	0
Winter (Jun–Aug)	0/12	0/120	0/1	Brad Woodworth	1	0	1
Spring (Sep–Nov)	0/12	0/120	0/1				
Total	3	70	2.6				

## From the Atlas: Australian Brushturkey



Widespread and increasing breeding resident. More records toward the end of the year, coinciding with the breeding season and building of incubation mounds. Not of conservation concern. Photo by Richard Fuller, Belmont Hills Bushland, 4 Jun 2017.

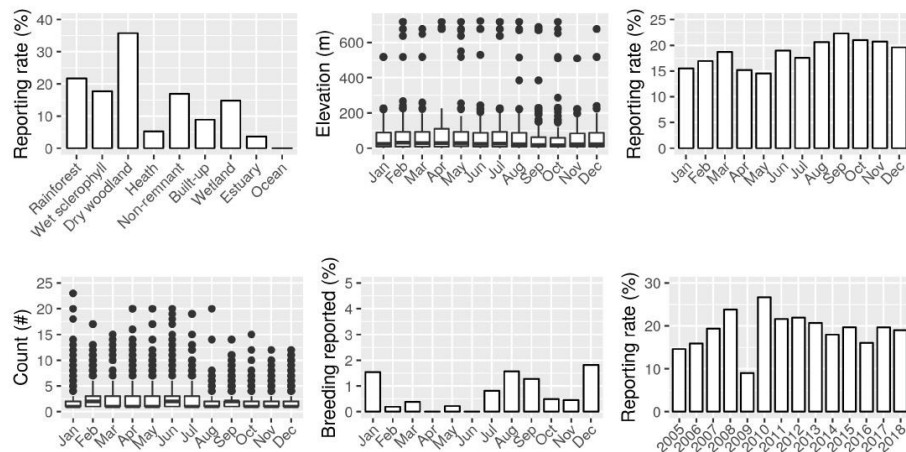
Each month we will reproduce a draft species account from the Atlas. If you spot errors, or see any additions that can be made, contact an editor—see back cover. Or email Richard Fuller (r.fuller@uq.edu.au) for a Word Document that you can edit.

The Australian Brushturkey is a common sight in parks and gardens for many Brisbane residents, with dark grey plumage set off wonderfully with yellow wattles and a red face and neck. They are well known for their impressive earthmoving abilities, capable of

moving enormous quantities of leaf litter to form an incubation mound for their eggs. They are common across nearly all of Brisbane and appear to be increasing in abundance.

A common species of mixed habi-

## From the Atlas continued...



tats across nearly all of Brisbane, Australian Brushturkeys are an excellent example of a species that has successfully adapted to suburban living. They are an increasingly common sight in parks and gardens, as well as remaining widespread across remnant habitats, including rainforest, wet sclerophyll and dry woodland.

Brushturkeys are widely distributed across all of mainland Brisbane, having been reported from nearly every surveyed Atlas square. They never occur in large numbers, with most records being of single birds or pairs, although groups of up to ten are not uncommon. Breeding has been reported from more than two dozen locations, with the majority of these being of nest building (NB) behaviour or recently fledged young (FL), both conspicuous and easily detectable activities. Counts of over 15 birds are known from 4 locations, with a high count of 23 birds at Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary in January 2016 (Drucker 2016).

Brushturkeys are present in Brisbane all year-round, with a slight increase in reporting rate over spring and early summer, coinciding with the breeding season when adults are more active and conspicuous when mound-building, and chicks (which are precocious) and juveniles wandering widely in search of suitable habitat (Göth & Vogel 2003). While Brushturkeys

are somewhat less threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation than many other local species, they are at risk of predation by domestic pets, with newly hatched chicks especially vulnerable to cats and dogs (Jones & Everding 1991). Furthermore, human-animal conflict arising from this species propensity to dig up and destroy gardens continues to create problems for this species' survival in an urban environment (Göth et al. 2006).

### Distribution and Habitat

Australian Brushturkeys are widely distributed across Brisbane, with the exception of Moreton Island, where the species has only been reported once. They occur across the entire elevational gradient, although most reports are from below 100m. Birds have been reported in all habitats except for ocean, but are most common in rainforest, wet sclerophyll and dry woodland (>20% of all checklists), and less common in non-remnant and wetland environs. They are only occasional visitors to heath, built-up and estuarine habitats.

The geographic distribution of Brushturkeys in Brisbane is presumably driven by the availability of leaf-litter and ground scrub for the birds to use as a food source and as matter to be used in nest-building. This explains the species' absence on Moreton Island, alt-

hough given the low number of checklists submitted for the Island it is possible there are localised populations of this species present there.

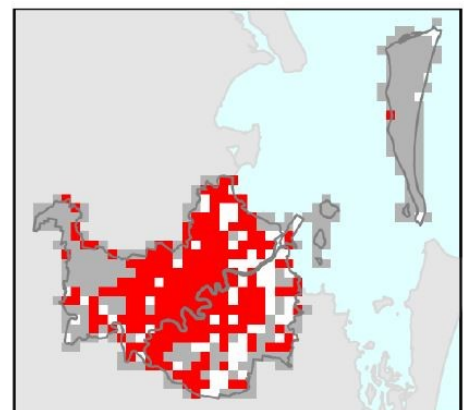
The distribution of Australian Brushturkeys within Brisbane shows no discernible variation across the year, with the same areas inhabited in every season. Breeding has been reported from many sites around Brisbane.

### Seasonality

Given the conspicuous nature of mound-building and the precociousness of Brushturkey chicks, it is not surprising that this species has more breeding records than most others within the Brisbane area. Breeding activity has been reported in nearly every month, with a small peak over Jul-Sep followed by a slightly larger one in Dec-Jan. The exact reasons for this are unclear, although it is possibly a peak in nest-building and associated activities followed by a peak in chicks hatching and wandering. Despite the relatively significant amount of breeding data already available for this species, it would be good to collect additional data to be able to make finer-scale conclusions about this species' breeding season and habits from within the LGA.

### Trends

Over the Atlas period, the report-



## From the Atlas continued...

ing rate for Australia Brushturkeys has remained relatively stable, albeit with a noticeably low reporting rate in 2009 that is as yet unexplained. However, this species is widely reported in the literature, e.g. (Jones & Everding 1991), to have significantly increased in abundance within Brisbane over the 1970s-1990s. It would seem that this explosion in population has now levelled out, with Brushturkeys now occupying most suburban parks and gardens as well as many bushland reserves.

Despite this increase in population, these birds are still somewhat threatened by anthropogenic activities, with domestic pets being a key one. Loose cats and dogs will predate chicks (and sometimes even adults), threatening the long-term survival of the species. Furthermore, many landowners are increasingly irritated by adult Brushturkeys digging up their gardens for use in nesting mounds, creating human-wildlife conflict that can result in negative outcomes for the birds. However, for the moment these threats seem to be well-controlled and the population appears stable.

### Information Gaps

- Determine the distribution of this species on Moreton Island
- Collect some more breeding data.

### Key Conservation Needs

- Educate landowners about the threats to the species from pets
- Protect bushland and remnant habitats from being cleared

### Contributors to Species Account

- Louis Backstrom

### References

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*“If you spot errors, or see any additions that can be made, contact an editor—see back cover.”*



## Birding Brisbane: Birds and Birdwatching in the River City

We would love to be able to use your photographs from eBird in future issues of Birding Brisbane. Please email Richard Fuller (r.fuller@uq.edu.au) to give us permission to reproduce your images directly from eBird.

**brisbanebirds.com**



Birding Brisbane is a monthly newsletter aimed at sharing information about birds and birdwatching in Brisbane. It is a companion project to the Atlas of the Birds of Brisbane, which is compiling all known information about the birds of Brisbane into a single reference work. The Atlas uses eBird data. Any eBird records submitted in Brisbane will automatically be incorporated into the Atlas.

The Atlas is being written by the birdwatching community, and is freely available at <http://brisbanebirds.com>

The geographic area encompassed by this newsletter is the Brisbane Local Government Authority boundary, and all coordinates offshore that are closer to Brisbane LGA than any other LGA.

Please feel free to contact the *Atlas* editors with any questions, suggestions or offers of help: Louis Backstrom (louis.backstrom@gmail.com); Richard Fuller (r.fuller@uq.edu.au)

## List of Observers

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*Buff-rumped Thornbill, Lake Manchester, 14 Jul 2019 (Stephen Murray)*