

Birding Brisbane



Birds and Birdwatching in the River City

Volume 1, Issue 9

Oxley Creek Transformation Project

In 2016, Brisbane City Council announced the \$100 million Oxley Creek Transformation Project, which is set to radically change the configuration and design of the parklands along the Oxley Creek Corridor from the Brisbane River to Larapinta. The stated goals of the project are to:

- Reduce the impacts of industry and development on the creek and its surrounds
- Embed flood resilience into the corridor
- Grow its rich network of green spaces
- Transform Oxley Creek corridor into a vast multi-use parkland

- Attract investment to unlock its economic potential
- Collaborate with business, industry, government and the community.

The Master Plan for the re-development has now been released, and can be downloaded from the project website at <http://oxleycreek.com.au>. Also available are a number of precinct plans for individual projects, including a new Archerfield Wetlands Parkland.

The Friends of Oxley Creek Common played a big role in influencing the plans, and this is cer-



Chestnut-breasted Mannikin at Oxley Creek Common. Photograph on 15th Aug 2018 by Richard Fuller.

tainly one to engage with as the development progresses.

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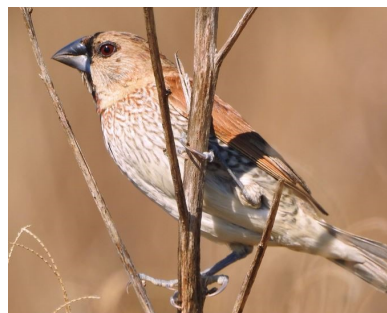
Highlights:

- Wood Sandpiper in Brisbane
- August pelagic seabirding trip
- New media management tool in eBird
- Contributing to the Atlas of the Birds of Brisbane
- Identify the mystery bird
- Go birding in Clifton Hills!
- White-headed Pigeon

Bird news, August 2019

August rounded out a moderate winter for Brisbane's birds, with a suite of nice species seen throughout the month without anything astounding. Probably the month's best bird was a Superb Fruit-Dove at

Gold Creek Reservoir on the 3rd of August, found by Brandon Hewitt (and unfortunately not successfully twitched by anyone). Notably, this is the second record of this species in the city for this year – although



Scaly-breasted Munias appeared at Oxley Creek Common, where this one was photographed on 30th Aug by Tim Norris.

Bird news, continued

neither bird was observed twice! Incredibly, a Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove was also seen this month outside of its normal haunts – in suburban Tarragindi on the 19th by Dan Pagotto.

Shorebirds began to trickle back onto our coastline through the month, with records of several summer species along the coast. Lingering Double-banded Plovers were seen on 3rd at Manly (SH, BW) and on the 4th at the Port of Brisbane (JCo). A Brisbane vagrant was found by Chris Attewell in the form of a stunning Wood Sandpiper on the 14th at Kiana-wah Road Wetlands – yet another brilliant species for this site! Hopefully this is a sign of a great summer of shorebirds yet to come...

The Sunshine Coast pelagic on 29th August spent time in Brisbane waters, where Providence Petrels, Hutton's Shearwaters and large number of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters were observed around the boat. See p4-5 for the full write-up.



Good numbers of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters were at the continental shelf on 29th August. This bird shows a strongly bicoloured bill, reminiscent of Flesh-footed Shearwater, but otherwise has all the features of a Wedge-tailed, with relatively thin bill, narrow forward-held wings, and long tail.



Dan Pagotto managed to grab a picture of this Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove in the suburban streets of Tarragindi on 19th August. Just goes to show that interesting birds can turn up anywhere!

A relatively quiet month for water birds was kept alive by Cotton Pygmy-Geese and Australian Shoveler at Dowse throughout the month, and a Black-necked Stork touring around the city, seen at numerous locations. It was similarly quiet for birds of prey, although a Black Falcon was seen at Oxley Creek Common on the 24th (JAS, WS), as well as Little Eagle at Dowse (GT) and Lake Manches-

ter (TB), and Spotted Harrier at Sandy Camp (EL).

Parrots of unknown origin were around, with notable records including a possibly wild Eastern Rosella at the Port of Brisbane on the 3rd (T&A B), a probably escaped Budgerigar in Kenmore on the 21st (DB) and the long-staying Red-rumped Parrot also at the Port throughout the month showing well for several observers. In fact, 31st August was to be the last day of its three-month stay.

The winter of Red Wattlebirds finished with a bang, with records from Gold Creek (NL) and Toohey Forest (NH) rounding out an excellent season for this rare nomad to Brisbane. A White-cheeked Honeyeater was at Lake Manchester between 14th and 28th. This latter species is usually found in heathland habitats, so it is interesting that there appears to be a small population or lingering birds inland here.

Also in the Lake Manchester region, Jacky Winters and Dusky Woodswallows put on a good show at several locations throughout the month, and Spotted Quail-thrush

Bird news, continued

were also recorded at a handful of spots in the western suburbs too.

Finally, Scaly-breasted Munias turned up at Oxley Creek Common again, and hopefully will stick around for the spring just as they did last year. A sign of good things to come?

Round-up by Louis Backstrom, Richard Fuller and Sandra Gallienne. Note that sightings reported here may or may not be confirmed, and records of rarities are pending acceptance by relevant rarities committees.



This magnificent Wood Sandpiper was found by Chris Attewell at Kiana-wah Road Wetlands on 14th August. It was still present the next day, but then departed. This species is a sparse migrant to Australia, and very rare in Brisbane, not occurring annually. Photo by Ged Tranter.



Beautiful study of a Weebill at Lake Manchester on 20th August, by Stephen Murray. This species is very scarce in Brisbane, occurring regularly only in the far western woodlands, around Kholo and Lake Manchester. More complete investigation of the western woodlands might turn up further populations of this species in Brisbane, which is present year-round, but most frequently reported between March and May.

Sunshine Coast Pelagic Report, 29th August 2019

The winter Sunshine Coast pelagic trip scheduled for 14th July had to be cancelled at the last minute owing to problems with the boat. Unfortunately the replacement trip could not occur until 29th August, which is later in the winter season than is ideal. Still, our intrepid band of 22 seabirders gathered expectantly at the private dock in Mooloolaba with plenty of time to spare, and we got underway at 0615. We motored slowly up the Mooloolah River, then exited the seaway with a light easterly wind in our faces. The weather had been less than hopeful in the run-up to the trip, with mostly westerly winds, although they had swung to the east in the last two days.

Good numbers of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, and couple of Australasian Gannets were just offshore, but for the most part we focused on speeding towards the continental shelf. Slightly further offshore a nice subadult Brown Booby gave us a close, albeit brief flypast, and we saw our first Hutton's Shearwaters of the day. But more attention-grabbing were big numbers of Humpback Whales, on their migration from Great Barri-



Subadult Brown Booby, photograph by Richard Fuller.



Our vessel, Crusader 1, at the berth waiting for the participants to embark. The vessel comfortably accommodates 23 birders, with ample seating and handrails throughout.

er Reef calving grounds their Antarctic feeding quarters. There were many breaching animals, and we couldn't help but stop to watch the spectacular show! We saw at least 18 different animals during the course of the journey out, a memorable experience.

After a couple of hours we entered Brisbane waters and eventually arrived at the continental shelf in around 800 metres of water. We cut the engines and began deploying burley from the back of the boat. The weather was reasonably calm with only light variable winds. A steady stream of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters came to investigate the burley, but none of the birds seemed especially hungry and in general birds didn't linger long.

Presently a superb Providence Petrel arrived, followed by about four more dur-

ing the drift, but similarly these birds didn't linger. As breeding species, the Providence Petrel is endemic to Australia, breeding only on Lord Howe Island and Philip Island (just south of Norfolk Island). Providence Petrels are winter breeders, and wandering birds typically range off the east coast of Australia between March and November, after which they migrate to the northern Pacific (although occasional birds can be seen at any time of year). Listed as globally threatened by the IUCN, the Lord Howe Island population is estimated at around 32,000 pairs, while only 10-100 pairs survive on Philip Island. Fortunately, the successful eradication of pigs from Lord Howe Island means that the species is now increasing there.

Presently several Hutton's Shearwaters appeared, and it was interesting to see good numbers of this species on the continental shelf—we are accustomed to seeing them close inshore on the Sunshine Coast pelagic, but much less so on the continental shelf. At this time of year, birds are on their way



Series of excellent images of Humpback Whales breaching in the Coral Sea off Mooloolaba on 29th August 2019. We saw at least 18 different individuals, and most were actively breaching or slapping their pectoral fins onto the water surface. A spectacular show! Photographs by Gillian Matthew.



Providence Petrel in the Coral Sea off Mooloolaba (Brisbane waters) on 29th August 2019. Photograph by Gillian Matthew.

back from their winter range around much of the coastline of Australia to their breeding grounds in the mountains of South Island, New Zealand.

The Crested Terns were hungry and voraciously feeding on burley, but the petrels were not super interested, and eventually it was time to restart the engines and commence our journey back. Several more Humpback Whales were encountered on the way back, but there was nothing new bird-wise.

We arrived back into port at 3.30. A fairly quiet day on the sea, but livened up by a spectacular show from the Humpback Whales.

Our spring trips are on 27th Oct and 24th Nov. Contact r.fuller@uq.edu.au if you interested in coming along.

Story by Richard Fuller

SPECIES: Total (max. at once)
Crested Tern 52 (7)
Providence Petrel 5 (2)
Pterodroma sp 1 (1)
Wedge-tailed Shearwater 148 (27)
Hutton's Shearwater 29 (6)
Australasian Gannet 2 (1)
Brown Booby 1 (1)
Humpback Whale 18 (6)

PARTICIPANTS:

Margie Baker, Tyde Bands, Sarah Beavis, John Brinnand, Susan Brinnand, Robert Bush, Andrew Christodoulou, Patrick Colley, Richard Fuller, Lenn Isidore, Meg Johnson, Brian Johnson, Wayne Kroll, James Martin, Gillian Matthew, Tomas Poch, Jean-Cesar Puechmarin, Julie Sarna, David Simpson, Carolyn Stewart, Jamie Walker, Dylan Westaway.



Participants aboard Crusader I on the August 2019 Sunshine Coast pelagic (photo: RF).

eBird skills: New way to upload and manage media

In November 2015, the Macaulay Library and eBird joined forces—creating a way for us to upload photos and sounds directly to eBird checklists and have them archived in the Macaulay Library. In these past ~4 years, eBirders have uploaded 13.5 million photos and 300,000 audio recordings. These media—*your* media—have supported the development of exciting new tools like [Illustrated Checklists](#), [Explore Species](#), and thousands of Merlin Bird ID species accounts.

The new eBird process is optimized for adding audio and photos to your checklist while giving you the ability to add more information for each photo or audio file,

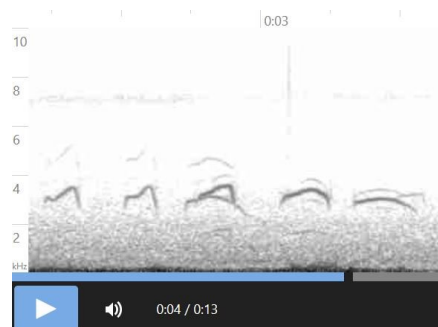
which helps you find exactly what you are looking for and makes the Macaulay Library even more valuable.

New features

- Editing info for multiple photos/audio at once (shift and command/control while clicking)
- New tagging tools for behaviors, sound types, and more
- Filtered views for quick access to (i) only the birds on the checklist, (ii) species with audio, or (iii) species with photos
- Option to add background species in photos and audio recordings

- Quickly apply your audio recorder gear to all your recordings on a checklist

The new system also neatly organises all the media, and has a nice, clean feel to it. Further help [here](#).



Michael Daley's sound recording of King Quail at Kedron Brook Wetlands on 18th November 2018.

Mystery photo



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

Last month's challenge was a superficially nondescript small passerine. Careful inspection of the bird reveals a sharp bill, and this combined with the overall shape of the bird indicates that this is thornbill, but which one? The bird has a distinct yellow wash to the unstreaked underparts, and its grey-brown forehead is flecked with pale marks. These features rule out Brown and Yellow-rumped Thornbills. Yellow Thornbill would show an orange wash to the throat, and black-and-white streaked ear coverts. This bird is a Buff-rumped Thornbill, locally common in Brisbane's western woodlands.



Buff-rumped Thornbill at Kholo Bushland on 14th Jul 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.

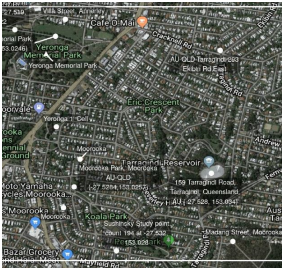
Contact the *Atlas* administrators with any questions or suggestions: Louis Backstrom

"All eBird records in Brisbane will be automatically included in the Atlas"

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

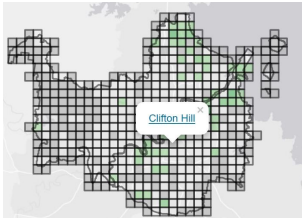
Undersurveyed Atlas Square: Clifton Hills

Lots to do here! An easily accessible Atlas square in high density suburbia, yet with several interesting-looking bushland patches. The far north end of Toohey Forest just about sneaks into this square, and explorations into the trails off Madang Street should be mapped to this Atlas square, if you keep to the Fim-



Only 36 species known from this square so far.

briata Track once in the forest. Exploring whether some parts of the bushland around Tar-ragindi Reservoir are accessible would be worthwhile, as would exploring any number of the small suburban parks in this square, even if for a series of 5-



min point counts. Just west of the Ipswich Rd / Beaudesert Rd junction the Moolabin Creek parklands look to be well worth a visit.

Download the survey sheet [here](#).

	Complete checklists	Total minutes	Total km		Species	Complete checklists	Incomplete checklists
ummer (Dec–Feb)	1/12	44/120	0.5/1	Andrew Ross	20	0	3
autumn (Mar–May)	0/12	0/120	0/1	Fuller Lab	12	2	0
Vinter (Jun–Aug)	1/12	60/120	0.5/1	Roger and Stephanie Ford	11	0	5
pring (Sep–Nov)	2/12	10/120	0/1	Peter Kyne	9	1	0
total	4	114	1	Dali Lin_Y	8	1	0

From the Atlas: White-headed Pigeon



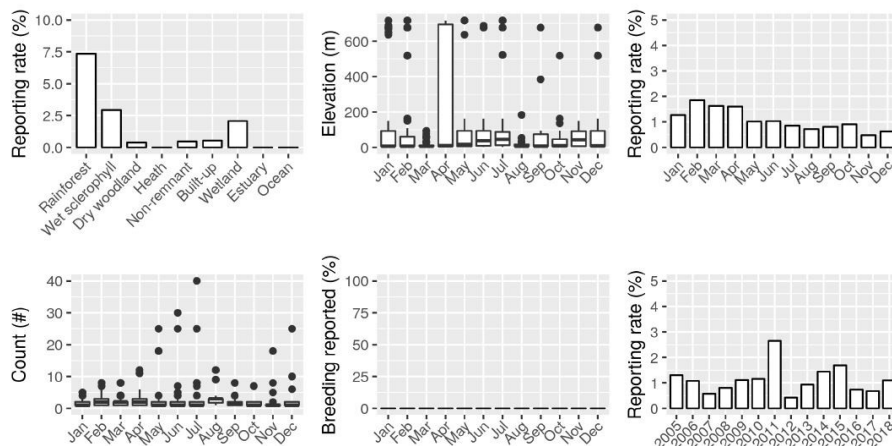
Uncommon to locally common resident of rainforest and wetter forest regions in the west of the city. More records toward the start of the year, with reporting rate declining from February onward, reasons unclear. Not of conservation concern. Photo by Richard Fuller at D'Aguilar National Park, 11th Jan 2018.

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.

A distinctively-plumaged, large species of pigeon, the White-headed Pigeon is Australia's only native extant representative of the widespread *Columba* genus. Birds have a white head and body and dark grey wings and tail and are easy to identify. Somewhat gregar-

ious, flocks of up to a dozen are not uncommon, with counts of as many as 40 birds reported. This species is best described as locally common and localised within Brisbane, although it may be more widespread in the north west than current data suggest.

From the Atlas continued...



Widely distributed along the east coast of Australia from Cairns down to Melbourne, White-headed Pigeons are a common species of rainforest and denser vegetation across their range, although within Brisbane they are somewhat uncommon. A distinctive bird, the only real potential ID contenders are aberrantly-plumaged [Feral Pigeons](#) with similar colouration - for example descendants of the [Turbit](#) breed.

Birds are quite gregarious within Brisbane, often found in small flocks of up to a dozen birds, although the average count is only of 2.5 birds per reporting checklist, and most checklists only report one bird. The high count is of 40 birds at Aspley in July 2018 (Lambert 2018), and counts of more than 10 birds have come from 10 widely spread locations around the city, including Mount Glorious, Brookfield, Mount Crosby and Sherwood. This would tend to indicate that flocks move around widely, most likely in search of fruiting trees to feed on. The species is widely distributed across the elevational gradient in Brisbane, having occurred from sea level to above 600m. There are no breeding records of this species in Brisbane, although it is likely that birds do breed locally - more work is needed here. Birds are present in Brisbane all year-round, although there is a notable decrease in the reporting rate from February to December.

Although this species is quite dependent on wetter forest habitats, which are threatened by modification and destruction across the range, birds appear to be relatively well-adapted to artificial habitats and moderately well-suited to suburban living, with numerous reports of birds in urban parks and gardens. As a result, this species' current status within Brisbane appears to be stable. Nonetheless, care is needed to preserve large tracts of suitable habitat for this species, such as that in D'Aguilar National Park.

Distribution and Habitat

White-headed Pigeons are a relatively localised species within Brisbane, being more or less restricted in their regular distribution to the wetter forests of Brisbane's western suburbs. Given much of the habitat that they are known to prefer (rainforest and wet sclerophyll) lies in the scarcely-surveyed Camel's Head and Body, the true range of this species in Brisbane is somewhat unclear at the moment, but likely covers most of the city west of Oxley/Sherwood. There are very few records from the north, east or south of the city, although odd feeding flocks or wandering individuals do turn up in the suburbs. The species has been reported just once from Moreton Island (Michael 2005), but this record lacks verification; the species is not known from the island historically

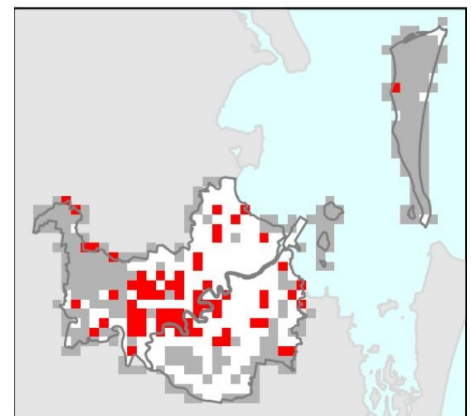
(Vernon & Martin 1975) or from other databases such as [Birddata](#), so is at best a rare visitor to the bay.

Within Brisbane, birds are widely distributed across the elevational gradient, with the majority of records coming from the lowland below about 100m, but numerous records higher up, as high as Brisbane's summit over 600m. This is probably reflective of the distribution of suitable habitat for this species - wet forests are found at all elevations in Brisbane, and cover the highest mountains in the region (such as Mount Glorious and Mount Nebo). Similarly, the geographic distribution of White-headed Pigeons across Brisbane is presumably mostly driven by the availability of such habitats.

The distribution of birds within the city shows no clear seasonal variation, with approximately the same areas occupied throughout the year, although with some variation. It is however likely (given records across the whole of suburban Brisbane) that birds wander somewhat across the city in search of optimal habitat and fruiting trees, although more fine-scale monitoring than is currently available is needed to confirm this hypothesis.

Seasonality

The seasonal abundance of White-headed Pigeons in Brisbane shows



Threat status	Brisbane status
<i>IUCN</i> : Least Concern	<i>eBird records</i> : 506
<i>National</i> : Not listed	<i>Atlas squares</i> : 70
<i>Queensland</i> : Not listed	<i>Reporting rate</i> : 1%

a notable level of variation, with a marked decline in reporting rate over the year. Peak reporting rate is in February (at just under 2% of all complete checklists), and drops off steadily until November–December, when the reporting rate is well under 1%. The cause for this is unclear, but may be a reflection of birds moving around either locally (e.g. up and down the mountains, as is seen in other species) or more widely around the region. More work is needed here.

There are no breeding reports of this species in Brisbane, a surprising result given that birds are present year-round in the city (despite the aforementioned variance). As such the local breeding season is not yet known; it would be excellent to collect more information about where and when our local birds breed.

Trends

The reporting rate year-to-year for this species has been somewhat variable over the *Atlas* period, with annual rates as low as 0.5% and as high as 2.5%. The specific causes of such variation are unknown, but may be a result of variations in the number and abundance of fruiting trees, observer patterns and behaviours, or other factors. Fortunately, however, the long-term trend appears stable, with no clear decline or increase in the species' abundance. White-headed Pigeons are not of any significant conservation concern in the sense that Brisbane's population is rather peripheral to the main distribution of the species across the eastern forests of Australia, and the population appears

to be fairly stable over time. However, the species is partially threatened by destruction of habitat across its range, and care is needed to preserve the habitat of this species within Brisbane to safeguard against any declines in population.

Information Gaps

- Collect information on any local movements undertaken by this species
- Collect more records of this species in Moreton Bay and in the Camel's Head

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

- Determine the causes for the decline in reporting rate over the course of the year
- Determine the underlying causes of annual variation in abundance
- Collect breeding information for this species

Key Conservation Needs

- Protect key areas of wet forest in the western suburbs

Contributors to Species Account

Louis Backstrom

References

Lambert J (2018) eBird Checklist: <http://ebird.org/view/checklist/S47337982>.

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Vernon D & Martin J (1975) Birds of moreton island and adjacent waters. *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum*, 17, 329–33.

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

BW Brad Woodworth; DB Danielle Bourke; EL Elliot Leach; GT Ged Tranter; JCo Jon Coleman; JAS Jo-Anne Schulz; NH Neil Humphris; NL Nick Leseberg; SH Sandra Harding; T&AB Terry & Audrey Burgess; TB Tyde Bands; WS Wayne Schulz.



Striated Pardalote, Nudgee Beach, 24 Aug 2019 (Hayley Alexander)