



NATURE TERRITORY

May 2010

Newsletter of the Northern Territory Field Naturalists Club Inc.

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Meetings are generally held on the second Wednesday of every month, commencing at 7:45 PM, in Blue1.14 (Business Faculty Building) on the Casuarina Campus of Charles Darwin University.

Subscriptions are on a financial-year basis and are: Families/Institutional - \$30; Singles - \$25; Concessions - \$15. Discounts are available for new members – please contact us.



This striking arboreal gecko *Gekko vittatus* (photographer Carla Eisemberg) was encountered by Steve Reynolds in the Kikori River region of Papua New Guinea – see report on page 6.

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Club activities

May meeting – Wednesday 12 May, 7:45pm. Blue1.14 (Business Building), CDU.

Stuart Young

Meerkats, Mongooses and More in the Kalahari



In March 2010 Stuart was lucky enough to visit his younger sister at the Kuruman River Reserve in the Southern Kalahari. The Reserve is a research station shared by Cambridge and Zurich Universities. During his short stay, he spent several days rising before the sun and helping out on a couple of research projects. One project focused on Meerkats (as seen on the documentary 'Meerkat Manor') and the other on the Slender Mongoose (as yet no Hollywood contract). The Meerkat Project is a long term (17 year) project which aims to discover more about the evolution of cooperative behaviour. The Zurich project aims to discover more about the biology and what part cooperative behaviour plays in Slender Mongoose society. Stuart also found a little bit of spare time to learn about other

projects that have been run in the past and to meet some of the other animals and birds that call the Kalahari home... well the green bit of it anyway.



May field trip – Weekend of 15-16 May. **Natural history survey, Crab Claw Island.**

Last month's newsletter invited members to participate in this survey. The response was so good that all available places for this excursion have now been taken up. We will be contacting people who have already registered to give them more details, including confirmation of the meeting time for briefing at Crab Claw on Saturday 15th May – likely to be 9.00am, which will mean an early start from Darwin. If you have already registered and have not received more information by 10 May, please contact Sherry Prince, who is now the coordinator for this excursion, on mobile 0438 072 394 or by email sherry.prince@cdu.edu.au. Please note the new coordinator for this excursion.



Future events

June 2010 meeting Wednesday 9 June. Ian Morris: *Lord Howe Island*.

June 2010 field trip Saturday 12 June (to be confirmed). *Night critters of Charles Darwin NP*.

July 2010 meeting Wednesday 14 July. Greg Miles: *Captive breeding of Australian wildlife*.

September 2010 meeting Wednesday 8 September. Judit Szabo: *Bird surveys in Venezuela*.

November 2010 meeting Wednesday 10 November. Azlan: *Mangrove birds*.

Top End Native Plant Society activities

20 May 2010 Jan Seatonberry will speak on sketching, painting and photographing plants.

General meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of the month at the Marrara Christian College, corner Amy Johnson Ave. and McMillans Road, and commence at 7:30pm (speaker at 8pm).

For more information, visit the website <http://www.topendnativeplants.org.au/index.php> or contact Russell Dempster on 8983 2131.

Club notices

Welcome to new committee member: Peter Holbery has agreed to serve on the committee for the duration of the Club year. While Peter has lived in the Top End he has become a true 'Renaissance' naturalist. We hope he will be able to expand the Club's horizons with his local knowledge.



Welcome to new members: Marianne & Graeme Fitch, Erica Garcia & Jon Clark, Prue Barnard, Chris Hall, Duncan Buckle & family, Susan & John Warburton, John Westaway, John Rawsthorne.



Thank you

The previous issue was proof-read by **Fiona Douglas** and collated and mailed by **Susan Jacups**. It was printed by **Tida Nou** and **Don Franklin** using equipment very kindly made available by **Collections, Biodiversity & Biological Parks** from the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts & Sport, and the **School for Environmental Research** at Charles Darwin University.



Club Web-site and Newsletter

Anyone who has visited the web-site recently will have noticed its new fresh image. Club and committee member **Tissa Ratnayeke** has been working hard on this with, the committee thinks, great success. He has now taken over web-site editing from **Graham Brown** who is concentrating on various natural history publications. We now have a clear theme running through the web-pages and carried through into our revamped publicity brochure and membership form. The newsletter has also undergone some changes, especially noticeable in the colour version, bringing it more into line with the new look and hopefully making it more attractive. Let us know what you think of the changes, especially to the newsletter!

Contributions for the newsletter

Sightings, reports, travelogues, reviews, photographs, sketches, news, comments, opinions, theories , anything relevant to natural history is always welcome. Please forward material to Don at eucalypt@octa4.net.au or the Club's postal address, or contact him on 8948 1293. [*Don is currently away so contributions can also be sent to Fiona Douglas, temporary stand-in editor, contact email fiona.douglas@octa4.net.au; phone 8985 4179*]

Deadline for the June newsletter: Friday May 21.



Club library

The Club's journal and book collection is available to members. Lists of holdings can be found on our web-site: <http://sites.google.com/site/ntfieldnaturalists/library>. The library is housed in two sections:

Books, reports and CDs: at the medical clinic of Dr. Lyn Reid in the Rapid Creek Business Village. This can be accessed directly between 9 AM and 2:30 PM Tuesday to Thursday, and 4–6 PM on Tuesday, or indirectly by phoning Lyn at work on 8985 3250.

Journals: in the office of Don Franklin at CDU Casuarina (Red 1.2.34 = room 31.2.34). These can be accessed directly during working hours, or by ringing Don on 8946 6976 (w) or 8948 1293 (h).



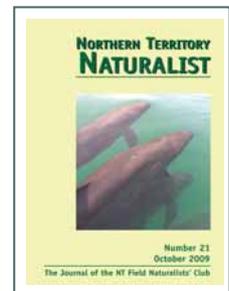
Northern Territory Naturalist

The Editorial Committee of the Club's journal, the *Northern Territory Naturalist*, is now calling for manuscripts for issue no. 22. The journal publishes works concerning any aspect of the natural history and ecology of the Northern Territory or adjacent areas of northern Australia. and may include Research Papers (Articles or Short Notes), Reviews, Species Profiles and Book Reviews.

The *Northern Territory Naturalist* is a registered, peer-reviewed journal (ISSN 0155-4093) and is recognised as a Category C publication by the Australian Research Council (http://www.arc.gov.au/era/era_journal_list.htm). Complete author instructions may be downloaded from our web-site: <http://sites.google.com/site/ntfieldnaturalists/journal>.

If possible, manuscripts should be submitted in digital form by email to michael.braby@nt.gov.au. Editors of the journal are Dr Lynda Prior, Dr Michael Braby and Dr Chris Tracy.

The journal page of the web-site also has an order form for back issues of the *Northern Territory Naturalist*, which are available individually or as a set (some are out of print and available as photocopies only).



New beetle species in Darwin region?

Text and photos by Tissa Ratnayeke

In mid October 2009, I photographed a few small beetle specimens and sent a couple of images to Graham Brown to be identified. He immediately recognised them as *Eleale* sp. (family Cleridae); these are common in south-eastern Australia but he is not aware of any previous records in the Darwin region.

Initially it was the sparkle on a dried stem that caught my eye while walking through Holmes Jungle in the evening. Closer inspection revealed a small iridescent beetle about 7mm long, with five others nearby, each resting atop individual 450mm long stems.



Four of the specimens sighted were predominantly orange, while the other two were blue. Graham felt this was simply a random colour variation between individuals rather than a gender or other specific trait. They were spread out within an area I estimated at four square metres. I watched the beetles for around twenty minutes and didn't see any interaction between them.

I subsequently visited the site once with Graham and on several other occasions by myself, but no more sightings have been made.

Another interesting feature of this species, clearly visible in the larger image, is that they are very "hairy" for a beetle.



Recently discovered (and well-camouflaged) skink

Contributed by Deb Bisa

Dappled Snake-eyed Skink *Cryptoblepharus daedalos* from the Stokes Range near Victoria River roadhouse.

This small rock-dwelling skink is endemic to the NT and was only described in 2007. The red armpit patch is actually a colony of small red mites. These are a common feature of many lizards and are generally restricted to a small area (usually an armpit) where they live in what is known as a 'mite-pocket'.

Thanks to Paul Horner for the identification.

Recent rare insect sightings

Tissa Ratnayeke sighted two rare insects in Holmes Jungle recently.

The rarer, seen in April, was a very unusual looking Froghopper, later identified by Graham Brown as *Machaerota pupionnatus*. The following day Tissa was able to lead Graham to the same shrub where it was seen again. Graham collected the specimen and delivered it to the Museum and Art Gallery of the NT, where it is the sole representative of its species. The sap-sucking froghoppers are related to leafhoppers, planthoppers and cicadas.

(continued on page 11)



Mosquitoes (from Recent Literature, page 11)

Mosquitoes are biodiversity too, albeit a form we often aren't too comfortable with. Actually, only about 10 species trouble people out of the 70-odd species in the Darwin region. However and unsurprisingly, most of the local literature is about those 10 species.

A species of particular concern for residents of Darwin is the Northern Saltmarsh Mosquito *Aedes vigilax*. The species breeds in the Leanyer/Holmes Jungle Swamp and in smaller numbers along the Darwin Harbour coast, major population flushes occurring in October to December or January following particularly high tides (de Little *et al.* 2009; Jacups *et al.* 2009).



Habitat of the Northern Saltmarsh mosquito *Aedes vigilax*. Photo provided by Susan Jacups

The species lays its eggs on mud in the saltmarsh and the eggs remain dormant until flushed by the tides. Within these swamps, breeding is heavily concentrated in particular micro-habitats – drains and tide-affected low saltmarsh (*Sporobolus/Xerochloa*) grassland – see Jacups *et al.* 2009 for a more specific explanation. As the Northern Saltmarsh Mosquito is both a terrible biting nuisance and a major vector of the Ross River and Barmah Forest viruses, the response has included altering drainage in the swamp to reduce breeding sites (which seems to have had some positive effect), aerial spraying with a fungal larvacide (apparently not toxic to humans or other wildlife) and spot spraying with insecticides, with

studies helping to focus these activities as precisely as possible (Jacups *et al.* 2009; Kurucz *et al.* 2009a,b).

It might not seem surprising that the number of larvae present in the saltmarsh tracks the number of adults in the previous month (de Little *et al.* 2009). In fact, this is quite informative, building on previous studies that show that the species crowds itself out at high densities (in technical jargon, it displays negative density dependence). This particular finding shows that the crowding effect does not occur as a result of competition amongst adults. It seems likely therefore that the crowding effect occurs amongst larvae of the species – perhaps by competition for resources, or perhaps because at higher densities they become more prone to predation by fish. This has huge implications for management of the species. It means that whilst larvacide spraying when numbers are high may temporarily mitigate the problem, the effect will be very short-term, so that major control of the species will require effort when populations are low as well as when they are high.

The Common Banded Mosquito *Culex annulirostris* is also locally common, annoying and carries disease. In contrast to the Northern Saltmarsh Mosquito, it breeds in freshwater, occupying the Leanyer/Holmes Jungle Swamp mainly during the wet season after heavy rain causes freshwater inundation of it (de Little *et al.* 2009).

Two species of mosquito that have been (presumably) accidentally introduced to the Top End have recently been the subject of control measures. The Dengue Mosquito *Aedes aegypti* was discovered on Groote Eylandt in October 2006 during routine monitoring (Kulbac & Whelan 2007). In November 2006, 10.1% of properties in Alyangula tested positive for the mosquito, but seven months later following four rounds of control, this was reduced to 0.2%. Further control was anticipated to fully eradicate the population. Larvae of a mosquito believed to be *Aedes albopictus* were detected by an Australian Quarantine Inspection Service officer in pools of water associated with imported cable drums in a Darwin shipping yard (Nguyen & Whelan 2007). These were eradicated.

Being short-lived, laying many eggs and so able to reproduce rapidly, and depending on free water for breeding, one might suspect that mosquito populations would be highly responsive to rainfall, including year to year variations in it. Occasional plagues of some species seem to reinforce this notion. However, an analysis of the mosquito community around Darwin as detected in traps at 11 sites over 5 years and one of these sites (Holmes Jungle) for 24 years (63 species in a sample of 1.4 million) suggests otherwise (Franklin & Whelan 2009). Composition and relative abundance of species in the mosquito community was remarkably constant from year to year, each species have a well-defined seasonal peak in abundance. Most species' peaks were between January and June, but a few peaked during the Build-up and several as late as August.

A trip along the Kikori River, Papua New Guinea

Report on the talk by Steve Reynolds

Chris Tracy

Following Richard Noske's talk last month on Papua (the western half of the island of New Guinea), Steve Reynolds this month took us along the Kikori River in Papua New Guinea (the eastern half of the island) to learn about hunting pressures on Pig-nosed turtles (*Carettochelys insculpta*) and to see what sorts of interesting frogs might be around.

The Kikori river flows about 320 km south-east from the central mountain range to empty into the Gulf of Papua. Its mouth forms an intricate delta with lush vegetation and large mangrove stands. The river is wide and deep near the coast but often fast-flowing nearer the source. It acts as an important transportation route and, as Steve showed, sometimes that transport takes the form of a long canoe containing 50 people or more!



At least 50 people were counted in this canoe. Photo: Les Bauer

The trip was funded by an oil company which has a pipeline through the area. The town of Kopi, largely a maintenance camp for the pipeline, was the base camp for the trip. The area around the river is highly populated and includes six different language groups, so there was always an interpreter along. And because the river in high flow has many unseen hazards, a local boat driver who knew the area was a must.

One of Steve's interesting realizations was that many areas of what appeared to be jungle along the banks of the river were in fact 'gardens'. Much of the lush greenery was actually planted, usually with some kind of food crop or tree, all of which could be pointed out by our guide as belonging to specific individuals.

Somewhere along the river though, there was jungle in the proper sense - a wall of diverse greenery that bore some resemblance to vegetation from the Top End, only with diversity gone wild.

One trip took Steve up river to a small village just a few kilometers from an escarpment. Amazingly, straight out of the side of that escarpment was an enormous waterfall which is the start of a tributary to the Kikuri. Apparently, the mountains receive a huge amount of rain (about 7 metres of rain per year!) but, because they are porous, the water seeps through the rock and gushes out the side of the cliff in an impressive torrent.

Steve saw relatively little wildlife, which he felt was due to hunting pressure keeping animals very secretive. He had photographs of even less wildlife: only one wild egret, but various birds in captivity, including cassowaries which behaved like chickens; several cuddly-looking animals were photographed on perched on shoulders or in people's arms. It is likely that many of these 'pets' were only kept until they were big enough to provide a satisfactory meal.

However Steve did find various geckos and frogs, many of which had amazing calls which he was able to play to us. As well as Pig-nosed turtles, he showed us one very weird turtle *Pelochelys* sp., with tentacles on its nose and a fully retractable neck.

Pressure on Pig-nosed turtles is growing as the human population in the area is increasing. People are also much more mobile than before – many people now have boats with outboard motors, when they used to only have paddle-powered canoes. With the increase in wages because of work with the oil company, more people are able to pay for fuel for motors, so can travel further and more often. All of that increases hunting



A "Grumpy Frog", a ground-dwelling forest microhylid, possibly a species of *Hylophorbus*.

Photo: Steve Reynolds

pressure on turtles and their eggs, which are prized food items. There appears to have been a breakdown in some of the traditional food taboos, which means that more people are eating reproductive-sized females.

The turtle breeding season in PNG differs from that in the NT as there is no real dry season in this part of PNG. Pig-nosed turtles breed in the Dry in the NT but in Kikori they breed during a hot and wet season. Local people know that these turtles nest when a particular tree with yellow flowers blooms. As favoured nesting sites are also known, and easily accessible by canoe, it is not difficult for people to find this food source.



One reason that turtles are so heavily hunted is that the people generally lack protein in their diet, so they value animals for their high quality protein. The staple of the diet is sago, pounded from the palms into a flour-like powder that is then used for flat bread.

Shady sandy banks are preferred nesting sites for Pig-nosed turtles.
Photo: Steve Reynolds

One of the strategies being tried to prevent the robbery of nests and killing of adult turtles is to install a trustworthy caretaker at a critical point on the river, who was prepared to stop anyone from travelling further up-stream. This caretaker had been supplied with quantities of food, including tinned fish and meat, and fuel, so that he and some family could stay on site continuously, to prevent turtle deaths. There appeared to have been some success that season, but one can't help but wonder whether this imposed solution will be sustainable.

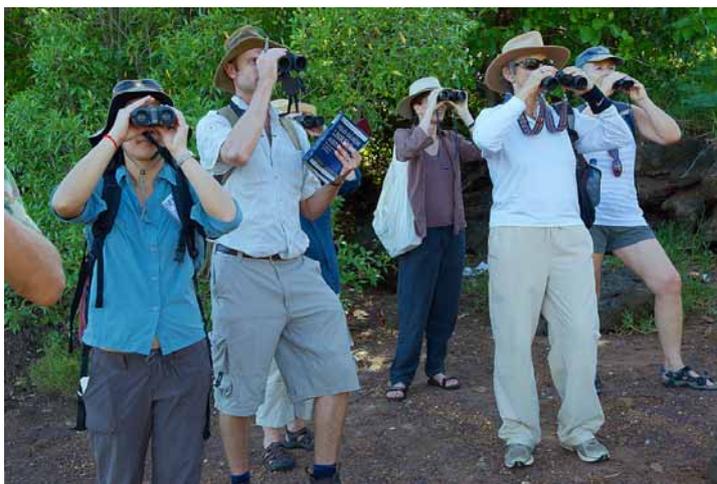
Steve did his bit for cultural exchange by inoculating kids with the idea of playing Aussie rules instead of rugby, but it is unclear whether the inoculation will take. He would like to return to find out.

Rapid Creek estuary and surrounds

Report on the March 2010 excursion

Denise Lawungkurr Goodfellow

Eight club members met leader Chris Parker at the car park near Rapid Creek footbridge on the morning of Saturday 27 March. We hung around in the shade of a large banyan for some minutes waiting to see if others would join us. The banyan was fruiting, but none was ripe, and there were few birds in that particular tree. The first birds noted (apart from Galahs and Rainbow Lorikeets) were Long-tailed Finches carrying nesting material and later seen mating. Another bird busily attending to family duties was a Double-barred Finch also carrying nesting material. A Masked Lapwing appeared to be feigning a broken wing on the lawn, but it was some distance from us, and so it may really have been injured.



We set off along the path walking into the sun, which made bird identification a little difficult at times. Denise and Chris discussed a falcon seen flying high above near some Whistling Kites, which Chris thought a Peregrine, but Denise wasn't so sure.

Binoculars were well-used on this walk led by Chris Parker (second from left). Photo: Tissa Ratnayeke

Wandering down to an access point on Rapid Creek we spotted a pair of Striated Pardalotes that had a hole in a bank very near the mangroves. Grey(Brown) Whistlers were calling vigorously in this spot, as were Red-headed Honeyeaters. Although the official name for the whistler is "Grey", the type was taken in the Top End, and our bird is brown! Denise managed to call a couple up. While in this particular

spot we noted Common Sandpiper on a sand island. Michael valiantly attempted to rescue a day-flying moth *Dysphania fenestrata* (family Geometridae). The beautiful orange and purple insect was stranded on the water but Michael's branch was just not long enough.

Mangrove Gerygones were calling all along the walk but they weren't particularly active. Peter Holbery saw one – highlighting the fact that it is sometimes beneficial to stray away from the group. Denise saw another in flight, but it was gone too quickly to point out to the others. The best time to see these little birds is early on a dewy morning when they're busy preening.

Other birds were identified by call – Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Little Bronze-cuckoo, Shining Flycatcher and Black Butcherbird (also seen in flight). Two cuckoos were calling, one giving a descending series of whistles and the other, a trill on the same note. Northern Fantail, Weebill and Large-billed Gerygone gave very brief bursts of song and then were silent, not giving us a chance to follow them up. We saw White-gaped Honeyeater, but a surprising absentee was Dusky Honeyeater with no a calls let alone a sighting. Mangrove Robin were considered unlikely to be in these mangroves as there didn't appear to be any suitable habitat.



Grey-crowned Babblers.
Photo: Tissa Ratnayeke

Yellow Oriole, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Little and Helmeted Friarbirds and a single Grey-crowned Babbler made brief appearances, the latter two species in flight. Brown Honeyeater was the most common of that group. Surprisingly Rufous-banded Honeyeater was hardly calling at all, and we only saw a couple and then not particularly well. However, they are relatively easily identifiable from Brown Honeyeater

even if one only sees part of the bird: Brown has a lemon-yellow and rather diffuse bar on the primaries, while Rufous-banded's is chrome-yellow and rather sharply defined.

Denise pointed out some of the plants and their uses by indigenous people and others. Ash from *Avicennia marina* (named after a famous Persian mathematician and philosopher of the 10-11th century AD) can be used as an antiseptic wash. Roots of the two *Ipomoea* species we saw, *I. macrantha* and *I. pes-caprae*, can be eaten, but taste dreadful! White-flowering Mangrove, *Lumnitzera racemosa* may be a good plant to remember when, next Wet Season, the electricity supply fails again – it burns while wet. Those living near mangroves will still be able to make a cup of tea! Peanut Tree *Sterculia quadrifida* was common on the landward side of the mangroves, but Denise pointed out that anyone wanting to eat the “nuts” should remove the black skin, unless they enjoyed having diarrhoea! The poisonous *Pongamia pinnata*, also growing on the landward side of the mangroves, was pointed out and warned against. Of more use is the vine *Tinaspora smilacina* which can be used to treat headaches.

Tida noted the smell of drying Spear grass in the air, whose golden heads nodding in the sunlight were very attractive. Chestnut-breasted Mannikins flitted through the grass and dragonflies and butterflies were much in evidence. One dragonfly identified was the Graphic flutterer *Rhyothemis graphiptera*. Butterflies were mainly from the family Pieridae: Common Grass Yellow, whites in the mangroves, possibly Pearl Whites, *Elodina* sp plus a couple of nymphalids - a Varied/Common Eggfly, *Hypolimnas bolina*, and a Meadow Argus, *Junonia villida*. Peter also spotted a Union Jack, *Delias mysis*. Another insect of interest was a Robber Fly, family Asilidae, found by eagle-eyed Tissa.



Chestnut-breasted Mannikins.
Photo: Tissa Ratnayeke

A flying fox colony could be heard calling nearby, but the only other mammal noted in the vicinity was a Black Rat that cheekily ran out of the *I. pes-caprae* near us.

A Striated Heron and three obliging Forest Kingfishers were observed at the end of the trip, winding up a nice start to the weekend. Many thanks to Chris Parker for leading the field trip and compiling the bird list.

Fogg Dam open day

Report on the April 2010 excursion

Fiona Douglas

This now-annual event has grown enormously, as has its sophistication and the scope of activities. More than 1,000 people came in to take advantage of the breadth of knowledge of presenters and walk leaders. It really is true to say that there was something for everyone and there were contributions from everyone. I met whole families – grandparents through to grandchildren, some of whom wouldn't call themselves naturalists in a million years, who were keen to learn more about this Top End icon. An older couple, who have lived in Darwin for half a century and who had not been to Fogg Dam for decades, had been attracted by opportunity to refresh their knowledge. They made a point of telling me later how much they had enjoyed it and how amazed they were by the place and its stories. It is a real tribute to the Friends of Fogg Dam that this event continues to develop.



Friends of Fogg Dam HQ.
Photo: Fiona Douglas

The Club had a stall at the event, at which some of us chatted to people, took new memberships and generally showed the flag. The day was a hot, humid “build-down” classic so we didn't last all day, taking a hint from a rather full storm cloud that it might be

sensible to pack down before we had everything soaked. Stalls were set up on the terminal loop near the high lookout on the far side of the dam wall, an excellent central location.



Club President Tida Nou at our stall.
Photo: Tissa Ratnayeke

flowing down the depression behind the stalls. The grunting and groaning was amazing, reminiscent of pigs rather than birds! The Spoonbills were particularly spectacular in their breeding



plumage – they have a pink area on the forehead and yellow above each eye, and plumes that form a halo when the bird's back is to the wind. It was also wonderful to see water still flowing over the dam wall, with the colony of hunting waterbirds dancing around the traffic in and out of the streams.

Many congratulations to the Fogg Dam Friends for a great day.

Royal Spoonbill in breeding plumage.
Photo: Tissa Ratnayeke



Ambos who helped us erect our tent.
Photo: Fiona Douglas

Several Club members contributed their expertise to the day's events: Penny Steele whose children's bird count competition was popular and the butterfly crew, including Graham Brown, Sheryl & Arthur Keates and Lyn & Brian Reid.



Kids look for aquatic life.
Photo: Fiona Douglas

Interesting bird sightings

20 March to 23 April 2010

Compiled by Ian Hance

Sightings are as reported (unvetted, unconfirmed) and have been mostly compiled from the e-mail digest of the NT birder website (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ntbirds>) moderated by Niven McCrie.

Species	Date	Location	Observer/s	Nos./comments
Waterbirds & Seabirds				
Great-billed Heron	5/4	South Alligator River	Marc Gardner	1
Chestnut Rail	7/4	Buffalo Creek	Jim O'Shea	1
~	9/4	Buffalo Creek	Al Stewart	3
Black Bittern	4/4	Cockatoo Ck, Keep River NP	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	1
Pomarine Jaeger	21/3	Lee Point; Buffalo Creek	Peter Kyne	1 pale morph
Lesser Frigatebird	28/3	Alyangula, Groote Eylandt	Braden McDonald	17
Waders				
Common Redshank	7/4	Buffalo Creek	Jim O'Shea	1, uncommon
Oriental Pratincole	28/3	Katherine Sewage Ponds	Andrew Bell	1
Birds of prey				
Black-breasted Buzzard	4/4	Keep River NP	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	1 ad, 1 imm
Rufous Owl	12/4	Botanic Gardens	Sheryl & Arthur Keates	2
Pacific Baza	19/4	CDU Campus	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	2; 1 on 21/4
Osprey	19 & 21/4	CDU Campus	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	1
Other non-passerines				
Fork-tailed Swift	20/3	Leanyer Sewage Ponds	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	large nos.
~	5/4	South Alligator River	Marc Gardner	80+
Red-backed Button-quail	26/03	Bird Billabong	Marc Gardner	2
Oriental Cuckoo	1/4	South Alligator River	Marc Gardner	1
Spinifex Pigeon	2 & 4/4	Keep River NP	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	numerous
Channel-billed Cuckoo	2/4	Stuart H'way, Adelaide River	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	1
White-quilled Rock-Pigeon	3/4	Gurrandalng walk, KRNP	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	2
Spotted Nightjar	3/4	Keep River NP	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	2
Emerald Dove	4/4	track b'tn Casuarina & Lee Pt	Gavin & Meg O'Brien	1
Partridge Pigeon	5/4	Jabiru	Marc Gardner	2
King Quail	5/4	South Alligator River	Marc Gardner	1
Grass Owl	5/4	South Alligator River	Marc Gardner	1, probable sighting
Passerines				
White-breasted Woodswallow	c.19/3	Katherine	Mike Reed	large nos. returning
Arafura Fantail	4/4	track b'tn Casuarina & Lee Pt	Gavin & Meg O'Brien	2
~	7/4	Daly River	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	1
Golden Backed Honeyeater	4/4	Bullita Access Rd	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	1
Barn Swallow	20/3	Buffalo Creek	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	1, uncommon
Eastern Yellow Wagtail	20/3	Leanyer Sewage Ponds	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	3; 2 on 11/4
Grey-fronted Honeyeater	2/4	Keep River NP	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	1
Pictorella Mannikin	4/4	Bullita Access Road	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	2
Painted Finch	4/4	Buchanan H'way	Brian & Lyn Reid	2
Australian Magpie	4/4	Keep River NP	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	1 ad, 1 imm
Purple-crowned Fairy-wren	5/4	Victoria River Roadhouse	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	1
Star Finch	5/4	Buntine Highway	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	1
Red-rumped Swallow	18/4	Leanyer Sewage Ponds	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson, also S & A Keates	1 vagrant

What's in a name?

contributed by Don Franklin

Khaya

The African Mahogany, so widely planted in urban Darwin, bears the scientific name of *Khaya senegalensis*. In a delightful aside, Dawkins (2009) noted that *Khaya* means 'I don't know' in the local language, "with the presumed subtext: '...and I don't care and why don't you stop asking stupid questions about plant names.'"

Reference Dawkins R. 2009. *The Greatest Show on Earth. The Evidence for Evolution*. Bantam Press, London. 470 pp. [footnote on page 177]

Recent literature about Top End natural history

Back listings and summaries may be viewed at <http://www.cdu.edu.au/ser/profiles/ecologyintopend.htm>.

INSECTS & OTHER INVERTEBRATES

Compiled by Don Franklin

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- Brown G. 2009. *Northern Territory Insects*. University of Queensland: Brisbane. [CD; see *Nature Territory* Oct. 2009, p 8]
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- Nguyen H, Whelan PI. 2007. Detection and elimination of *Aedes albopictus* on cable drums at Perkins Shipping, Darwin, NT. *Northern Territory Disease Control Bulletin* 14: 39-41.

New species, classification

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Recent rare insect sightings (continued from page 4)

A rare sighting in March, again by Tissa Ratnayeke in Holmes Jungle, was a Moth Butterfly *Liphyra brassolis*, an identification confirmed by Michael Braby. The butterfly has an unusual and interesting life cycle: the larva, protected by a hard outer covering, enters the leaf nest of Green tree-ants *Oecophylla smaragdina*. Once inside, the larva feeds on ant larvae and pupates under the same protective covering. The emerging butterfly is covered in thousands of loose scales that assist it in escaping the ants, which are left with mandibles clogged with scales!

