

NATURE TERRITORY

November 2010



Newsletter of the Northern Territory Field Naturalists Club Inc.

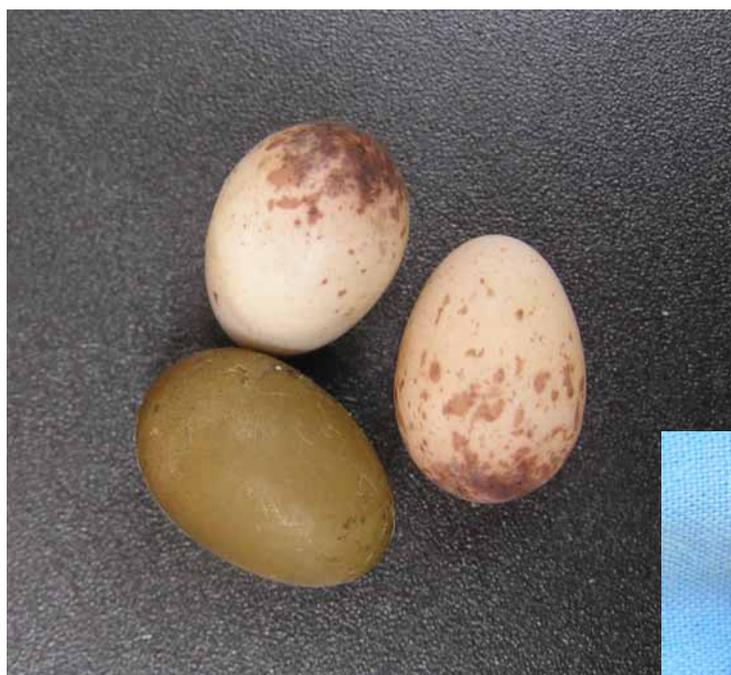
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Club web-site: <http://ntfieldnaturalists.org.au/>

Meetings are generally held on the second Wednesday of every month, commencing at 7:45 PM, in Blue 1.14 (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.



Perhaps surprisingly, the Large-billed Gerygone cannot distinguish its own eggs (pink, blotched purple-brown) from those of the Little Bronze-Cuckoo (brown).

However, they can sometimes identify a Little Bronze-Cuckoo nestling (right) – see article on page 5.

Photos: Richard Noske.



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Disclaimer: The views expressed in *Nature Territory* are not necessarily those of the NT Field Naturalists Club Inc. or members of its Committee.

Club activities

November meeting. Wednesday November 10, 7:45 PM. Blue 1.14 (Business Bldg.), CDU.

Azlan (Mohd Azlan Jayasilan A. Gulam Azad)

"Mangrove birds"

Mangroves comprise only 1% of the natural habitat in the Northern Territory yet they contain more mangrove bird endemics than any other mangroves worldwide. The community ecology of birds in mangrove forests at 13 sites in the Darwin region was investigated between February 2008 and April 2009. A total of 115 bird species representing 43 families were observed, including shorebirds and waterbirds. However, excluding non-target species (sea and shorebirds, aerial species and raptors), 70



species, predominantly passerines, were recorded. This study demonstrates that consideration of mangrove patch size, and the surrounding matrices, is vital in managing and conserving mangrove bird communities. The remaining mangroves in the Darwin region should be protected from further fragmentation and fragments should not be regarded as of low conservation value. Smaller mangrove patches offer refuge to endemic bird species, and to bird species from the surrounding matrices which themselves are under pressure. The mangroves in the Darwin urban area act as a green belt, providing access and protection to wildlife that would otherwise be locally extinct.

Azlan is a PhD student with the School for Environmental Research at Charles Darwin University. He hails from Malaysian Borneo, where he has worked on wild cats and bats. He has also worked with WWF on tiger-human conflict in Peninsular Malaysia.

Mangrove specialist: the Mangrove Golden Whistler (a male). Photo: Trevor Collins.

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November field trip. Sunday 14th Nov. – Behind the suburbs at Leanyer, led by Ian Hance.

Meet at 8 AM at the end of Hodgson Drive (off Leanyer Drive) Leanyer. We'll spend a couple of hours investigating the surprising variety of habitats that occur in this fairly small area. Bring binoculars, closed-in shoes, plenty of water, and protection from sun, mozzies and midges. Any enquiries, phone Ian Hance on 0417 145 447.

Doggie dinner and sausage sizzle. Saturday 20th Nov., 5.00 - 7.00 PM, Lee Point BBQ area (last car park). This public-awareness event is being sponsored by the Club. See notice on page 10.

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December 2010 meeting. Wednesday December 8. **Christmas social.**

There will be a natural history quiz with prizes, and a mystery talk.

Top End Native Plant Society activities

November 18 meeting. Ian Morris: *Seasons of the North*. (this is also the Annual General Meeting) 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 7:30 PM (speaker at 8 PM). Visit <http://www.topendnativeplants.org.au/index.php> or contact Russell Dempster on 8983 2131.

Club notices

Welcome to new members: Ruchira & Nilusha Somaweera; Melanie Bradley.

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

Newsletter contributions welcome: Sightings, reports, travelogues, reviews, photographs, sketches, news, comments, opinions, theories , anything relevant to natural history. Please forward material to Don at eucalypt@octa4.net.au or the Club's postal address, or contact him on 8948 1293.

Deadline for the December newsletter: Friday November 19.

Changes to the Committee: **Sherry Prince** has resigned after an extended period as our Membership Officer. We are indebted to Sherry for her essential contribution to the Club's operations, and look forward to seeing her around at Club activities – including at the December meeting where she has a key role.

Tida Nou has kindly stepped up to the task of managing the Club's membership database. The task includes managing renewals, adding new members, and producing monthly mail merge and email lists for the newsletter.

Need a Club membership form? Go to: <http://sites.google.com/site/ntfieldnaturalists/downloads>.

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). These can be accessed directly during working hours, or by ringing Don on 8946 6976 (w) or 8948 1293 (h).

Addition to library: Fitzsimons J, Legge S, Traill B, Woinarski J. 2010. *Into oblivion? The disappearing native mammals of northern Australia*. The Nature Conservancy: Melbourne. 20 pp. [reviewed in October newsletter]

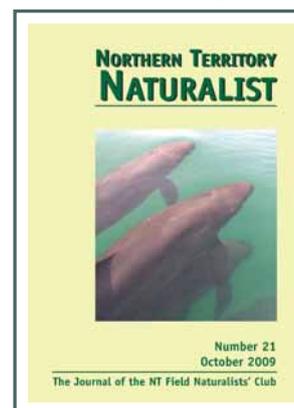
Northern Territory Naturalist: By the time this newsletter reaches you, issue no. 22 should be with the printer.

The Editorial Committee of the Club's journal, the *Northern Territory Naturalist*, is now calling for manuscripts for issue no. 23. The journal publishes works concerning any aspect of the natural history and ecology of the Northern Territory or adjacent 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). 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).



Gerygone nests from *Recent Literature*, page 11. Though both the Large-billed and Mangrove Gerygones nest in mangroves, the location and shape of nests differs greatly. Mangrove Gerygones build a compact dome in low mangroves on or adjacent to salt flats, whereas the Large-billed Gerygone builds a large, pendant dome that is usually suspended from tall mangroves overhanging tidal creeks (also over freshwater creeks). Using artificial nests, Sato *et al.* (2010b) tested whether predation rates were influenced by nest and habitat type. Artificial Mangrove Gerygone nests were predated less frequently in low than tall mangroves, but there was no difference between habitats in predation rates of artificial Large-billed Gerygone nests.

Magpie Geese

From *Recent Literature*, page 11.

Photos by Trevor Collins

Magpie Geese are believed to track the seasonal ebb and flow of resources across the floodplains of northern Australia, for example, moving into Darwin and mango orchards during the Build-Up as many wetlands dry out. Lochran Traill *et al.* (2010a) provide details of the first radio-tracking study to evaluate this perspective. Ten birds caught on the floodplains of the South Alligator River in Kakadu National Park (Mamukala and vicinity) were fitted with satellite radio-transmitters. They were tracked for from 10 to 64 weeks until the transmitters failed, or didn't move for a prolonged period – the latter could be either because the transmitter fell off or the bird died. "Movements were multi-directional and the maximum linear distance travelled by an individual was 114 km from the site of release, over 38 weeks of tracking." Most birds remained in Kakadu, with some movement to the floodplains of the East Alligator, Wildman and Mary Rivers. Young birds moved less distance than did adults, and birds that moved more in the dry season also moved more during the wet season. "Movements did appear to be related to seasonal environmental fluctuations, with some birds moving to favoured breeding and foraging sites, but most monitored birds were resident within the national park." Though caution should be exercised in extrapolating results from one area of capture and relatively few individuals, these results raise unanticipated questions about the nature and scale of movements in Magpie Geese.

To catch birds for radio-tracking and related studies, Lochran tested clap-nets, drop-nets, cannon-nets and cage-traps (Traill *et al.* 2010b). Based on effectiveness, cost and safety to both birds and catchers, he recommends the use of cage-traps – large enclosures baited with crushed corn.

NRETAS has released a management plan for Magpie Geese covering the years 2009-2014 (Delaney *et al.* 2009). The aims are to maintain viable populations and their habitats, facilitate sustainable use where appropriate, and to refine management by review of previous prescriptions and performance. However, the plan does not deal with permits, hunting and hunting reserves – a subsequent Waterfowl Hunting Plan to be developed by the end of 2011 will do so.



In the management plan, Delaney *et al.* (2009) report that the population of Magpie Geese in the Top End is estimated to be between 1 and more than 2 million. Recruitment is potentially large but strongly tied to rainfall via nesting success. The species is protected in the NT, meaning the harvest (i.e. mostly shooting) requires a permit. It is estimated that less than 100,000 are taken by hunters each year, and that this is sustainable. The harvest allowed under the plan, expressed as a maximum percentage of the minimum estimated population, are: for traditional and non-traditional hunting – average (over 3 years) of 10% per year (max. 14% in any one year); and for control of the species as an agricultural pest – 1% per year. Land management for the Magpie Goose is generally sympathetic; key threats identified are modification or loss of habitat including by introduced pasture grasses and Mimosa, and climate change. The use of lead-shot by hunters is prohibited in the four government-managed hunting reserves only. Lead poisoning following ingestion of spent shot causes painful death to birds and poison can accumulate in wetlands. Extension of the ban to all wetlands in the NT has been identified as a management objective (what do you read that to mean? – *ed.*).

Cuckoos from *Recent Literature*, page 11

Observations in Darwin mangroves by Sato *et al.* (2010a) have shed intriguing light on the evolutionary “arms race” between cuckoos and their hosts. Eggs and nestlings of the Little Bronze-Cuckoo and its frequent host, the Large-billed Gerygone, are illustrated with photographs by the authors. Even though the eggs of the cuckoo do not closely resemble those of the gerygone, the gerygone apparently lacks the ability to detect the difference. However and notwithstanding that cuckoo nestlings do resemble those of the gerygone – unusually so in having black skin – Large-billed Gerygones apparently can sometimes recognise the nestlings as “ring-ins”. Sato *et al.* monitored 11 parasitised and 11 non-parasitised nests of the Large-billed Gerygone with video cameras. They recorded three instances where the single cuckoo nestling was ejected – literally, picked up and dropped outside the nest – by the host. However, they also recorded three nests in which the gerygones similarly evicted their own young – one nest from which a Little Bronze-Cuckoo nestling was also evicted, and two that did not contain a cuckoo nestling. This imperfect response, the authors suggest, is because the behaviour is still evolving. Cuckoos fledged from two



nests. Although hosts have been recorded abandoning nests because they contain a cuckoo chick, the authors believe this is the first report of any host species physically ejecting a cuckoo nestling.

Hosts may not only recognise and reject a cuckoo egg or nestling, but recognise and attack adult cuckoos. The sight of cuckoos being chased will be familiar to many bird watchers. However, in an observation at CDU Casuarina, Jackson & Kyne (2010) saw things go a deal further. Three Little Friarbirds mobbed an Eastern Koel and drove it to the ground, where one friarbird was seen on the Koel’s back and pecking it on the head. The friarbirds departed and a Black Butcherbird arrived and “delivered one powerful peck to the Koel’s head”. The stunned Koel was retrieved by the authors, but died shortly afterwards. A post-mortem analysis failed to confirm that the pecks were the cause of death. The authors make the interesting suggestion that the friarbirds may have deliberately “attracted the mightier” butcherbird to complete the task for them. Although neither the Little Friarbird nor the Black Butcherbird have been recorded as hosts of Eastern Koel eggs or nestlings, they are both candidates and other species of friarbird have been recorded as hosts.

Female Eastern (Common) Koel. Photo: Trevor Collins.



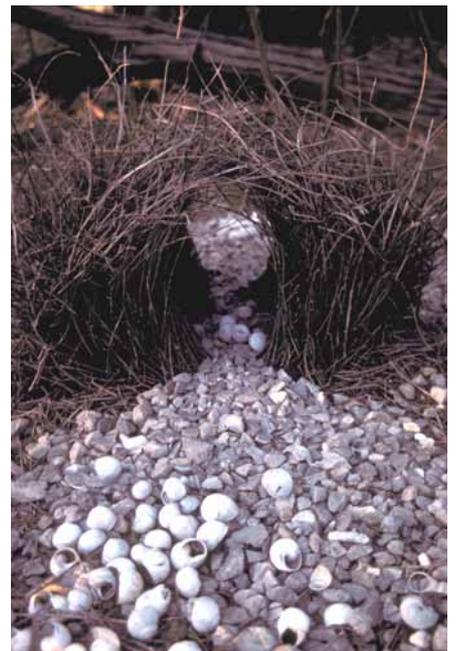
Life at a bower from *Recent Literature*, page 11

A series of papers arising from study at Coomalie Farm near Batchelor yield intriguing insights into the lives of the Great Bowerbird.

Bigger bowers are better, sort of. Katsuno *et al.* (2010) recorded activity at bowers using video cameras, and measured bowers. They found that mating success of males was greater when the bower avenue was longer and the walls were thicker, but less when the bower avenue was wider. They suggest that a long, narrow bower gives females better protection from over-vigorous males!

Furthermore, males with longer, thicker-walled bowers made more loud, long “tick” calls, and these appear to play a key role in successful courtship (Okida *et al.* (2010).

Mikami *et al.* (2010) noticed that 6 of 9 bowers of the Great Bowerbird that were in recently burnt areas avoided being burnt. Using calculations based on the percentage of ground that was burnt in circular plots of 50 m radius surrounding the bowers, they demonstrated that the survival of six bowers was unlikely to be due to chance. Protection from fire may arise due to the birds’ selection of sites and/or their removal of grass and leaf litter. This could be an accidental by-product of the way birds prepare bowers for courtship. However, the authors point out that loss of a bower to fire represents a loss of mating opportunities for the male, so natural selection in the fire-prone savannas of northern Australia may have favoured behaviours at the bower that reduce the risk of the bower being burnt.



Fire proof? Bower of the Great Bowerbird. Photo: Don Franklin.

Brown Booby

Text & photo by Jack Ellis

A young sea bird that seems to have mistaken the Mandorah Jetty for a coral cay appears to have little fear of humans. The bird regularly rests on the steps and only flies off when someone approaches a tad too quickly.

A seafood eater, the Brown Booby also cadges the odd bait fish from people fishing on the jetty. Also known as a Brown Gannet, the bird can grow up to 75 cm in length and normally feeds by diving spectacularly into the sea for a meal.

The birds are common from Moreton Bay in Queensland right around the coast to the islands off Western Australia. With most of the food supply off-shore, the booby is not a regular visitor to the coast, preferring small islands and coral cays for nesting and resting.

Adult birds have white underbellies and predominately white feet and beaks, indicating the jetty visitor is still a juvenile.



Active at this time of year: the Northern Mouse Spider *Missulena pruinosa*.

This one is a male (female in last month's newsletter). Although males look remarkably like a Sydney Funnel-web Spider, the toxin of the Northern Mouse Spider does "not appear to be a major medical problem in humans".

Photo: Tim Schinkel.

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Ancient birds from *Recent Literature*, page 11

Part of a large avian wing-bone retrieved from fossil deposits in the Victoria River District has been identified as new species of eagle and named *Aquila bullockensis* (Gaff & Boles 2010). The eagle (or at least, its wing-bone) is a little smaller than a Wedge-tailed Eagle. It is named for the Bullock Creek site on Camfield Station (between Top Springs and Kalkarindji) at which it was found. The Bullock Creek fossil deposit is estimated to be 12 million years old, which makes this the earliest *Aquila* eagle fossil found in Australia and possibly the world.

Tacon *et al.*'s (2010) report relates to a much more recent era. Stencils of birds, in which paint is laid down around real birds, producing silhouettes, are not a common Aboriginal art form. A stencil of a bird, found in a rock shelter in northern Arnhem Land, is therefore of considerable interest. Tacon *et al.* argue that the size and shape of the head and bill suggest that the bird is a Singing Honeyeater – and as the Singing Honeyeater generally occupies drier habitats, this suggests that the stencil was made during a time when the climate was drier. However, your editor and several other bird people have examined the authors' photo of the stencil and are far from convinced by the identification – your editor suggests it may be a fledgling Helmeted (Sandstone) Friarbird. The paper also includes a photo of two much more recent (est. perhaps 50-100 years old) yellow-ochre paintings of birds, which your editor feels are rather self-evidently Orange-footed Scrubfowl, though that isn't the authors' interpretation.

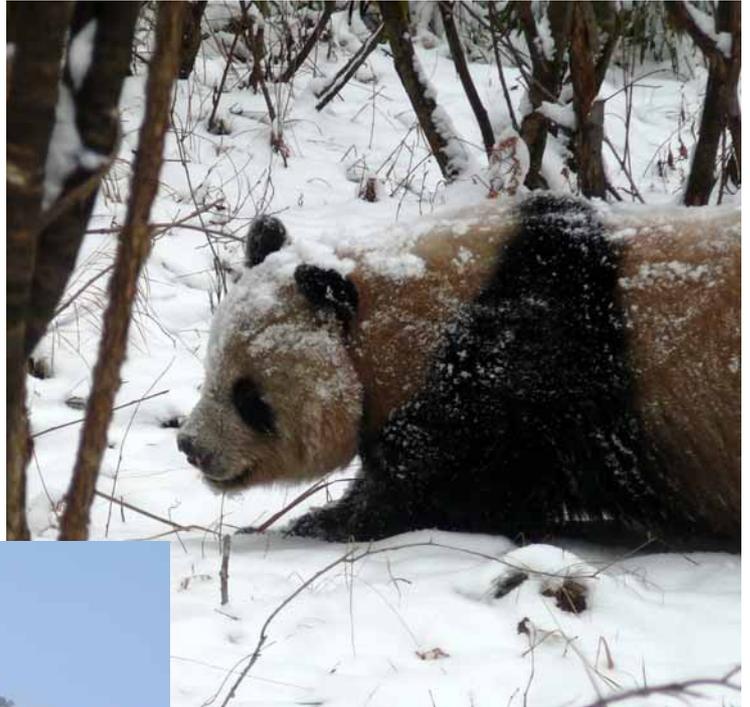
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Fire and fairy-wrens from *Recent Literature*, page 11

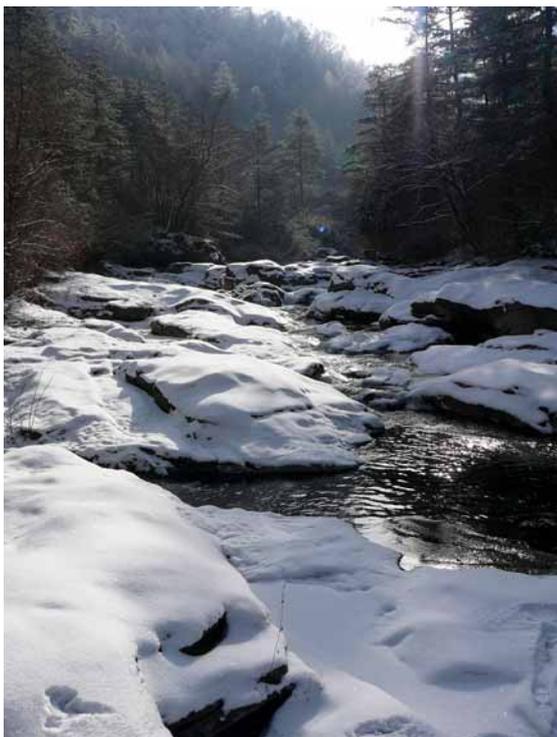
The Red-backed Fairy-wren is known to be adversely affected by fire in its savanna habitat. Using colour-banded birds, Nakamura *et al.* (2010) have provided evidence as to the nature of the demographic impact. Fires occur in the dry season (of course) when the birds are not breeding. The authors report no mortality during the fire. Birds that were burnt out attempted to move to unburnt refuges, but these areas were already fully occupied by established small groups, forcing them to move on and aggregate into "larger but unstable flocks" in burnt areas.

Snow ... in China

Been feeling a bit hot of late? Then drool over these scenes from the Qinling Mountains, Shaanxi Province, photographed by Nick Hogarth



Bamboo (above) and ... a *wild* Giant Panda (right).



Mud snakes of Darwin Harbour

Report on the October meeting talk by Emma Francis

Louise Finch

October's meeting featured a presentation by Emma Francis, a CDU PhD student, investigating the ecology, distribution and genetic relationships of Northern Australia's mangrove snakes. It was attended by smaller crowd than usual suggesting scaly things are less popular than other critters. But those who came were treated to an interesting talk and a great set of photos of really beautiful snakes – that is if you like chunky-shaped animals. *Cerberus australis*, or the Grey Bockadam, from the family Homalopsidae is a case in point. It really does have a dog-like head in the staffie mould! Returning to the science for a moment, it is found from India across to PNG and Cape York. There are 40 species in this family with confusing morphology and incomplete genetic work but Australian homalopsids are genetically different from Asian ones. All prefer hot, steamy areas.

Emma assured us these are advanced snakes even though they choose to live in mangroves – offering very basic accommodation when you think about it. They are rear-fanged, unlike elapids such as Brown snakes or Black snakes. They deliver their venom to prey by dripping it from a groove along their teeth. They don't use a hypodermic action which is very reassuring when you may want to have a close encounter with one in the mangroves after dark. They also have valvular nostrils which means they can close their noses and hang about underwater. The other clever thing they have is a notch in their rostral scale which means they can stick their tongue out underwater and still have an airtight seal.

Emma enthused about how different these mud snakes are. She showed us a 'sit and wait' predator from Vietnam and Thailand, *Eperton tentaculatus*, which seems to sense prey with growths on its face. Another adaptation she described involved scales. Land snakes use ventral scales to gain purchase and often use a side-winding or serpentine form of motion. Sea snakes have flattened ventral scales to provide a keel for swimming which means

they aren't mobile on land. Mangrove snakes are not great movers on land and they are not really aquatic either. They just love the muddy stuff. File snakes were also mentioned as not being great movers on land.



Beautifully marked: the White-bellied Mangrove Snake *Fordonia leucobalia*. Photos: above, adult, Brendan Schembri; below right, juvenile, Emma Francis.

We were shown images of *Fordonia leucobalia*, the White-bellied Mangrove Snake, which Emma described as a 'Darwin local'. It is terrestrial and nocturnal. During the day it curls up in mud lobster burrows, emerging when hungry to feast on small crabs. She had a great set of images showing it cracking a crab and discarding the crunchy leg bits in order to concentrate on the body. This beautifully marked black and red snake was only a chunky 750mm long. Other individuals were equally gorgeous but varied in colour and markings. Some were grey and red; one had a kind of leopard-print pattern. Then

we were shown a photo of *Cerberus australis*, my favourite dog-headed species. When it is not night-foraging, it rests in burrows and in trees. It is a fisher-snake, anchoring itself by the tail and reaching out for a passing meal.

Emma told us not much is known about the reproduction of any of these snakes. She's seen a baby *Fordonia* in Bynoe Harbour and seen snakes mating in the wet season. In Australia, habitat destruction and pollution would be the only threats to mud snakes, but in Asia they are harvested for snake leather and to provide food for farmed crocodiles. The distribution of all species isn't well-known yet and the extent of genetic variation from west to east hasn't been established. Just how sedentary the snakes are isn't known either. It is possible that individuals don't go far from home.

Then we were shown the little Myron. *Myron richardsonii*, or Richardson's Mangrove Snake, is about 30cm long and not at all flashy. This snake can be found after dark in the small channels that empty as the tide falls in the mangroves. Its appeal for me lay in the fact that it is possible to hand-feed it mud skippers. Can you imagine it? The field trip will be fun I feel sure.



In search of Darwin's nocturnal mangrove snakes

Report on the October excursion

Tissa Ratnayeke

On the evening of Sunday 18 October I drove out along Channel Island road rather thankful that the predictable evening rain of the past week wasn't going to happen on this day. I had hoped to arrive early for our field trip, but I was running late and wondered how many people would be brave enough to take up the challenge of exploring



Stroll in the mangroves. Photo: Tissa Ratnayeke.

mangroves on a hot night. I was happy to discover over twenty people had turned up for the excursion. Shortly after 6 PM, while there was still plenty of daylight, we split into two groups, one led by Emma Francis and the other by new member Ruchira Somaweera. We followed opposite banks of a mangrove-lined tidal creek. The most numerous signs of animal life were the hundreds of mudskippers and small crabs, the ideal food source for our snakes.

For nearly an hour we meandered through the mangroves without any major sightings and as darkness began to set we turned around to retrace our steps and commence the search in earnest for the three species of small nocturnal mangrove snakes. Our first excitement for the night was

Ruchira catching a large mud crab. Still hopeful, we continued on our search, some of us having sunk up to our knees in mud in the quest for discovery.

And so we searched all the way back to within a stones throw of the parked cars without a single sighting, when an excited call of "I found one" made us rush over and sure enough, there was a small but adult *Myron richardsonii* (Richardson's Mangrove Snake) whose hunt for mudskippers had been rudely interrupted. Then to complete the night, a few minutes later a slightly larger, crab-eating *Fordonia leucobalia* (White-bellied Mangrove Snake) was discovered.

We had come very close to "just having a long walk in the mangroves" but in the end we were rewarded with the sightings of two of the three species of these interesting snakes.

Below: the White-bellied Mangrove Snake *Fordonia leucobalia*. Photo: Tissa Ratnayeke.



Richardson's Mangrove Snake *Myron richardsonii*. Photos: above, Tissa Ratnayeke; below, Ruchira Somaweera.



Interesting bird sightings

To 22 October 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, waders				
Shoveler sp.	22-24/9	Brunette Downs, Barkly	Chris Wiley	1
Little Ringed Plover	27/9	Leanyer Sewage Ponds	Stephen Garnett	2
Oriental Plover	7/9	Darwin Airport	Richard Noske	50
~	c. 22/9	Finniss River floodplain	Geoff Corey	large flocks
Little Curlew	27/9	Darwin Airport	Richard Noske	130
Birds of prey				
Red Goshawk	c. 22/9	Central Arnhem Highway	Clive Garland <i>et al.</i>	1
~	c. 14/10	Kakadu	Nick Leseberg	1
Wedge-tailed Eagle	28/9	Bees Creek	Gill Ainsworth	1
Rufous Owl	c. 27/9	Botanic Gardens	Clive Garland <i>et al.</i>	1
Other non-passerines				
Hooded Parrot	8/10	Ferguson River	Andrew Bell	45
Fork-tailed Swifts	17/10	Nightcliff	Peter Kyne & Micha Jackson	20 at Knuckeyes Lagoon & other sightings, other locations, dates & observers
Passerines				
White-breasted Whistler	c. 14/10	Nightcliff mangrove	Nick Leseberg	1
Buff-sided Robin	26/9	Palmerston Sewage Ponds	Clive Garland <i>et al.</i>	4
Star Finch	c. 14/10	Timber Creek	Nick Leseberg	?
Gouldian Finch	26/9	Marrakai Track	Clive Garland <i>et al.</i>	flock
Yellow-rumped Mannikin	c. 22/9	Victoria River	Clive Garland <i>et al.</i>	some
~	9/10	Nightcliff	Fiona Douglas	1
~	19/10	Humpty Doo	Darryel Binns	1

Doggie Dinner and free Sausage Sizzle

Saturday 20th Nov* 5.00 - 7.00 pm at the Lee Point BBQ area (last car park)

- Food and refreshments for dogs and their human companions
- Guided walks to the shorebird roost while dogs are minded
- View birds through telescopes and talk with experienced guides
- Information about the amazing flights of these birds will be on display
- Bring your dog and lead

The Club is sponsoring this activity to raise public awareness, particularly among dog owners, of shorebirds that use the foreshore at Casuarina Coastal Reserve and other coastal areas in the Top End. Most of these amazing birds have flown from as far as Siberia to experience our 'Territory Lifestyle'. About 20 species breed in summer in the Northern Hemisphere and return for our summer. Birds weighting as little as 35 gm fly return journeys of about 25,000 km with some species flying over 7,000 km in a single flight.



Remarkably, our resident Red-capped Plover breeds on our beaches above the high tide mark. Their eggs and chicks face many threats including dogs while many beach walkers are unaware of their presence.

For more details, or anyone prepared to help out on the day, please call Sheryl or Arthur on 8941 6262 (0401 119 677).

*If postponed due to rain – alternative date Saturday Dec 4th, 5.00 – 7.00 pm

Shorebirds at Lee Point.
Photo: Brian Thistleton.

Recent literature about Top End natural history

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

BIRDS

Compiled by Don Franklin

Not technical

Dutson G, Garnett S, Gole C. 2009. Important Bird Areas in the Northern Territory. Pp 28-29 in *Australia's Important Bird Areas. Key sites for bird conservation*. Birds Australia Conservation Statement No. 15, Melbourne.

Noske R. 2010. Paperbark writer. *Wingspan* 20(1): 36-37. [birds of paperbark woodlands in Arnhem Land]

Standon R. 2010. Fishing techniques. *The Bird Observer* 865: 16. [Yellow Waters: Sea-eagle, Darter, Azure Kingfisher]

Magpie Geese

Delaney R, Fukuda Y, Saalfeld K. 2009. *Management Program for the Magpie Goose (Anseranas semipalmata) in the Northern Territory of Australia, 2009–2014*. Northern Territory Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport: Darwin. 50 pp. Available at <http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/wildlife/programs/approved.html>.

Traill LW, Bradshaw CJA, Brook BW. 2010a. Satellite telemetry and seasonal movements of Magpie Geese (*Anseranas semipalmata*) in tropical northern Australia. *Emu* 110: 160-164.

Traill LW, White W, Smith J. 2010b. Trapping methods for tropical waterfowl. *Corella* 34: 17-20.

Great Bowerbirds

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Talking Turkey: based on study in the Top End and further inland, Mark Ziembicki (2010) has written a book about the Australian Bustard that was recently published by CSIRO. Chapter headings are:

- 1 Talking turkey;
- 2 Bustard Dreaming;
- 3 Taxonomy and characteristics;
- 4 Status, distribution and habitat;
- 5 Diet and the daily routine;
- 6 Exploding bustards;
- 7 Movements; and
- 8 Threats and conservation.

This photo of a male Australian Bustard is the work of Brian Thistleton.