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LIFE IN THE TROPICS

Bird watching

EXPERIENCE TOWNSVILLE'S

lake ross



White-bellied Sea-eagle

The beautiful Lake Ross stores over 200,000 mega litres of water and supplies up to 80% of the city's drinking water. The dam wall stretches 8.3km across the Ross River floodplain, providing additional flood mitigation benefit to downstream communities.

The dam's extensive shallow margins and fringing woodlands provide habitat for over 200 species of birds. At times, the number of Australian Pelicans, Black Swans, Eurasian Coots and Hardhead ducks can run into the thousands – a magic sight to behold. The dam is also the breeding area for the White-bellied Sea-Eagle and the Osprey. The park around the dam and the base of the spillway are ideal habitat for bush birds. The borrow pits across the road from the

dam also support a wide variety of water birds for some months after each wet season.

Lake Ross and the borrow pits are located at the end of Riverway Drive, about 14km past Riverway in Thuringowa Central.



White-faced Heron

ross river

The Ross River winds its way through Townsville from Ross Dam to the mouth of the river near the Townsville Port. The river maintains a fairly static level throughout the year as it is held back by Black Weir. It is utilised year-round for power-boating, water skiing, rowing and other water sports. The Ross River Parkway consists of continuous community open space along both banks of the picturesque Ross River, interspersed with high quality recreation facilities, all linked by over 30 kilometres of shared pathways.

For its entire length from the Ross River Dam to its mouth, the Ross River offers a number of excellent bird watching spots, in particular around its various weirs, parks and walkways. Those areas, together with a healthy and well vegetated riparian zone along the river bank, provide easily accessible bird watching locations. Several species of Finches are often seen in the grassed areas along the bank. The observant bird watcher can sometimes spot a Tawny Frogmouth



Australian Darter



Barking Owl



Comb-crested Jacana

or even a Southern Boobook or Barking Owl secreted amongst the dense foliage.

bird watching in townsville

There are numerous bird watching locations in the Townsville region. This brochure details ten of the most accessible and diverse of those locations that will give local residents and visitors a chance to see a good number of birds most common to the region. The locations range from easy short walks to whole day or overnight trips that take you from suburbia to the edge of the outback, through pristine rainforests to the sands and mangroves of the local beaches.

There is even one that will take you across Cleveland Bay to Magnetic Island off the coast of Townsville.

Further bird watching information can be found on the Townsville City Council State of Environment web site at www.soe-townsville.org/images.html or on the Townsville Region Bird Observers Club at www.trboc.org.au.

what to bring

For satisfying bird watching you will need a good field guide and a pair of binoculars with a magnification of about 7 x 50 or 8 x 40.

Bird watchers are encouraged to wear a wide brimmed hat and to apply sunscreen and insect repellent.

Threatened, endangered & vulnerable birds

Townsville is the home of a number of Australia's threatened, endangered and vulnerable birds including the Southern Cassowary, Cotton Pygmy-Goose, Australian Bustard, Bush Stone-Curlew, Beach Stone-Curlew, Rufous Owl, Masked Owl

and Blackthroated Finch. It is estimated that one in five of Australia's bird species is threatened with extinction, so it is important that native birds and their habitat are protected. Please do not disturb birds, their nests or their habitat.

Birds likely to be seen include:

Australasian Darter, Little Pied Cormorant, Australian Pelican, White-faced Heron, Little Egret, Eastern Great Egret, Intermediate Egret, Australian White Ibis, Royal Spoonbill, Black Kite, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Australian Bustard, Rainbow Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Rainbow Bee-eater, Helmeted Friarbird, Yellow Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Spangled Drongo, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Pied Butcherbird, Great Bowerbird, Nutmeg Mannikin, Olive-backed Sunbird (Yellow-bellied Sunbird).

Birds likely to be seen include:

Australasian Darter, Little Black Cormorant, Intermediate Egret, Black Kite, Brahminy Kite, Comb-crested Jacana, Crested Pigeon, Peaceful Dove, Pale-headed Rosella, Pheasant Coucal, Southern Boobook, Tawny Frogmouth, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Forest Kingfisher, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Yellow Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Brown-backed Honeyeater, Leaden Flycatcher, Spangled Drongo, Figbird, Great Bowerbird, Double-barred Finch, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, Olive-backed Sunbird.

bird sighting checklist

- Southern Cassowary
- Emu
- Australian Brush-turkey
- Brown Quail
- Magpie Goose
- Plumbed Whistling-Duck
- Wandering Whistling-Duck
- Black Swan
- Australian Wood Duck
- Pink-eared Duck
- Cotton Pygmy-goose
- Green Pygmy-goose
- Australasian Shoveler
- Grey Teal
- Pacific Black Duck
- Hardhead
- Australasian Grebe
- Great Crested Grebe
- Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)
- White-headed Pigeon
- Spotted Dove
- Brown Cuckoo-Dove
- Emerald Dove
- Crested Pigeon
- Squatter Pigeon
- Diamond Dove
- Peaceful Dove
- Bar-shouldered Dove
- Wompoo Fruit-Dove
- Superb Fruit-Dove
- Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove
- Pied Imperial-Pigeon
- Topknot Pigeon
- Tawny Frogmouth
- Papuan Frogmouth
- White-throated Nightjar
- Spotted Nightjar
- Large-tailed Nightjar
- Australian Owlet-nightjar
- Australian Swiftlet
- White-throated Needletail
- Fork-tailed Swift
- Brown Booby
- Australasian Darter
- Little Pied Cormorant
- Great Cormorant
- Little Black Cormorant
- Pacific Golden Plover
- Pied Cormorant
- Australian Pelican
- Black-necked Stork
- Black Bittern
- White-necked Heron

- Eastern Great Egret
- Intermediate Egret
- Cattle Egret
- Striated Heron
- White-faced Heron
- Little Egret
- Eastern Reef Egret
- Nankeen Night-Heron
- Glossy Ibis
- Australian White Ibis
- Straw-necked Ibis
- Black-shouldered Kite
- Square-tailed Kite
- Pacific Baza
- White-bellied Sea-Eagle
- Whistling Kite
- Brahminy Kite
- Black Kite
- Brown Goshawk
- Collared Sparrowhawk
- Grey Goshawk
- Spotted Harrier
- Swamp Harrier
- Wedge-tailed Eagle
- Little Eagle
- Nankeen Kestrel
- Brown Falcon
- Australian Hobby
- Black Falcon
- Peregrine Falcon
- Brolga
- Purple Swamphen
- Red-necked Crike
- Buff-banded Rail
- White-browed Crike
- Dusky Moorhen
- Eurasian Coot
- Australian Bustard
- Bush Stone-curlew
- Beach Stone-curlew
- Australian Pied Oystercatcher
- Sooty Oystercatcher
- Black-winged Stilt
- Pacific Golden Plover
- Grey Plover
- Red-capped Plover
- Lesser Sand Plover
- Greater Sand Plover
- Black-fronted Dotterel

- Red-kneed Dotterel
- Banded Lapwing
- Masked Lapwing
- Comb-crested Jacana
- Latham's Snipe
- Black-tailed Godwit
- Bar-tailed Godwit
- Little Curlew
- Whimbrel
- Eastern Curlew
- Terek Sandpiper
- Common Sandpiper
- Grey-tailed Tattler
- Wandering Tattler
- Common Greenshank
- Marsh Sandpiper
- Ruddy Turnstone
- Red-tailed Sandpiper
- Red-backed Button-quail
- Red-chested Button-quail
- Little Button-quail
- Australian Pratincole
- Little Tern
- Gull-billed Tern
- Caspian Tern
- Whiskered Tern
- White-winged Black Tern
- Lesser Crested Tern
- Crested Tern
- Silver Gull
- Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo
- Glossy Black-Cockatoo
- Galah
- Little Corella
- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
- Cockatiel
- Rainbow Lorikeet
- Scaly-breasted Lorikeet
- Little Lorikeet
- Double-eyed Fig-Parrot
- Australian King-Parrot
- Red-winged Parrot
- Crimson Rosella
- Pale-headed Rosella
- Budgerigar
- Pheasant Coucal
- Eastern Koel
- Channel-billed Cuckoo
- Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo

- Black-eared Cuckoo
- Shining Bronze-Cuckoo
- Little Bronze-Cuckoo
- Pallid Cuckoo
- Fan-tailed Cuckoo
- Brush Cuckoo
- Oriental Cuckoo
- Rufous Owl
- Barking Owl
- Southern Boobook
- Sooty Owl
- Masked Owl
- Eastern Barn Owl
- Eastern Grass Owl
- Azure Kingfisher
- Little Kingfisher
- Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher
- Blue-winged Kookaburra
- Forest Kingfisher
- Red-backed Kingfisher
- Sacred Kingfisher
- Collared Kingfisher
- Rainbow Bee-eater
- Dollabird
- Noisy Pitta
- White-throated Treecreeper
- Brown Treecreeper
- Spotted Catbird
- Tooth-billed Bowerbird
- Golden Bowerbird
- Satin Bowerbird
- Great Bowerbird
- Red-backed Fairy-wren
- Lovely Fairy-wren
- Fernwren
- Yellow-throated Scrubwren
- White-throated Scrubwren
- Large-billed Scrubwren
- Weebill
- Brown Gerygone
- Mangrove Gerygone
- Large-billed Gerygone
- Fairy Gerygone
- White-throated Gerygone
- Ruf-rumped Thornbill
- Mountain Thornbill
- Spotted Pardalote
- Striated Pardalote
- Eastern Spinebill
- Lewin's Honeyeater

- Yellow-spotted Honeyeater
- Graceful Honeyeater
- Bridled Honeyeater
- Yellow-faced Honeyeater
- Singing Honeyeater
- Varied Honeyeater
- Mangrove Honeyeater
- White-gaped Honeyeater
- Yellow Honeyeater
- Fuscous Honeyeater
- Noisy Miner
- Yellow-throated Miner
- Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
- Brown-backed Honeyeater
- Rufous-throated Honeyeater
- Dusky Honeyeater
- Scarlet Honeyeater
- Brown Honeyeater
- White-cheeked Honeyeater
- Black-chinned Honeyeater
- White-throated Honeyeater
- White-naped Honeyeater
- Blue-faced Honeyeater
- Helmeted Friarbird
- Noisy Friarbird
- Little Friarbird
- Macleay's Honeyeater
- Striped Honeyeater
- Grey-crowned Babbler
- Chowchilla
- Eastern Whipbird
- Varied Sittella
- Ground Cuckoo-shrike
- Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
- White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike
- Barred Cuckoo-shrike
- Cicadabird
- White-winged Triller
- Varied Triller
- Crested Shrike-tit
- Golden Whistler
- Grey Whistler
- Rufous Whistler
- Little Shrike-thrush
- Bower's Shrike-thrush
- Australasian Figbird
- Yellow Oriole
- Olive-backed Oriole
- White-breasted Woodswallow
- Masked Woodswallow
- White-browed Woodswallow

- Black-faced Woodswallow
- Little Woodswallow
- Black Butcherbird
- Grey Butcherbird
- Pied Butcherbird
- Australian Magpie
- Pied Currawong
- Spangled Drongo
- Rufous Fantail
- Grey Fantail
- Northern Fantail
- Willie Wagtail
- Australian Raven
- Little Crow
- Torresian Crow
- Leaden Flycatcher
- Satin Flycatcher
- Shining Flycatcher
- Restless Flycatcher
- White-eared Monarch
- Black-faced Monarch
- Spectacled Monarch
- Magpie-lark
- Pied Monarch
- Yellow-breasted Boatbill
- White-winged Chough
- Apostlebird
- Victoria's Riflebird
- Jacky Winter
- Lemon-bellied Flycatcher
- Pale-yellow Robin
- Eastern Yellow Robin
- Mangrove Robin
- Grey-headed Robin
- White-browed Robin
- Horsfield's Bushlark
- Golden-headed Cisticola
- Australian Reed-Warbler
- Tawny Grassbird
- Rufous Songlark
- Brown Songlark
- Silvereye
- Welcome Swallow
- Fairy Martin
- Tree Martin
- Bassian Thrush
- Russet-tailed Thrush
- Metallic Starling
- Common Myna
- Mistletoebird
- Olive-backed Sunbird
- Zebra Finch

- Double-barred Finch
- Black-throated Finch
- Crimson Finch
- Plum-headed Finch
- Red-browed Finch
- Nutmeg Mannikin
- Chestnut-breasted Mannikin
- Pictorella Mannikin
- House Sparrow
- Australasian Pipit

This bird list was created from sightings recorded by members of Townsville Bird Region Birds Observers Club. Other birds may be seen that are not listed in this brochure.

A copy of your bird sightings with dates and contact details would be appreciated by the:

Townsville Region Bird Observers Club
 PO Box 756
 Townsville QLD 4810

Contact (07) 4778 1945 to report unusual sightings.

Date _____

Location _____

Observer _____

Taxonomical order and birds names are in accordance with 'Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds' by Chistidis and Boles published in 2008 by CSIRO Publishing.

bird watching locations



- Town Common
- Northern Beaches
- Alligator Creek
- Mt Spec National Park & Paluma
- Ross River
- Bluewater
- Magnetic Island
- Lake Ross
- Oak Valley
- Star River Loop



Townsville Region Bird Observers Club
 PO Box 756, Townsville, QLD 4810
www.trboc.org.au

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Townsville City Council
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 Email enquiries@townsville.qld.gov.au
 Website www.townsville.qld.gov.au

the northern beaches

Townsville's Northern Beaches are located off the Bruce Highway north of Townsville, and are all well sign-posted. Beaches in the region, including Bushland, Saunders, Toolakea, Toomulla and Balgal, are popular bird watching areas. All provide ideal habitats for seabirds and migratory waders. Of particular note are the Beach Stone-curlew, Australian Pied Oystercatchers, Red-capped Plovers and several species of terns. Raptors are ever-present in the sky, while a good assortment of forest birds can be spotted in the vegetation behind the dunes.

Large numbers of migrating waders can usually be seen on the beaches between September and April.

Care should be taken on the beaches to ensure dogs do not disturb the birds and motorised transport is prohibited on the beaches and the dunes. Walks in the bush behind the dunes and along the edges of the mangroves will generally reveal some of the more elusive forest birds.



Bar-tailed Godwit



Red-capped Plover

Birds likely to be seen include:

Eastern Reef Egret, Straw-necked Ibis, Osprey, Black Kite, Whistling Kite, Brahminy Kite, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Red-necked Stint, Black-fronted Dotterel, Silver Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Little Tern, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Red-winged Parrot, Pale-headed Rosella, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Mangrove Gerygone, Helmeted Friarbird, Blue-faced Honeyeater, White-winged Triller, Olive-backed Oriole, Black Butcherbird.

bluewater

At the southern end of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is the Bluewater section of Paluma State Forest, which is the closest and most accessible rainforest to Townsville, offering great views over the coast and offshore islands. This location is a popular retreat in summer, but few facilities are provided so visitors must be self-sufficient. Good bird watching is also available in the parkland and a designated camping area is located at Bluewater Park on Forestry Road (note: camping is not allowed in the forest).

Bluewater is a 30 minute drive north of Townsville on the Bruce Highway. Turn left off the highway into Forestry Road at Bluewater and drive 18km west into the forest. The road is closed during the wet season but is generally accessible by conventional vehicle in dry weather. Caution is advised when driving on the gravel road up the range.

Before venturing into the area, it is suggested that information



Pale-headed Rosella



Red-backed Fairy-wren

regarding accessibility and road conditions be sought from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in Ingham on (07) 4777 2822.

mt. spec national park & the paluma region

The Paluma region is a bird watcher's paradise. Some of the region's most rare and endangered species can be found here. The township of Paluma is home to a wide array of impressive native rainforest bird species, while further past Paluma there are opportunities to view dry tropical forest birds.

The first bird-watching stop is at the picnic area at Little Crystal Creek, then McClelland's Lookout and finally Paluma village. Birthday Creek Bridge is worth a stop, as is the walk to Birthday Creek Falls, where you may spot the elusive Golden Bowerbird. Lake Paluma offers the rainforest environment at its best. There are also camping facilities, BBQs and toilets. The Eucalyptus grandis forest near Hidden Valley is another good bird watching location.

The turnoff to Paluma is located approximately 60km north of Townsville off the Bruce Highway, and is well signposted. The 18km road leading to Paluma is quite

narrow and windy, and is not suitable for caravans. The Little Crystal Creek picnic area is located about half way up the range, and Lake Paluma is approximately 16km past the township of Paluma. A further 4km past the turnoff to Lake Paluma and the landscape starts to change to the open grandis Forests of Hidden Valley.



Victoria's Riflebird



White-cheeked Honeyeater

star river loop



Emu

Whether you are a keen bird watcher or just enjoy a long drive that will show you the diversity of Townsville's environment, this is the trip to take. The 300 km, full-day drive loops from the suburbs, to the edge of the outback, into lush rainforest and onto sandy beaches.

The drive from Townsville along Hervey Range Road to the top of the range shows the change of habitat and the diversity of the species of birds. Tea Rooms are located at the top of the range – a perfect stop for refreshments. From there, continue along Hervey Range Road for 63km to the Star River – a good spot for bird



Apostlebird

watching. A right-hand turn, 1km past the Star River, will take you to Hidden Valley. There is good bird watching on this part of the drive, but be aware that you cannot venture off the road as it runs through private property for most of its length. From Hidden Valley it is a 23km drive to Paluma where, along the way, you enter the southernmost end of the Wet Tropics Rainforest. After Paluma, head down the mountain to the Bruce Highway and onto one or more of the city's Northern Beaches. It is long day-trip, but for the keen bird watcher, it is one that is sure to please.

the town common

The open woodlands, grasslands, beaches, wetlands and swamps of the Town Common offer a range of habitats and very diverse bird-life. Over 300 species of birds have been recorded here. These ephemeral wetlands, changing dramatically from the wet to dry season, are often used by migratory waders (shorebirds).

of its role in the World War II conflict. To visit the Town Common Environmental Park (open 6:30am – 6:30pm) take the road from Rowes Bay to Cape Pallarenda and turn left at the large road sign, about 10kms from the city centre.

The Many Peaks Range with its forested gullies divides the Town Common on the northern boundary from Halifax Bay. The forest walk, bird hides and observation points give the birdwatcher many opportunities to stop, look and listen. The Town Common has a long and interesting history with reminders



Tawny Frogmouth



Olive-backed Sunbird



Brolga

Birds likely to be seen include:

Brolga, Black-necked Stork, Australasian Darter, Eastern Great Egret, Pacific Black Duck, Black-winged Stilt, Comb-crested Jacana, Whistling Kite, Brahminy Kite, Forest Kingfisher, Leaden Flycatcher, Varied Triller, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Bush Stone-curlew, Brown-backed and Yellow Honeyeater, Double-barred Finch.

alligator creek, bowling green bay national park



Australian Swiftlet

The Bowling Green Bay National Park covers 55,300ha of coastal and mountainous terrain including sections of Mt Elliot, Cape Cleveland and Cape Bowling Green. The importance of the park lies in its diversity of habitat, ranging from mangroves at sea level to mountain-top rainforests at 1200m altitude. The wetlands of Bowling Green Bay are classified under the Ramsar Convention.

Alligator Creek is the most accessible of the streams that flow off Mt Elliot and offers creek-based recreational activities, including swimming in the rock pools, bushwalking, picnic areas and overnight camping.



Australian Brush-turkey

Bird-watching opportunities are best early in the morning and during non-holiday periods. The riparian woodlands along the creek hold a good selection of honeyeaters and flycatchers, while the whistlers prefer the drier bush lands on the slopes of Mt Elliot. White-browed Robin frequent the picnic area and Australian Swiftlets are often recorded flying high over the creek.

The turn-off to the Cape Bowling Green National Park and Alligator Creek is located approximately 20km south of Townsville off the Bruce Highway, and is well sign-posted.

magnetic island

Just a 20 minute ferry ride from Townsville is the beautiful Magnetic Island. Maggie, as it's affectionately referred to by locals, features huge granite boulders covered in hoop pines, eucalypts, wattles and kapok trees. There are also mangrove swamps and tea tree swamps on the island. Two thirds of the island is National Park and there are 25 kilometres of walking trails linking the island's main bays. Koalas can usually be seen on the walking track to the forts, which were built to defend Townsville in World War II.

The Bush Stone-curlew is the iconic bird of Magnetic Island. Its eerie cry can be heard echoing across the bays at night. They are accustomed to people and wander around the roadside edges and gardens, day and night. Magnetic Island is also home to a few families of Orange-footed Scrubfowl. A careful search will disclose the mounds of these small megapodes. Brahminy Kites can usually be seen at the Nelly Bay marina where they scavenge bait from fishers. White-bellied Sea Eagles can often be seen soaring

over the hills between Nelly and Picnic Bays. Easter Reef Egrets and Striated Herons usually patrol Geoffrey Bay at low tide.

The island is easily accessible from Townsville by both passenger ferry from the Breakwater Terminal on Sir Leslie Theiss Drive and by car ferry at the terminal on Ross Street.

In the wet season Magpie Geese and Brolgas, among other water birds, may inhabit the swampland at the back of the beach in Horseshoe Bay.



Bush Stone-curlew

oak valley

Oak Valley is a rural residential suburb of Townsville, located to south of the CBD and adjacent to the Ross Dam. The Oak Valley Reserve is a 75ha nature reserve, and is a favourite area for bird-watchers. The reserve has a bird viewing platform and an all-weather gravel Wildlife Trail. Not far from the reserve you will find the Chisholm Trail, which is one of the few remaining habitats in Townsville for the critically-endangered Black-throated Finch.

The Oak Valley turn off is located 11km south of Townsville off the Flinders Highway, and is well sign-posted. Cross the railway line and then turn right into Valley Drive. After a short distance, turn left into Greta Road. To get to the Chisholm Trail, turn right into Thunderbolt Drive and then turn left after 500m.

To get to the reserve, turn left at the end of Thunderbolt Drive and continue until you reach the picnic area alongside Sach's Creek.



Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo



Black-throated Finch



Squatter Pigeon

Birds likely to be seen include:

Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Brahminy Kite, Helmeted Friarbird, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Eastern Reef Egret, Striated Heron, Pied Currawong, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Laughing Kookaburra, Figbird, Nankeen Kestrel, Whistling Kite, Masked Lapwing, Red-capped Plover, Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Silver Gull, Australian White Ibis, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Torresian Crow, Pied Imperial-Pigeon, and Welcome Swallow. In the wet season Magpie Geese and Brolgas, among other water birds, may inhabit the swampland at the back of the beach in Horseshoe Bay.

Birds likely to be seen include:

Australasian Darter, Magpie Goose, Plumed Whistling-Duck, Egrets, Royal Spoonbill, Bush Stone-curlew, Whistling Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Collared Sparrowhawk, Crested Pigeon, Squatter Pigeon, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Brush Cuckoo, Forest Kingfisher, Dollarbird, Brown Honeyeater, Dusky Honeyeater, Friarbirds, Lemon-bellied Flycatcher, Pied Butcherbird, Double-barred Finch, Black-throated Finch, Golden-headed Cisticola.