

Happy Birthday Cecily.

Recently I met this most amazing woman, Cecily Fearnley on the eve of her 94th birthday. Cecily has been a member of BQ since 1975. We chatted about her interest in wildlife and the environment going back to 1946. Her late husband Mr Jim Fearnley was just as passionate.

Cecily's parents encouraged her to complete her Senior High schooling which led to studies at the Brisbane School of Arts. During WWII, Cecily used her drawing skills as a civilian employee in General MacArthur's Office in Brisbane where she prepared drawings of camp sites and then mapping. Later she applied herself to the sad and daunting task of grave mapping for the US Forces.

Cecily was a member of the Queensland Naturalists' Club and while drawing trees at an outing in 1946 she was approached by a man who asked if she could also draw birds. He invited her to visit him at the Qld Museum where she was offered a position as the first museum artist in 1947. She was required to do all types of artwork and went out on field trips with the museum workers. This provided the opportunity to learn much about a range of different wildlife. She was particularly impressed by the young group of birders which sparked her passion for birding. Around this time, Cecily joined the NPAQ where she soon became known as "someone who knew a lot about birds".

Cecily always played an active role in everything she was involved with so when the inaugural meeting for Brisbane Bushwalkers Club was announced in 1948, Cecily's mother would not let her attend unless she promised not to come back as president. Cecily kept her promise and returned home as the first vice-president.

Cecily met Jim on a NPAQ camp at the Glass House Mountains and married in 1953. They both loved the outdoors and became involved in many activities to conserve and protect the environment including holding positions as Honorary Protectors and Rangers as described in the Fauna Conservation Act 1974 and National Parks and Wildlife Act 1975.

Cecily and Jim moved to the Noosa region and were foundation members of the Noosa Parks Association in 1962 (Jim became president from 1979 to 1987). Cecily said this was to save Noosa from "uprise". Jim became the first Noosa Shire Councillor elected as a pro-conservationist in 1978.

Cecily founded the Noosa Parks Association Bird Observers Group and the Noosa Bird Trail was launched in December 2004. The Trail includes the Fearnley Bird Hide on the edge of Lake MacDonald at Jabiru Park, named in memory of Jim Fearnley.

Cecily was awarded the Queensland Naturalist Award in 2001. Over the years she has published several books on the flora and fauna of the Noosa region including "Common Birds of Noosa, Cooloola and the Sunshine Coast".

In 1973 Cecily began writing the Noosa Nature column for the Noosa News producing 1500 columns over 30 years. Cecily has retained a record of her amazing work (each article accompanied by her own drawings) in a series of scrapbooks. This is a priceless historical treasure-trove of interesting articles covering all facets of the different bird species including appearance, habitats, behaviours, current threats and conservation, as well as social commentary. Her writing encompasses both the scientifically accurate and the lyrically descriptive making them an interesting and entertaining read.

On a final note, Cecily is concerned about the disappearance of birds over the past 10 years. She said that although the habitat on her part of the Noosa River has remained the same, small birds have

drastically reduced in numbers or disappeared such as the Grey Fantail. Waterbirds have declined in numbers with a Jabiru making an infrequent appearance. The Common Myna numbers have been greatly reduced by council trapping. Cecily believes roaming domestic animals are the main culprits.

It was a privilege and a joy to talk with Cecily. Examples from Cecily's articles are shown below.

A rarely seen inhabitant

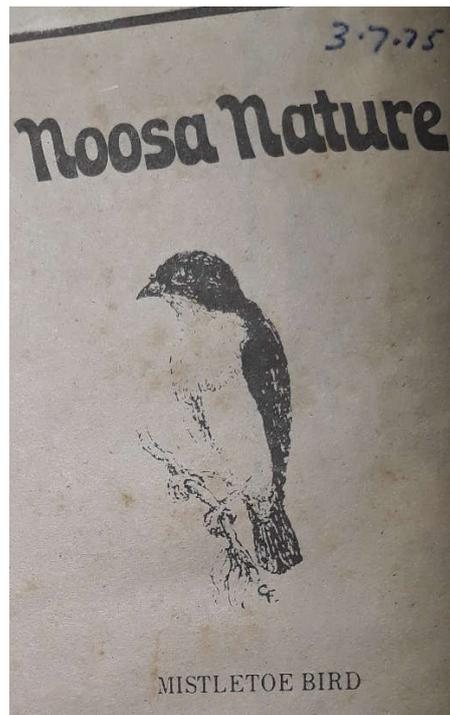
(By Cecily Fearnley)

Brilliant scarlet, rich navy blue and white — a dramatic combination of colours in anything, and one could expect it to guarantee its making any bird wearing it immediately noticeable. Yet this is not the case with the tiny male mistletoe-bird.

Though thus attired, it is seldom seen on a day's outing, for its small size and tree top habits make it difficult to view clearly.

As the name suggests, they are particularly fond of mistletoe berries and blossom, as well as other small fruits and insects found on and among high foliage. Generally speaking, when looking at mistletoe clumps, then look for this bird.

Many people blame them for the spread of this parasitic plant, and they most certainly assist. Apparently they have specialised stomach or gizzard adapted as a tube which allows the numerous berries to pass quickly through into the intestines and out again. Some sticky seeds then become attached to fresh branches there to germinate and parasitise possibly a new tree.



Their chief predators are Tree Goanas, Eagles and Man. Through constant clearing of land, these birds are being forced even further into the mountains and wilderness areas in the search for quietness in which to rear their families. May we retain enough areas of State Forests of native timbers (not exotic pines) and National Parks of sufficient size that in about 100 years from now we will still hear country people say "Hear the Black Cockatoos - there must be rain about".



THE PELICANS ARE BACK

Noosa Nature

By Cecily Fearnley

News that a pelican had been seen on the river a couple of weeks ago made many people "prick up their ears" and look carefully.

Though he stayed only a couple of days, the locals smiled and called it a good omen. Then Ian Gall in his nature article in the Courier-Mail said a flock of 25 or so were seen flying around near the Hornbrook Highway, and even more local interest was aroused.

So when a flock of 23 flew over the Noosa River as though "casing the joint" and surveying food prospects, the news travelled like wildfire. I heard about them from three different people the same day.

We love our pelicans here on the Coast. Residents of eight or more years: standing

