

## **A fine thread linking Leichhardt's first expedition and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Easter Camp 19-22 April 2019.**

The following is based on information interpreted from the BQ archives and the Chinchilla Naturalists' *Going Bush with the Chinchilla Nats* (1988).

Mr Cec Cameron, Country Vice-President of Birds Queensland (1970-1974) and founder of the Chinchilla Field Naturalists (1967) appears to be quite an impressive visionary. He was a prolific contributor to Sunbird and applied rigour to his scientific observations and data collection.

The first Birds Queensland camp was Easter 1970 at Mr Cec Cameron's property "Rockwood". It was held with the Chinchilla Field Naturalists and included tripping around the Miles-Condamine area. Mr Cec Cameron generously offered his "Rockwood" property for the inaugural Easter camp as well as Easter Camps in 1972 and 1974. Access to "Rockwood" is now restricted as it has been absorbed by the extensive gas fields in this region.

In 1844 the first Leichhardt Expedition from Jimbour Station to Port Essington camped at Kent's Lagoon on Stockyard Creek between Chinchilla and Miles in October 1844. The expedition stayed for several days during which the ornithologist John Gilbert made the first bird list for the region. He died from spear wounds in June 1845 towards the end of the expedition. His diaries containing the bird list were lost until 1938 when Alec Chisholm (Australian journalist and author) tracked them down while visiting England on his way to a bird conference in Berlin – rather keen for this period in history. Gilbert's diaries and other manuscripts obtained by Chisholm are now held by the Mitchell Library ([www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/collections/zoology/john-gilbert/diary/index.aspx](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/collections/zoology/john-gilbert/diary/index.aspx)). Alec Chisholm became patron of the Chinchilla Field Nats.

A second bird list was prepared in 1884 when Kendall Broadbent (professional collector for Queensland Museum) visited. Urimbirra (Chinchilla Nats Newsletter) contains various bird lists compiled over the years including R.A. Hando's list *Birds of Riverside* (Urimbirra Jan 1978).

Mr Cec Cameron's Country Vice-President report to the 1974 AGM makes the following observations which highlight the importance of these bird lists over time (ie historical lists).

Mr Cameron believes the long-term trend of many inland species spreading to areas closer to the coast is partly due to the change in land usage. Large tracts of native timber are being removed and grain growing areas are spreading. He first recorded Crested Pigeons on the Eastern Downs in 1932. They are now found all the way to Brisbane. He also noted this trend in N.S.W. when he helped catch and band the first Crested Pigeon in north Sydney a few years ago (pre-1974). In the 1930's Galahs could only be seen out west from Roma but now (1974) they are a common sight in Indooroopilly. Blue Bonnets now breed as far east as Condamine, and a week ago (1974) he saw the first flock of Corellas 10 miles east of Condamine.

Mr Cameron also noted that the explanation for changing ranges of non-grain eating species is more elusive. The Western Warbler (Western Gerygone) for example was first seen near Miles five years ago (pre-1974) and has become widely established as far east as Dalby. There appears to be no explanation for the “island” of Pratincoles on the Jimbour Plain as there are no intermediate records east of a line from Cunnamulla to Windorah. Also, the Grey Falcon is spreading east “from a bridge-head ... in the Cooper Channel Country” with many sightings now between there and the Chinchilla region.

Mr Cameron went on to say “But birdwatching has, in the last decade changed from a way-out hobby of a few cranks, and become quite respectable...” attracting visits by many prominent ornithologists. “As a direct result, many landowners are now preserving representative samples of habitat, especially swamps and lagoons.”

This clearly acknowledges all members of Bird Qld and their positive impact on the environmental values of the wider community.