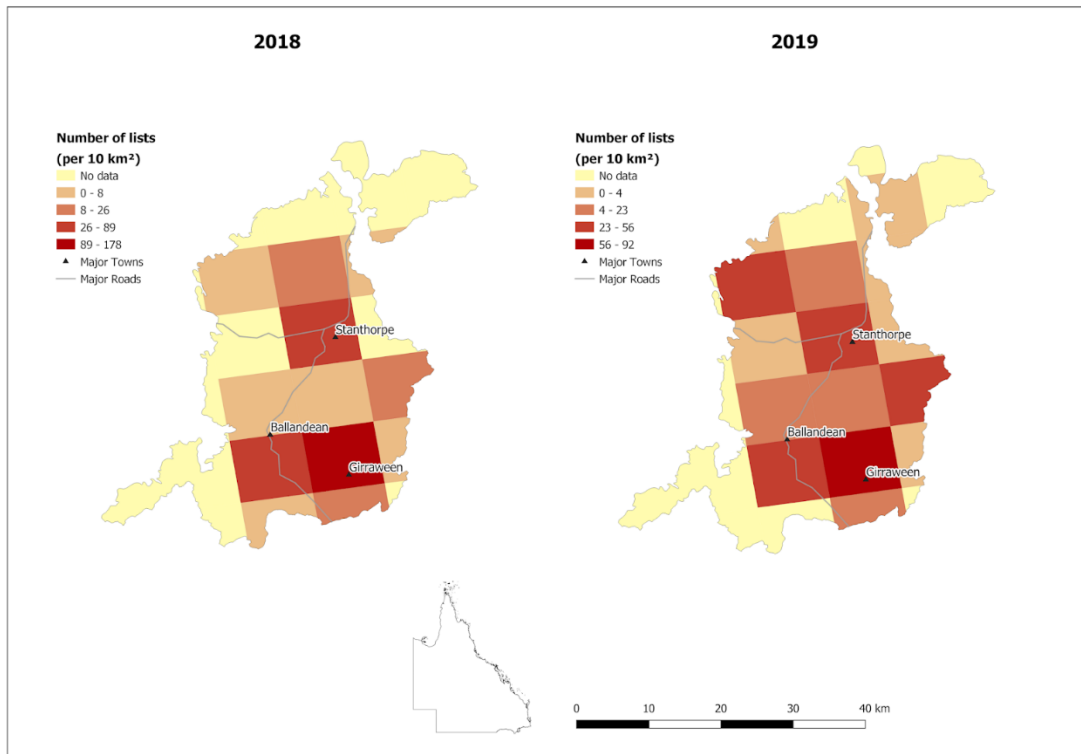
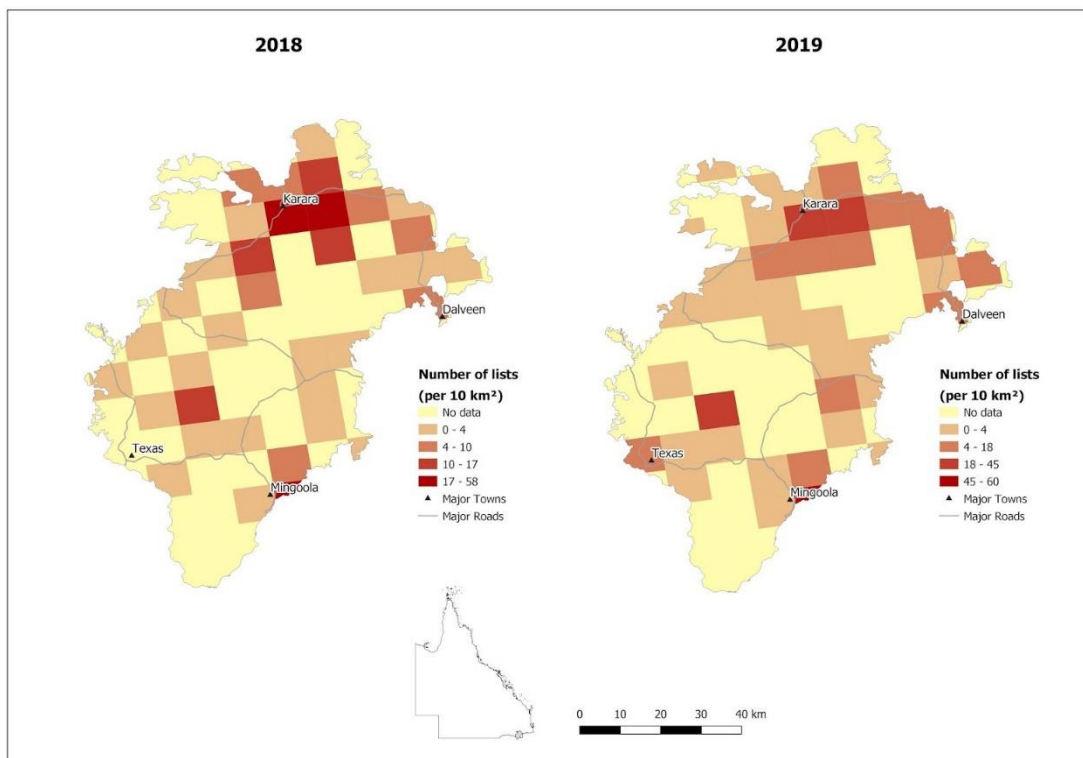


## 14. New England Tablelands, including Nandewar

David Niland & Paul Grimshaw



Map of New England Tablelands Bioregion, showing eBird survey effort



Map of Nandewar Bioregion, showing eBird survey effort



**Swift Parrot** (Jim Sneddon)



**Turquoise Parrot** (Vince Bugeja)

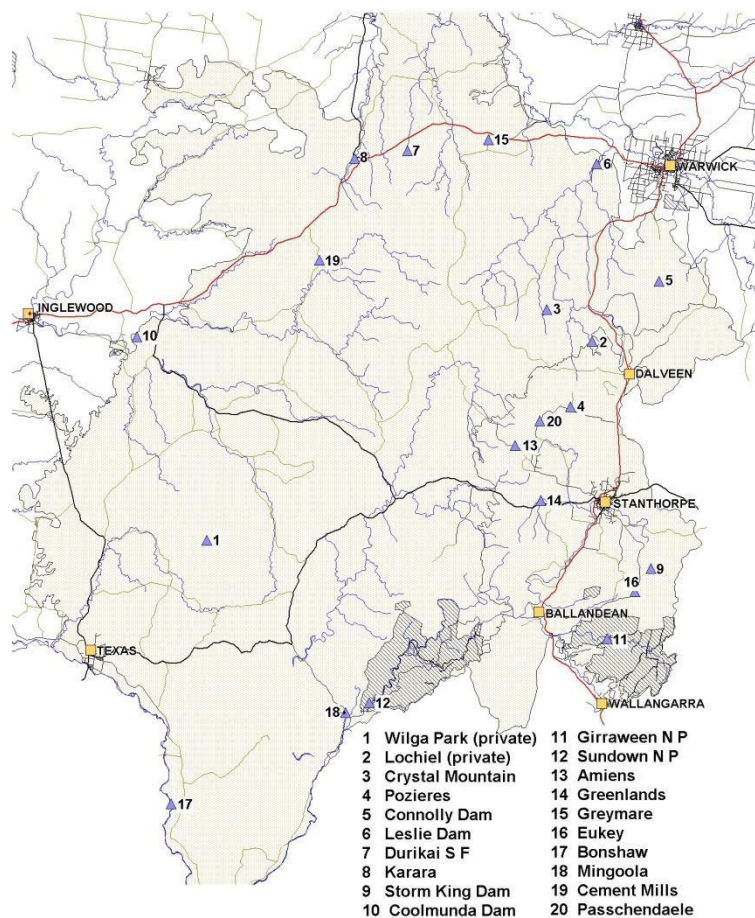
## Geography

The New England Tablelands and Nandewar Bioregions (NET) lie largely in northeastern New South Wales, but small sections of each extend into southeast Queensland. The combined area of these two bioregions is 7,748 km<sup>2</sup>, which accounts for merely 0.45% of the state, yet most of its ecosystems are unique within Queensland (DES 2013). As part of the Great Dividing Range, NET is mainly elevated land, composed of a granite batholith with underlying sedimentary rocks which are exposed on the land sloping down to the west. These geological landforms are known as the Granite Belt and Traprock Country regions, occupying roughly the eastern third and western two-thirds of NET, respectively.

The mean annual rainfall is 700–770 mm, with most rain falling from November to February. Average temperatures range from 1° to 16°C in winter and 14° to 27°C in summer at Stanthorpe (BoM 2018).

The major towns in these bioregions are Stanthorpe, Wallangarra, and Texas, and the Traprock extends north to the village of Leyburn. Most of the region lies within the Southern Downs Local Government Area (LGA) and some western parts within the Goondiwindi LGA. The state boundary with New South Wales forms much of the eastern and southern boundaries of the bioregions. The Cunningham Highway crosses the northern section, and the New England Highway runs down the eastern side, mainly through the Granite Belt. Major drainage catchments include a small part of the Condamine River and the headwaters of the Severn–Dumaresq River, which drains to the west as part of the Darling River Basin (DES 2013).

Fruit and vegetable crops dominate the farmland west of Stanthorpe, but most of the remainder has sheep and cattle grazing. Many of the farms have small dams, but the amount of water they contain is variable. A series of ornamental ponds along Quart Pot Creek in Stanthorpe is attractive to many birds. Most of the natural vegetation is grassy, shrubby woodland, or open forest with large granite outcrops and peaks in places (Sattler & Williams 1999).



Map of New England and Nandewar bioregions combined, showing eBird survey localities

## Birds of the bioregion and their conservation

The Queensland Government lists 326 native and nine introduced bird species in BBS from historic data. This includes 16 threatened or rare species although some of those may now be locally extinct. Introduced species include the recent arrival of Common Blackbird which is a Declared Pest in Queensland (DoAFF 2022).

BirdLife Australia (2019a) have identified the Traprock region as a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA), particularly for the Regent Honeyeater and Diamond Firetail. Areas providing environmental protection comprise the Girraween and Sundown National Parks (NP); Horan's Gorge Environmental Park and Arcot; Broadwater, Durikai, Greenup, Gunyan, Leyburn, Passchendaele, Talgai, and Texas State Forests (SF); and 22 Nature Refuges. Artificial waterbodies include Storm King Dam in the east, Glenlyon and Coolmunda Dams in the west, and the Leslie and Connolly Dams near Warwick to the north-east (DES 2013).

Since 2005 BirdLife Southern Queensland volunteers have been conducting seasonal surveys on farms at Braeside, Dalveen, and Pozieres as part of their Adopt-a-farm Project; and on properties north of Texas for the 20 Million Trees Program (BLA 2019b). Birds Queensland volunteers continued a series of regular route surveys around the southwestern end of Sundown National Park to map birds in the different ecosystems.

## Major events in 2018-2019

There was a steady decline in the amount of rainfall during 2018 and 2019. The second year suffered severely with 70% less than the average annual rainfall (BoM 2020). This reduced the main water supply for Stanthorpe at Storm King Dam to such an extent that in September 2019 the water ran out.

The hot, dry conditions and strong winds in early September fanned a large bushfire around Stanthorpe, Applethorpe, and Amiens which resulted in significant property loss and a 2,000-ha burnt (Bom 2019b). The previous large fire in the area was in 2002. The Goondiwindi Regional Council area was drought-declared throughout this period and the Southern Downs was from May 2018 onwards (QG 2022).

Significant sightings in 2018 included a pair of Musk Duck at Pozieres, a Brolga at Wilga Park, a Powerful Owl at Girraween Lodge, a Barking Owl at Glen Aplin, three Long-billed Corella near Cement Mills, Swift Parrots at Durikai, Black Honeyeaters around Karara, Painted Honeyeaters at various locations, a Satin Flycatcher at Girraween NP, White-backed Swallow at Sundown NP, and a Goldfinch at Pozieres. In 2019 there was a single Black-tailed Nativehen at the Leslie Dam, a Baillon's Crake at Stanthorpe, a Comb-crested Jacana at the Connolly Dam, White-winged Fairywrens near Sundown NP, and a single Bell Miner at Durikai SF.

## 2018 Notable bird records

**Emu.** The most eastern observation in the bioregion was six recorded at Pikedale in June.

**Pink-eared Duck.** Few birds recorded, but a high count of 30 observed at the dam at Pozieres on 1 September.

**Australasian Shoveler.** Over 20 recorded at Wallangarra STW during June and July.

**Hardhead.** An exceptional count of 74 recorded at Leslie Dam on 12 September.

**Blue-billed Duck.** Near-threatened. Up to seven recorded at the dam at Pozieres from April to December.

**Musk Duck.** Two observed at the dam at Pozieres on 13 January.

**Pacific Koel.** Last observation recorded on 4 February, and the first returning observed on 19 October.

**Little Bronze Cuckoo.** One bird recorded at Stanthorpe on 2 March.

**Brolga.** One bird observed at Wilga Park on 3 February.

**Banded Lapwing.** A couple of sightings recorded east and south of Karara in August through October.

**Red-kneed Dotterel.** One recorded at the Pozieres dam on 28 July.

**Latham's Snipe.** Five birds observed around Storm King Dam on 12 September.

**Gull-billed Tern.** One bird observed at Leslie Dam on 12 September.

**Little Pied Cormorant.** A large count of 60 recorded at Lake Coolmunda on 4 August.

**Australian White Ibis.** Virtually all observations recorded in the vicinity of Stanthorpe.

**Pacific Baza.** Observations recorded at Stanthorpe in March and Durikai SF in September.

**Swamp Harrier.** One observed at the dam at Pozieres on 1 September.

**Powerful Owl.** One recorded at Girraween Lodge on 14 January.

**Barking Owl.** One recorded at Glen Aplin on 13 November.

**Oriental Dollarbird.** Last observation recorded on 13 March, and the first returning on 1 October.

**Sacred Kingfisher.** Last observation recorded on 9 February, and the first returning on 6 October.

**Red-backed Kingfisher.** Three separate birds recorded in Karara-Greymare area on 23 September.

**Rainbow Bee-eater.** Last observation recorded on 15 March, and first returning observed on 9 September.

**Black Falcon.** Single birds observed at Girraween NP in March and May, and at Wilga Park in August.

**Long-billed Corella.** Introduced. Three birds observed in the Cement Mills area on 19 November.

**Eastern Rosella.** Hybrids with Pale-headed recorded at Durikai SF and Sundown NP.

**Australian Ringneck.** One bird recorded at Wilga Park on 4 February.

**Swift Parrot.** Critically Endangered. Up to seven birds observed at Durikai SF in May and August through September.

**Turquoise Parrot.** One count of 30 birds recorded at Sundown NP on 30 June.

**Rainbow Lorikeet.** One count of 400 birds recorded at Goondiwindi on 24 October.

**Spotted Bowerbird.** Two birds observed at Wilga Park on 19 May.

**Red-backed Fairywren.** One bird recorded at Girraween NP on 19 October.

**Black Honeyeater.** Observations common around Durikai SF and Karara from September to November.

**Painted Honeyeater.** Vulnerable. Single birds or pairs recorded in February, September, and October.

**White-cheeked Honeyeater.** Single birds observed at Girraween NP in January and Ballandean in August.

**Black-chinned Honeyeater.** All records from Durikai SF and further west.

**White-naped Honeyeater.** About 50 observed in small groups flying over Wallangarra on 31 May.

**Yellow-faced Honeyeater.** About 50 observed in small groups flying over Wallangarra on 31 May.

**Yellow-throated Miner.** Observations recorded at Lake Coolmunda in August and Karara in October.

**Western Gerygone.** Most observations recorded from September to December.

**Striated Thornbill.** All observations recorded east of Wyberba and Ballandean.

**Southern Whiteface.** All observations recorded from Sundown NP and further west.

**White-browed Babbler.** All observations recorded to the west of Wallangarra and Amiens.

**Masked Woodswallow.** Most observations recorded from September to November with a high count of 2,500 at Karara on 27 October.

**White-browed Woodswallow.** Observations mainly recorded from September to November with a high count of 2,500 in a mixed flock with Masked Woodswallows at Karara on 27 October.

**Little Woodswallow.** Observations recorded at Karara and Sundown NP in September and October.

**Rufous Shrike-thrush.** One bird recorded at Girraween NP on 19 October.

**Satin Flycatcher.** One observation recorded at Girraween NP on 17 October.

**Hooded Robin.** Observations recorded east as far as Wallangarra.

**Rose Robin.** Observations recorded from April to August in Nandewar section.

**White-backed Swallow.** Observations recorded at Sundown NP in October and December.

**Brown Songlark.** Observations recorded once at Sundown NP, around the Karara area, and at Wilga Park.

**Common Blackbird.** Introduced. Observations recorded in Ballandean, Stanthorpe, and Pozieres.

**House Sparrow.** Introduced. Observations recorded at Wallangarra, Ballandean, Stanthorpe, and Thulimbah.

**Diamond Firetail.** Scattered observations recorded with 20 observed at Wallangarra in May.

**Plum-headed Finch.** Counts of 60 birds recorded at Wallangarra in May and July.

**European Goldfinch.** Introduced. One bird observed at Pozieres on 30 October.

**Stubble Quail.** One heard at Leslie Dam on 7 October.

### **2019 Notable bird records**

**Australasian Shoveler.** Up to 40 observed at the Wallangarra STW in March.

**Australian Ringneck.** Three birds observed at Wilga Park on 17 August.

**Azure Kingfisher.** One flew into a window and found dead at Stanthorpe.

**Baillon's Crake.** One recorded at Stanthorpe on 29 October.

**Banded Lapwing.** Five birds observed at Cement Mills on 5 May, and another single bird observed in September.

**Bell Miner.** A single bird observed at Durikai SF in April and May.

**Black-eared Cuckoo.** Single birds recorded at Amiens in January, Greenup in February, and Terrica in November.

**Black-faced Monarch.** A single bird observed east of Cement Mills on 6 October.

**Black-tailed Nativehen.** One bird recorded at Leslie Dam on 1 November.

**Brown Songlark.** Four birds recorded at Leslie Dam on the 6 September.

**Caspian Tern.** An exceptional count of 18 birds recorded at Leslie Dam on 4 August.

**Chestnut Teal.** Twelve observed at Wallangarra STW on 29 March.

**Comb-crested Jacana.** One bird observed at Connolly Dam on 6 May.

**Common Bronzewing.** A nest with young observed at Stanthorpe on 31 October.

**Common Myna.** Introduced. Species observations were quite numerous at Pozieres with a count of 37 in an hour on 27 June.

**Common Starling.** Introduced. An exceptional count of over 100 observed at Ballandean on 6 May.

**Crested Bellbird.** One recorded at Coolmunda Conservation Park on 26 July.

**Double-barred Finch.** An exceptional count of 45 recorded near Ballandean on 6 December.

**Dusky Moorhen.** A significant increase in numbers observed in August with 27 recorded at Storm King Dam, which would have been almost dry.

**European Goldfinch.** Introduced. Observations recorded at Pozieres in April and Amiens in May.

**Glossy Black Cockatoo.** Observations recorded at Girraween NP in June and Sundown NP in December.

**Glossy Ibis.** One observed at Storm King Dam on 19 January.

**Gull-billed Tern.** Observations recorded at Leslie Dam in May and June.

**Hardhead.** Up to 70 recorded at Connolly Dam in August.

**Hoary-headed Grebe.** A peak of 22 birds recorded at the dam at Pozieres on 23 June.

**Horsfield's Bush Lark.** One bird observed at Leslie Dam on 13 December.

**House Sparrow.** Introduced. Three observed in Girraween NP in October, and 15 at Texas in November.

**Little Black Cormorant.** A large group of 300 birds with other cormorants recorded at Leslie dam on 6 May.

**Little Corella.** One flock estimated at 1,000 birds recorded in Stanthorpe during March.

**Little Grassbird.** A single bird recorded at Amiens in April and June, and three recorded at Wallangarra STW in August and September.

**Little Pied Cormorant.** An exceptional count of 23 birds observed at Leslie Dam on 4 August.

**Little Wattlebird.** Odd birds recorded at Girraween Lodge, Sundown NP, and Durikai SF.

**Little Woodswallow.** One observation of four birds recorded at Durikai SF on 18 October.

**Painted Buttonquail.** Two birds observed near Sugarloaf, southeast of Stanthorpe on 9 February.

**Pied Stilt.** Observations recorded mostly from June until December.

**Pink-eared Duck.** Up to 45 recorded at the Wallangarra STW in September.

**Red-backed Fairywren.** Observations included two birds at Girraween NP and six at Durikai SF, both in April.

**Red-capped Plover.** Two birds recorded at Leslie Dam on 8 December.

**Rufous Fantail.** Single birds recorded at Girraween NP in January and November.

**Scaly-breasted Lorikeet.** A count of 23 recorded feeding on rotten apples at The Summit in April.

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.** Six birds observed at Leslie dam on 1 November.

**Singing Honeyeater.** Three observed at Durikai SF in August, and one observed at Freestone in September.

**Spotted Bowerbird.** One bird observed at Wilga Park on 17 August.

**Spotted Pardalote.** An exceptional count of 22 recorded in an hour at Wilga Park on 2 June.

**Squatter Pigeon.** A group of eight birds recorded at Durikai SF on 5 May.

**Superb Lyrebird.** Up to six birds observed at Girraween NP with more observations in June and July.

**Swamp Harrier.** One bird recorded at Leslie Dam on 28 June.

**Tawny Grassbird.** Single birds observed at Pozieres in January and Amiens in May.

**Turquoise Parrot.** Over 30 recorded in small groups at Pikedale in June, and over 20 recorded at Wilga Park in August.

**Western Gerygone.** Up to three birds recorded at Sundown NP, and other observations recorded in the Cement Mills area.

**White-browed Woodswallow.** Greater numbers observed with up to 60 counted at Durikai SF in February.

**White-winged Fairywren.** Groups of three and five birds recorded near Sundown NP on 23 June.

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