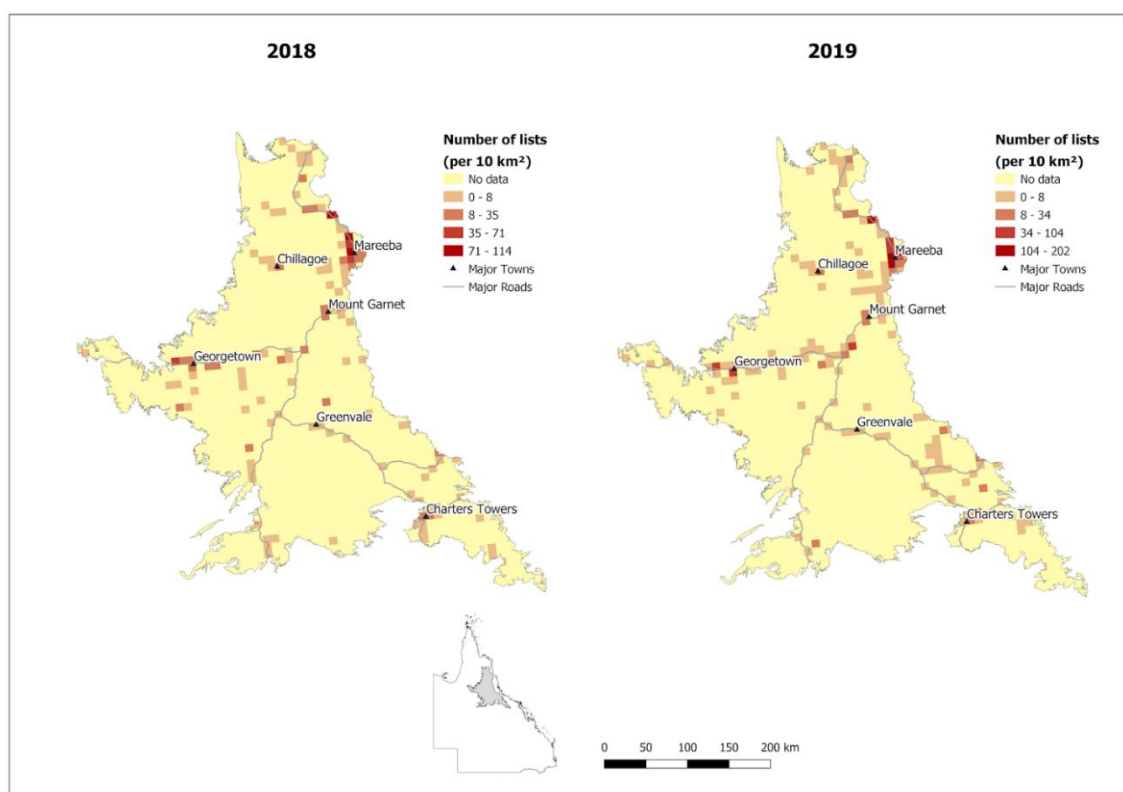


5. Einasleigh Uplands

David Niland



Map of Einasleigh Uplands Bioregion showing eBird survey effort



Brown Treecreeper (David Niland)



Black-throated Finch (Vince Bugeja)

Geography

The Einasleigh Uplands Bioregion (EIU) covers an area of over 116,260 km², constituting 6.8% of the area of Queensland, and stretches across three climate zones: Grassland, Tropical, and Subtropical (BoM 2016). It forms the 'roof' of northern Queensland, with altitudes ranging from 200 m to over 1,000 m with bedrock geologies that include granites, acid volcanics, metamorphosed sediments, and basalts. The

bioregion straddles the Great Dividing Range from about Cooktown south to Proserpine, and the area encompasses the headwaters of several rivers including the Normanby, Flinders, Burdekin, and Barron (Low 2011).

Regional population centres include Charters Towers, Mareeba, Einasleigh, and Chillagoe (DES 2013). Transport corridors traversing the bioregion include the Kennedy Highway, Gregory Development Road, and Flinders Highway.

Birds of the bioregion and their conservation

The Queensland Government lists 449 native species and eight introduced bird species from historic data, and 23 species are listed as rare or threatened in EIU (DES 2013). The bioregion is a recognised biodiversity hotspot area that supports several endemic or threatened species and unique habitats. It embraces over 140 regional ecosystems including a number that are threatened: Gidgee (*Acacia cambagei*) woodland, Brigalow (*Acacia harpophylla*), Bauhinia (*Lysiphyllum carronii*) open woodland, and semi-evergreen vine thicket (DES 2019). Several nationally significant wetlands occur in the bioregion including the Herbert River Gorge, Lake Lucy Wetlands, Spring Tower Complex, and Walters Plains Lake. The most important protected areas in the bioregion comprise the Chillagoe-Mungana Caves, Bulleringa, Undara Volcanic, Giringun, Great Basalt Wall, and Blackbraes National Park (NP). There are an additional 16 NPs, four Conservation Parks, and 27 private Nature Refuges that are entirely or partially in EIU (DES 2013).

Major events in 2018-2019

The mean temperatures were above average in both 2018 and 2019 particularly from September through November each year. Rainfall was generally below average except for periods in March and December 2018 and the effects of Cyclone Penny in January and Cyclone Trevor in March of 2019 (BoM 2019, 2020). Only the southern section of the Charters Towers Council area was drought-declared during 2018 and 2019 (QG 2022).

During 2018 a total of 283 native and three domestics species were recorded in eBird by 178 observers providing 954 lists with a total of 16,109 records, and during 2019 a total of 285 native and six domestic species were recorded from 217 observers providing 1,166 lists with a total of 19,599 records. Observer effort was strongly seasonal as in both years 73% of the lists were recorded during the dry season from May to November.

2018 Notable bird records

Apostlebird. Many observed at Cumberland Dam including one count of 100 in December.

Australasian Grebe. Observations regularly recorded with a high count of 100 at Blackbraes NP in July.

Australian Painted-snipe. Endangered. One bird recorded in the Mt Carbine area on 15 August.

Banded Honeyeater. The species was more numerous in October and November with 12 observed at Maryfarms.

Bar-breasted Honeyeater. Single birds observed north of Mt Carbine in October and November.

Bassian Thrush. One bird observed at Emerald Creek Falls in August.

Black Bittern. Single birds observed at Cumberland Dam in April and December.

Black Falcon. One bird recorded at Cumberland Dam in January.

Black Kite. One observation of 275 birds recorded at Walkamin in January.

Black Swan. Almost 250 recorded at Lake Mitchell in January.

Black-faced Woodswallow. White-vented subspecies observed at Cumberland Dam in January and Brooklyn Sanctuary in October.

Black-necked Stork. Near-threatened. Most observations recorded in second half of the year with five counted at Pickford Road in October.

Black-throated Finch. Eight birds, including a nest-building pair, observed at Cumberland Dam in January.

Brown Treecreeper. A couple of observations of *Climacteris picumnus melanotus* recorded around the Mt Carbine area in August and October.

Budgerigar. Many small flocks recorded in western areas of the bioregion between April and September.

Buff-rumped Thornbill. A couple of observations recorded including Undara in June and Collins Weir, about 20 km west of Atherton, in July.

Comb-crested Jacana. A maximum count of 40 recorded at Big Mitchell Creek in November.

Crimson Finch. An observation of six birds recorded at Emerald Creek Road in June.

Diamond Dove. An exceptional high count of 100 recorded at Cumberland Dam in December.

Double-eyed Fig-parrot. Two birds observed at the Mareeba Wetlands Centre in April.

Eastern Osprey. A few nests recorded around the Lake Mitchell area in April and July.

Eastern Spinebill. A couple of observations recorded from areas near Mareeba in May and October.

Fairy Martin. A large flock estimated at 120 observed at Maryfarms in June.

Freckled Duck. Observations recorded at three locations from July through November with 12 near Mareeba in October.

Fuscous Honeyeater. A couple of observations of the distinctive 'Herberton Honeyeater' variety recorded from the north end of Lake Mitchell in July and Innot Hot Springs in September.

Galah. One observation of 160 birds recorded at Forsayth in July.

Glossy Ibis. Most observations recorded in the wet season with a maximum of 60 at Pickford Road in December.

Great Egret. A large count of 30 birds recorded at Big Mitchell Creek in September.

Green Oriole. Two birds observed at Mt Carbine in October.

Green Pygmy Goose. A good year for sightings with 150 recorded at Lake Mitchell in November.

Grey Fantail. Birds at Undara in August reported to be *keasti* subspecies.

Little Buttonquail. A few observations recorded around Georgetown in May including three at the Racecourse.

Little Crow. A flock of 20 observed at Georgetown, and 12 recorded at Greenvale on the same day in September.

Little Curlew. Two observations of one bird recorded at Georgetown in January.

Little Friarbird. Numerous recorded at Cobbold Gorge in September with counts of up to 35.

Little Grassbird. Two birds observed near Innot Hot Springs in February.

Long-billed Corella. Introduced. One bird noted here 'over many years' observed in a flock of Little Corellas at Mareeba in May and November.

Magpie Goose. Observations throughout the year recorded with a high count of 500 at Pickford Road in November.

Masked Woodswallow. Species predominantly observed in mixed flocks of one to 200 with White-browed Woodswallows at Cumberland Dam in July and September.

Metallic Starling. One observation of ten birds recorded in Mareeba during January.

Noisy Friarbird. Numerous observations in the west of the bioregion recorded from July to September with 50 at Undara in July.

Oriental Plover. Up to five birds recorded in the Maryfarms–Mt Carbine area in October and November.

Pictorella Mannikin. Observations of two and four birds recorded in the Georgetown area in April and May.

Pied Currawong. Three *robinsoni* subspecies recorded at Undara in May.

Pink-eared Duck. Regular observations recorded with 29 at Cumberland Dam in October.

Plum-headed Finch. A large flock estimated at 70 birds recorded at Porcupine Gorge in July.

Purple-backed Fairywren. Single birds observed at Forty Mile Scrub in July and Durham Dam in November.

Rainbow Bee-eater. Hundreds observed coming to roost in Charters Towers in April.

Red-tailed Black Cockatoo. Over 300 observed coming in to drink at a small dam at Maryfarms in September.

Rufous Owl. One recorded at Emerald Creek Falls between August and November.

Sarus Crane. Not as many observations recorded as expected with a high count of only eight at a dam near Walkamin in November.

Scaly-breasted Lorikeet. Hundreds observed feeding in eucalypts at Emerald Creek Falls in August.

Silver-crowned Friarbird. A few observations recorded around Lake Mitchell between May and November.

Spinifex Pigeon. A few observations recorded with a maximum count of 12 at Flat Creek Station to the south of Georgetown.

Spotless Crake. One observed on Pickford Road in Mareeba during December.

Squatter Pigeon. The largest count was of 80 birds observed at Cumberland Dam in December.

Tree Martin. A large flock estimated at 100 observed at Pickford Road in Mareeba during July.

Wandering Whistling Duck. The more common Whistling Duck observed, with a high count of 500 at Lake Mitchell in January.

Whiskered Tern. A few observations recorded between September and December with a maximum of 40 at Lake Mitchell in December.

White-eared Monarch. One recorded at Mareeba in October.

White-naped Honeyeater. Two observations of small flocks of four and six recorded at Emerald Creek Falls in October.

White-winged Tern. A single bird observed at Croydon in April.

Yellow-breasted Boatbill. One seen at the western limit of species range at Tinaroo Creek Crossing in November.

Yellow-faced Honeyeater. Many observations recorded between Mareeba and Mt Carbine throughout the year.

2019 Notable bird records

Australian Hobby. One observed taking dragonflies at Talaroo Airport Dam in April.

Australian Masked Owl. One heard at Emerald Creek campground in April.

Australian Swiftlet. Larger counts of over 50 observed around Mareeba in September.

Banded Lapwing. A pair recorded at Pickford Road in Bibbohra during November and December.

Bar-breasted Honeyeater. Single birds recorded at Maryfarms in June and Cumberland Dam in August.

Black Kite. An estimated 1,000 birds recorded at the Mareeba Rubbish Tip in August, and 900 observed at Big Mitchell Creek in November.

Black Swan. Large numbers observed at Mareeba Wetlands from October to December with a maximum of 200 observed.

Black-necked Stork. Near-threatened. Eight birds recorded just south of Mareeba in October.

Bower's Shrikethrush. Two birds recorded near Walkamin in March.

Brolga. An estimate of 600 recorded in the same field at Walkamin.

Brown Songlark. Single birds observed at Cumberland Dam in April and at Mareeba in December.

Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher. A single bird observed in Mareeba on 25 March.

Bush Stone-curlew. A very large population regularly observed at the Mareeba Golf Course with 48 counted in June.

Channel-billed Cuckoo. Unusual count of 35 recorded feeding in fig trees at Mareeba in February.

Common Sandpiper. One bird recorded at Pickford Road in January.

Crimson Finch. A single bird recorded at Charters Towers in July.

Emu. Many observations of adults with young especially from October to January.

Eurasian Coot. Very large counts recorded at West Barron Dam with 1,000 noted in December.

Galah. At least 1,000 counted at Georgetown in July.

Gull-billed Tern. Four birds observed at the Burdekin Weir on the same day as the Silver Gull.

- Hardhead.** Especially high count of 120 observed at Nardellos Lagoon (Walkamin) in November.
- Long-billed Corella.** Introduced. Five in a feral population recorded at Mareeba in October.
- Lovely Fairywren.** Four observations recorded from Granite Vale Station north to Bustard Downs.
- Magpie Goose.** Numbers increased from October to December with 1,250 at Pickford Road in October.
- Orange-footed Scrubfowl.** A couple recorded at Georgetown in October which is unusually far west.
- Oriental Dollarbird.** A late observation recorded of one north of Mt Carbine on 5 May.
- Pacific Golden Plover.** 24 birds recorded at Pickford Road in October.
- Plum-headed Finch.** Three birds observed at Porcupine Gorge north of Hughenden in June.
- Purple-backed Fairywren.** Four birds observed near Croydon in May.
- Rainbow Bee-eater.** One count recorded 50 birds at Bustard Downs in August.
- Red-chested Buttonquail.** Five birds observed at Cumberland Dam in August.
- Red-tailed Black Cockatoo.** Estimated 800 birds observed in harvested sorghum field 23 km north of Lakeland on the Peninsula Development Road.
- Sarus Crane.** An estimate of 2,000 recorded in a harvested cornfield at Walkamin in October.
- Silver Gull.** A single bird observed at Burdekin Weir in January.
- Spotted Bowerbird.** Individuals recorded at Greenvale in April and Undara in October.
- Spotted Quail-thrush.** A few sightings recorded around Watsonville to the west of Herberton in July and October.
- Squatter Pigeon.** Regularly observed and especially common at Granite Gorge with 35 counted in October.
- Striated Heron.** Single birds observed at Carpentaria Downs in the southeast section of the bioregion in May and at Mareeba Wetlands in September.
- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo.** About 300 observed feeding on maize along road to Emerald Creek in April.
- Tooth-billed Bowerbird.** One bird recorded at Mt Carbine caravan park in November which is unexpected habitat for this species.
- White-headed Pigeon.** Two birds recorded at Mareeba in February which is further west than normal range for this species.
- White-plumed Honeyeater.** Two birds observed near Mt Surprise in December which is a possible range extension for the species.
- White-throated Treecreeper.** One recorded in Danbulla Forest Reserve about 8 km east of Mareeba Airport.
- White-winged Chough.** A sighting of seven birds recorded at Lake Belmore Reserve in July, well north of the species' usual range.
- White-winged Fairywren.** Three birds recorded at Belmore Reserve near Croydon in October; this may be a range extension for the species.

White-winged Tern. Seven birds in a flock observed at the Burdekin Weir in late December.

References

- BoM. 2016. Climate classification maps. Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Government, Canberra. http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/ncc/climate_averages/climate-classifications/index.jsp?maptype=kpng#maps. Last accessed 10 March 2022.
- BoM. 2019. Queensland in 2018: Fifth warmest year on record. Bureau of Meteorology, Canberra. Queensland in [2018 \(bom.gov.au\)](http://www.bom.gov.au/2018) Last accessed 30 March 2021.
- BoM. 2020. Queensland in 2019: Record warm days and very dry in the southeast; flooding in the north and west. Bureau of Meteorology, Canberra. [Queensland in 2019 \(bom.gov.au\)](http://www.bom.gov.au/2019) Last accessed 30 March 2021.
- DES. 2019. Regional ecosystem descriptions, Department of Environment and Science, Queensland. <https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/regional-ecosystems/list/?bioregion=9&page=3> Accessed 26 June 2019
- DES. 2013. Einasleigh Uplands (EIU) IBRA bioregion — facts and maps, WetlandInfo. Queensland Department of Environment and Science, Brisbane. <https://wetlandinfo.des.qld.gov.au/wetlands/facts-maps/ibra-bioregion-einasleigh-uplands-eiu/>. Last accessed 10 March 2022.
- Low, T. 2011. *Climate Change and Terrestrial Biodiversity in Queensland*. Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management, Brisbane.
- QG. 2022. The Long Paddock. Drought Declarations Archive. Queensland Government, Brisbane. <https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/drought/archive/>. Last accessed 7 May 2022.