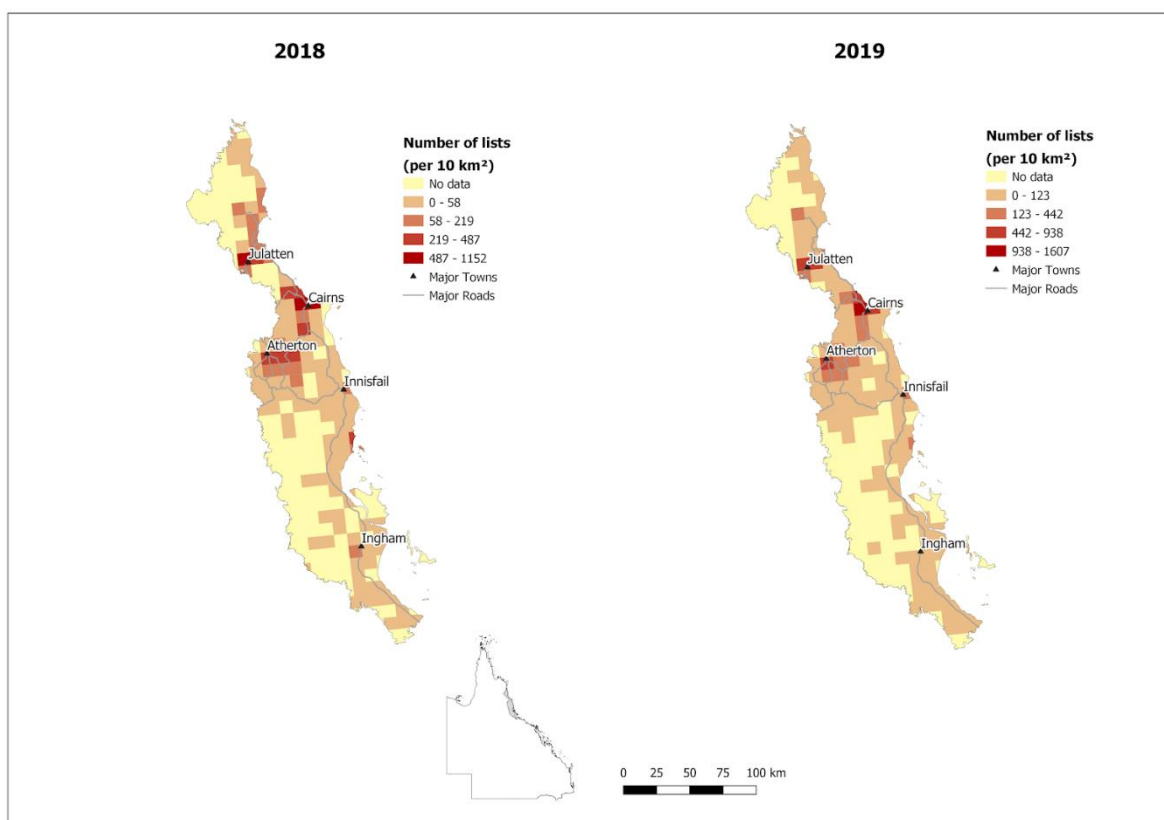


3. Wet Tropics

Peter Valentine, Emily Rush



Map of Wet Tropics Bioregion, showing eBird survey effort



Double-eyed Fig Parrot (James Niland)



Bridled Honeyeater (Ian and Jill Brown)

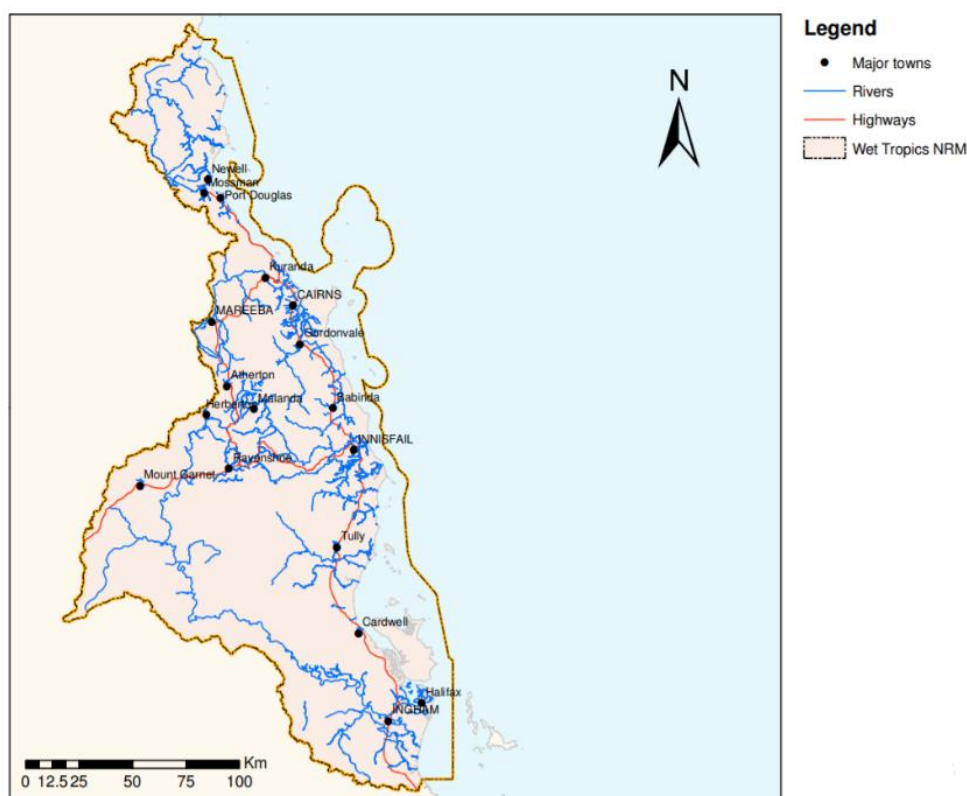
Geography

The Wet Tropics Bioregion (WET) covers only 1.16% (19,890 km²) of the State but is high in biodiversity and endemic species. The region stretches along the northeast coast of Queensland for some 450 km from Cooktown in the north to Townsville in the south. Forming the core of this bioregion is the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area which encompasses approximately 894,420 ha of mostly tropical rainforest (DEE 2019). The WET bioregion includes relicts of the Gondwanan forests that covered Australia and Antarctica some 50 to 100 million years ago (UNESCO 2019) making it the oldest surviving rainforest in the world (WTMA 2016). The vegetation is predominantly rainforest but includes a mixture of sclerophyll tree

species that can occur as emergents or co-dominants within the canopy. Fringing the rainforest are tall, open forests as well as tall, medium and low woodlands (DEE 2019). These environments provide habitat for numerous species of plants and animals, including 40% of Australia's bird species (WTMA 2016).

The bioregion lies within the Tropical zone of Australia (BoM 2016), featuring a marked wet summer with high annual rainfall totals of 1200–8000 mm per year and a dryer winter (WTMA 2016). Average mean temperatures in Cairns are 23–31°C in the wet season from November through April and 19–27°C in the dry season. This is an area of high humidity; Cairns ranges between 50% at 15:00 hours in the dry season to 100% at 09:00 hours in the wet season.

The major towns in WET include Townsville, Ingham, Innisfail, Cairns, Atherton and Mossman (Fig. 1). Some of the principal river catchments are the Barron, Burdekin, Daintree, Johnstone, and Tully Rivers (DES 2019). The distinct features of the Wet Tropics can be attributed to its seasonal monsoonal rainfall, diverse terrain, and steep environmental gradients (UNESCO 2019). The terrain is dominated by rugged mountain ranges, tablelands and lowland coastal plains, with elevations ranging from sea level to 1620m asl.



Major towns and rivers of the Wet Tropics Bioregion (DEE 2010)

Birds of the bioregion and their conservation

The WET bioregion harbours more than 370 species of birds of which 23 are largely confined to the bioregion and 13 are strictly endemic (WTMA 2016). Nine of these endemics are mainly upland species: Tooth-billed Bowerbird, Golden Bowerbird, Bridled Honeyeater, Fernwren, Atherton Scrubwren, Mountain Thornbill, Grey-headed Robin, Chowchilla and Bower's Shrike-thrush. The four remaining endemic species extend to lower altitudes: Lesser Sooty Owl, Macleay's Honeyeater, Victoria's Riflebird and Pied Monarch (WTMA 2016). All the upland species are at significant risk from climate change (Garnett et al. 2014; WTMA 2016).



Rose-crowned Fruit Dove (Paul Turner)

The bioregion incorporates over 30 National Parks (NP) including Wooroonooran which encompasses Queensland's two highest mountains: Bartle Frere and Bellenden Ker, as well as Mt Lewis, Daintree, Paluma Range, and Tully Gorge. Additionally, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park includes marine habitats and offshore islands (DES 2019). Birdlife Australia also recognises six Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) within the Wet Tropics region.

Paluma NP: Encompassing the southernmost portion of rainforest in the Wet Tropics, Paluma NP supports most of the high-altitude rainforest species endemic to the Wet Tropics including Tooth-billed and Golden Bowerbird. Long-studied populations make it an important reference site (Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership. 2022).

Daintree NP: This NP encompasses the most intact remaining area of rainforest vegetation from coast to mountain top in the Wet Tropics (Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership. 2022).

Coastal Wet Tropics: This area contains important summer feeding areas for international migratory waders of conservation significance and several restricted-range lowland rainforest forms, including the Queensland race of the Rufous Owl (*Ninox rufa queenslandica*) and Beach Stone Curlew (Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership. 2022).

Atherton Tablelands: The Tablelands supports a suite of tropical grassland and wetland birds including large flocks of Plumed Whistling-duck and Magpie Goose during the winter. There are also significant numbers of Sarus Crane, small numbers of Grass Owl, as well as the last remaining remnants of Mabi Forest (Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership. 2022).

Wooroonooran NP: This NP encompasses the largest tract of tropical rainforest in Australia, covering 514,491 ha. Populations of most of the Wet Tropics endemics are maintained in this large, protected rainforest (Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership. 2022).

Barron River Tributaries including Kuranda: This is an important area for mid-to lower-elevation rainforest and adjacent habitat, including critical habitat for the Kuranda Tree Frog. The area is not specifically maintained for bird conservation but includes good habitat.

Despite the many protections put in place for the Wet Tropics, long-term monitoring indicates that the biodiversity of the region is declining (WTMA 2016). Major threats to the area include habitat

fragmentation, invasive weeds, and introduced mammals including feral pigs, cattle, and cats. The presence of Yellow Crazy Ants is potentially a very serious threat for many species, and attempts to eradicate it are proving to be a challenge. However, the most significant threat is climate change which is already impacting high altitude species. The local abundance of most mid and high elevation species has declined at the lower edges of their distribution by >40% while lowland species increased by up to 190% into higher elevation areas. Upland-specialised species and regional endemics have undergone dramatic population declines of almost 50%. (Williams and Fuente, 2021). This decline in primary rainforest species also has been observed in a recent study at the School for Field Studies site (Kowalski et al., 2022).

There are several local initiatives that help monitor the status of WET bird species including long-running annual counts of Sarus Crane and Brolga on the Tablelands (Scambler et al. 2020) and of Torresian Imperial-Pigeons (Winter et al. 2016) which now incorporate mainland nests in Cairns. Recently, Bird Life Northern Queensland (BLNQ) has initiated regular monitoring of Tooth-billed Bowerbirds and Golden Bowerbirds, monthly bird surveys at Hasties Swamp NP, annual surveys of Beach Stone-curlew and other beach-nesting birds, regular monitoring of waders on the Cairns Esplanade, and working with the Cairns Regional Council to better protect the important habitat (BLNQ). Population estimates have confirmed that the Southern Cassowary is stable, and the threat status has been reduced to Least Concern (Garnett and Baker 2021).

Major events in 2018-2019

Significant developments in Web-based content, including the BLNQ Facebook page and the Cairns Birders Facebook page, mean that any interesting observations are rapidly communicated through the active birding community. Even if unusual birds do not stay for long, there are often many records. Rapid information flow increased awareness considerably and supported much better documentation of birds in the region. The large increase in records and the growing numbers of birders probably reflect these changes. Otherwise, there were no significant events that might have affected observations in 2018 and 2019.

During 2018 there were 370 species (including seven introduced species) recorded on eBird in WET. These came from 133,918 records. Rainfall was slightly higher in WET than the mean while temperatures were also slightly higher across northern Australia. In 2019 a total of 367 species recorded in WET during eBird surveys. These came from 162,200 eBird records, substantially up on the previous year. Rainfall in WET was slightly lower than average and temperature slightly up. The following annotated lists for both years identify notable species and records, particularly for endemic species or birds of conservation concern.

2018 Notable bird records

Apostlebird. Only four observations recorded at the western edge of WET including Mt Molloy, Ravenshoe.

Ashy-bellied White-eye. One observation recorded on Green Island, but discussions about genetic identity of Green Island white-eyes ongoing and more research is needed.

Asian Dowitcher. Near-threatened. Only one observation recorded at the Cairns Esplanade.

Atherton Scrubwren. Most observations recorded at Mt Lewis and Mt Hypipamee.

Australasian Shoveler. Although considered rare in WET, single birds recorded in July and September at Hasties Swamp.

Australian Boobook. Most observations recorded on the Tablelands in rainforest habitat.

Australian Bustard. Although species uncommonly observed in WET, a small number of observations recorded primarily from the Tablelands and Ingham.

Australian Pratincole. Only nine observations recorded including at France Road Turf Farm in Cairns and Orient Station in Ingham.

Australian Raven. Seven observations recorded at Mt Zero. This species is unlikely elsewhere in WET.

Banded Honeyeater. Only five observations recorded for this regular wet season visitor including at Wondecla and Lake Tinaroo.

Barking Owl. Surprisingly, only 15 observations recorded mainly on the Tablelands.

Barn Swallow. 15 observations of this accidental migrant recorded mainly on the coast and Tinaburra.

Bar-tailed Godwit. Near-threatened. Observations commonly recorded with the majority at the Cairns Esplanade.

Bassian Thrush. A small number of observations recorded from Mt Lewis, Mt Hypipamee, and Paluma.

Beach Stone-curlew. Near-threatened. Widespread coastal observations recorded across the region.

Black Falcon. One observation recorded of this rare falcon from the Upper Barron.

Black-backed Bittern. Only two observations recorded from the Daintree River and Tyto Wetlands.

Black-breasted Buzzard. Two observations recorded on the Tablelands of this species which is uncommon in the region.

Black-chinned Honeyeater. Only five observations recorded including at Mungalla Station and Abattoir Swamp.

Black-necked Stork. Near-threatened. Observations widespread across the region.

Black-tailed Godwit. Near-threatened. Observations reliably recorded at the Cairns Esplanade.

Bower's Shrikethrush. Frequent observations recorded mainly in upland areas.

Bridled Honeyeater. Most observations recorded on the Tablelands but some birds observed wintering near the coast along the Daintree River.

Broad-billed Sandpiper. 16 observations of this uncommon species recorded at the Cairns Esplanade.

Brown Gerygone. Observations recorded on the Tablelands and other upland areas.

Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher. Most observations of this summer migrant recorded in the northern area of the Tablelands.

Buff-rumped Thornbill. Only two observations recorded at Mt Zero which is the southwest edge of WET.

Chestnut Teal. Although rarely recorded in WET, one bird recorded at Cattana Wetlands in October and three at Port Douglas.

Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo. Observations limited to the Julatten area.

Chowchilla. Most observations recorded at Mt Lewis, Mt Hypipamee, and Lake Barrine.

Common Bronzewing. Only seven observations recorded in WET with two observed at Taravale.

Crested Shrike-tit. Small number of observations recorded mainly from Hasties Swamp and Wondecla.

Crimson Rosella. Observations indicated the species may be becoming less common, but observations recorded on the Tablelands and at Paluma.

Curlew Sandpiper. Near-threatened. Observations recorded at the Cairns Esplanade.

Double-banded Plover. Only ten observations recorded with a peak in July at the Barron River mouth.

Double-eyed Fig-parrot. Many observations recorded across the bioregion.

Dusky Woodswallow. Observations regularly recorded at Wondecla; uncommon elsewhere.

Eastern Grass Owl. A small number of observations mainly from the Tablelands and Tyto Wetlands.

Eastern Whipbird. Observations of this common rainforest species recorded mainly from the uplands.

Eastern Yellow Wagtail. Accidental. Four observations recorded at France Road in Cairns.

Eclectus Parrot. A small number of observations recorded mainly around Port Douglas of an established, escapee breeding population.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow. Introduced. A single bird observed and photographed at Cairns Esplanade.

Far Eastern Curlew. Endangered. Most observations recorded at the Cairns Esplanade.

Fernwren. Mt Lewis dominates all observation records.

Freckled Duck. Multiple observations of small groups recorded with almost all records occurring at Hasties Swamp.

Fuscous Honeyeater. A small number of observations recorded at Wondecla, but identification can be tricky and may be confused with Yellow-tinted Honeyeater. Records of both honeyeater species are likely the undescribed Herberton honeyeater which is common at this location. More ornithological research needed to determine genetics.

Golden Bowerbird. Observations recorded on the Tablelands and other upland areas, concern expressed about possible impact of climate change on this montane species.

Great Knot. Endangered. Observations reported frequently at the Cairns Esplanade.

Grey-headed Robin. Many observations recorded mainly on the Tablelands.

Helmeted Friarbird. Most common honeyeater; observations recorded mostly in the lowlands.

Jacky Winter. Six observations recorded at Wondecla.

King Quail. Only a single observation recorded of this elusive species that occurs on the Tablelands.

Little Curlew. Only seven observations recorded from Newell Beach.

Little Eagle. Two observations recorded on the Tablelands of this rare species.

Little Grassbird. Two observations recorded at Tyto wetlands.

Little Kingfisher. Most observations recorded from coastal sites, but a single, well-known bird was present at Hasties Swamp from March to October.

Mountain Thornbill. Most observations recorded at Mt Hypipamee, Mt Lewis, and the Tablelands.

Oriental Plover. Only 10 observations recorded from Newell Beach in October and November.

Oriental Pratincole. Nine observations recorded at France Road Turf Farm in Cairns. This is now a reliable site for the species.

Pacific Golden Plover. Observations indicate that the Cairns Airport Mangrove Boardwalk and France Road Turf Farm are key locations for this migratory species.

Painted Buttonquail. Only 12 observations recorded from the western edge of WET including at Wondecla and Mt Zero.

Pale Yellow Robin. Many observations recorded mainly on the Tablelands.

Pied Heron. Observations mostly recorded around Port Douglas.

Pink-eared Duck. Many observations recorded at Hasties Swamp, but observations were rare elsewhere on the Tablelands and even more rare on the coast.

Plum-headed Finch. Two observations recorded at Mungalla Station in Ingham.

Rainbow Lorikeet. This widespread and abundant species had the most eBird observations for the bioregion.

Red Knot. Near-threatened. Small number of observations recorded at the Cairns Esplanade.

Red-backed Kingfisher. Two unusual observations of this species recorded at Orient Station in Ingham.

Red-kneed Dotterel. Observations indicate Hasties Swamp is a key location for this species.

Red-necked Avocet. A single observation of a flock of 12 recorded at Cairns Esplanade with a photo record on eBird.

Red-necked Stint. Near-threatened. Most observations recorded at the Cairns Esplanade.

Red-rumped Swallow. Accidental. A small number of observations recorded with most at Tinaburra and the Daintree ferry.

Rufous Fantail. Although an anecdotal comment suggests reducing frequency, species commonly recorded across the bioregion.

Rufous Owl. A small number of observations at Cairns and the Tablelands.

Russet-tailed Thrush. Two observations recorded from Paluma and Wallaman Falls.

Sanderling. Two observations of this extremely uncommon species recorded at Michaelmas Cay and Newell Beach.

Sarus Crane. Annual counts conducted on the Tablelands.

Satin Flycatcher. 16 observations recorded for this uncommonly seen, passage migrant.

Silver-crowned Friarbird. Two observations recorded in the far northern part of the bioregion: Bloomfield and Black Mountain NP.

Southern Cassowary. Observations over all months with peaks in July and October recorded from both the coast and uplands. Records were 45% of single birds, 26% of two, and 29% of three to six birds.

Spotted Whistling Duck. Observations of this recent arrival are increasing, with flocks of up to 78 birds recorded and present most months and peak observations from October through December. They are regularly recorded in the Daintree region, Cairns, Wongaling Beach, and on the Daintree River. The most southern record was one at Mungalla Station in Ingham.

Square-tailed Kite. Small number of observations recorded mostly from the Tablelands.

Stubble Quail. Only four observations recorded at two locations: Mungalla Station in Ingham and France Road Turf Farm.

Tooth-billed Bowerbird. Regular observations mainly recorded on the Tablelands, but concern expressed about a possible decline in numbers.

Torresian Imperial-Pigeon. Many coastal observations recorded with occasional sightings at Julatten.

Varied Sittella. Small number of observations mainly recorded on the Tablelands.

Victoria's Riflebird. Many observations of this target species recorded mainly on the Tablelands.

Wedge-tailed Eagle. Species regularly observed at Hasties Swamp and recorded on other Tableland sites and Mt Zero.

White-browed Robin. Observations recorded mainly in the southern coastal region.

White-streaked Honeyeater. The three observations recorded: Shiptons Flat, Bloomfield River, and Mt Poverty.

White-throated Nightjar. Although species uncommonly observed in WET, a small number of observations recorded on the Tablelands.

White-winged Triller. A small number of observations of this unusual species scattered across WET.

Wilson's Storm Petrel. A single observation recorded at Michaelmas Cay in September.

Wood Sandpiper. One observation of this uncommon species recorded at Mungalla Station.

Yellow Thornbill. A rarely-observed species in WET recorded four times, but some recorded locations are unlikely habitat, so more documentation is needed. Record sites were: Kaban (likely), Henrietta Ck, Eubenangee, Lake Eacham (unlikely).

Yellow-tinted Honeyeater. A small number of observations recorded at Wondecla, but identification can be tricky and may be confused with Fuscous Honeyeater. Records of both honeyeater species are likely the undescribed Herberton honeyeater which is common at this location. More ornithological research needed to determine genetics.

Zitting Cisticola. Two observations recorded from Orient Station and Mungalla Station in Ingham.

2019 Notable bird records

Asian Dowitcher. Near-threatened. Accidental. A total of 32 observations recorded mostly at the Cairns Esplanade, but these rarities often become well known with many birdwatchers recording a single bird.

Atherton Scrubwren. Mt Lewis and Mt Hypipamee dominate the observations recorded along with other upland sites. It can be difficult to separate from Large-billed Scrubwren.

Australasian Figbird. The second most reported species in WET which is widespread and generally observed in small parties but occasionally in flocks of up to 20 with a high count of 60.

Australian Boobook. Only 23 observations recorded of this uncommon species; by habitat most would be subspecies *lurida* which is the rainforest-restricted population.

Australian Masked Owl. One observation of this uncommon species recorded at Rifle Creek at Mt Molloy in December.

Australian Pratincole. Most of the 23 observations recorded at the France Road Turf Farm near Cairns in October and November; additional observations included two records from the Tablelands near Atherton in July and one in Lucinda in May.

Banded Honeyeater. Significant increase to 32 observations recorded this year with most at the Tinaroo and Wondecla area.

Barn Swallow. Only one observation recorded at Cape Tribulation. This migrant is irregular but turns up most years in summer at a variety of sites.

Barred Cuckooshrike. Widespread observations recorded in Tablelands rainforest, and less frequent sightings recorded in the lowlands.

Bar-tailed Godwit. Near-threatened. A slight increase in observations with the vast majority at the Cairns Esplanade, but a few observations recorded on other beaches from Mossman to Toolakea.

Beach Stone-curlew. Near-threatened. Annual counts conducted on this species; eBird records increased from previous year.

Black-backed Bittern. Only two observations recorded including the Daintree in June and Eubenagee Swamp in November. Rare sightings needing more information to verify.

Black-breasted Buzzard. The two observations of this unusual species for WET included Julatten in October and Cairns in August.

Black-necked Stork. Near-threatened. Species widespread across the WET.

Black-tailed Godwit. Near-threatened. Majority of observations recorded at the Cairns Esplanade, but some recorded from northern beaches and south to Lucinda.

Blue-faced Parrotfinch. An increase of observations recorded with most from Mt Lewis, but one recorded at the Topaz area.

Bower's Shrikethrush. Reliable observations from higher elevation Tablelands locations; the couple of coastal records of this rainforest endemic are likely erroneous.

Bridled Honeyeater. Most observations of this endemic species recorded on the Tablelands, but some winter observations recorded from lowlands.

Broad-billed Sandpiper. Observations decreased from 16 to only nine compared to last year with most observations at the Barron River mouth.

Brown Gerygone. Observations recorded at many sites on the Tablelands and upland areas.

Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher. Reliable breeding migrant recorded mostly on the Tablelands with a few lowland records and south to Paluma.

Chestnut Teal. One observation of two females recorded at Hasties Swamp which is unusual in WET.

Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo. Observations declined from previous year to only 43 records on the northern Tableland, mainly around Julatten.

Chowchilla. Observations increased from previous year with most from uplands including Mt Lewis, Mt Hypipamee, and higher Tableland rainforests like Lake Barrine.

Common Greenshank. Most observations recorded at the Cairns Esplanade.

Common Myna. Introduced. A big increase in observations recorded compared to 2018. Most observations are from coastal areas, but also many from the Tablelands.

Crested Shrike-tit. A decrease to only 18 observations this year recorded mainly at Hasties Swamp, Wondecla, and the southern Tablelands.

Crimson Rosella. Over two times more observations recorded of this subspecies in upland areas including Tablelands and Paluma from previous year.

Curlew Sandpiper. Near-threatened. Observations increased from previous year with most records at the Cairns Esplanade.

Double-banded Plover. Observations decreased from last year with only two records at Cairns in May.

Double-eyed Fig-parrot. Widespread observations increased from previous year. This WET subspecies is currently listed as Vulnerable under the Queensland NCA, but this may be an administrative error as this population seems stable.

Dusky Woodswallow. A regular population observed in the State Forest on Springvale Road in Wondecla.

Eastern Grass Owl. Only eight records of this uncommon species, mostly on the Tablelands but also at Tyto Wetlands.

Eastern Whipbird. Observations had a large increase over the previous year with records widespread on the Tablelands and uplands areas.

Eastern Yellow Wagtail. Accidental. Species is now a regular summer visitor at the France Road Turf Farm with six observations recorded.

Eclectus Parrot. Over twice as many observations recorded compared to the previous year of this established breeding population.

Eurasian Whimbrel. Observations increased from 2018 with most recorded at the Cairns Esplanade, but records indicate a widespread distribution of usually small groups along the coast.

Far Eastern Curlew. Endangered. Species very reliably observed at the Cairns Esplanade during summer.

Fernwren. Observations of this endemic, upland species recorded mostly at Mt Lewis, but also Mt Hypipamee.

Freckled Duck. 19 observations recorded, mostly from Hasties Swamp, which is a decline from the previous year.

Fuscous Honeyeater. Multiple observations recorded at Wondecla, but identification can be tricky and may be confused with Fuscous Honeyeater. Records of both honeyeater species are likely the undescribed Herberton honeyeater which is common at this location. More ornithological research needed to determine genetics.

Glossy Black Cockatoo. Only a single record of eight birds recorded at Taravale/Mt Zero in July; this is a known, remote outlier population in the Casuarina Forest west of the Paluma rainforest.

Golden Bowerbird. Observations increased from previous year. Regular monitoring of known bowers as species is restricted to upland areas so there is concern about climate change impacts.

Great Crested Grebe. Species reliably observed at Lake Barrine with other records mainly in upland and some coastal areas.

Great Egret. Records significantly declined from the previous year, but it is difficult to know if this documents an actual decline or identification issues between egret species.

Great Knot. Endangered. Species reliably observed at the Cairns Esplanade during summer.

Greater Sand Plover. Slightly fewer observations recorded compared to previous year; a wide distribution recorded but most observations in Cairns.

Greater Sooty Owl. Most observations recorded on the Tablelands, but two observations recorded from the Cape Tribulation area.

Grey Plover. Records increased to 26 this year with most observations at Cairns Esplanade and adjacent beaches, but observations also recorded in southern areas: Balgal, Toolakea, and Toomulla.

Grey Whistler. Observations recorded mostly at coastal sites and at lower elevations with records rare above 500 metres.

Grey-headed Robin. Most observations of this endemic species recorded on the Tablelands or at higher elevation.

Helmeted Friarbird. The most frequently recorded honeyeater in the region; most observations recorded from coastal areas but some records on the Tablelands.

Hoary-headed Grebe. Six observations for this species, which is uncommon WET, with most observations being at Hasties Swamp from November to January.

House Sparrow. Introduced. Observations of this widespread species is increasing with most in urban areas.

Intermediate Egret. Records increased from the previous year, but it is difficult to know if this documents an actual increase or identification issues between egret species.

Kelp Gull. Accidental. Although there were 52 records of this species, they represent a single bird present mainly at the Cairns Esplanade, but occasionally on nearby beaches including Barron River mouth, throughout July and August.

Large-billed Scrubwren. Mostly observations recorded on the Tablelands and upland areas. It can be challenging to separate from Atherton Scrubwren.

Lesser Sand Plover. Observations increased from previous year with most recorded at the Cairns Esplanade, but some records both north and south.

Little Curlew. 22 observations at France Road Turf Farm recorded from late September to December.

Little Eagle. A single observation recorded at Mt Molloy in August.

Little Kingfisher. Only two observations recorded at Hasties Swamp compared to 46 the previous year.

Mangrove Gerygone. Only one observation recorded at Balgal Beach, just north of Townsville. This species is not normally found in the WET, but observations occasionally recorded from mangroves south of Cardwell.

Mountain Thornbill. Observations recorded mostly from upland areas including Mt Hypipamee and Mt Lewis, but observations seemed scarce on the Tablelands.

Northern Fantail. Records indicate the species is widespread along coastal sites, at lower elevations, and at Julatten but is not common in the rainforest or Tablelands.

Oriental Cuckoo. Although uncommon in WET, recorded observations increased considerably from the previous year to 93.

Oriental Plover. Only one observation recorded at France Road Turf Farm in November.

Oriental Pratincole. Ten observations recorded of up to two birds at France Road in early January; location becoming a hot spot for this uncommon wader.

Pacific Golden Plover. Most observations around Cairns including the Jack Barnes Mangrove Boardwalk, Barron River mouth, Cairns Esplanade, and France Road Turf Farm which is now a regular site for this species.

Painted Buttonquail. Nine observations recorded at Wondecla and Mt Zero.

Pink-eared Duck. Most observations recorded on the Tablelands with regular observations at Hasties Swamp, but fewer observations than last year.

Plum-headed Finch. One observation recorded in Cairns which was most likely an aviary escapee.

Rainbow Lorikeet. Species was still the most recorded and widespread species in WET.

Red Knot. Near-threatened. Unlike most other international waders, the number of records declined this year to only 18, mainly at the Cairns Esplanade.

Red-backed Buttonquail. Only one observation recorded of this elusive species at China Camp/Roaring Meg Falls in December.

Red-chested Buttonquail. Only one observation recorded at Bluewater SF in January.

Red-footed Booby. Most of 13 observations recorded of single birds at Michaelmas Cay from August to March.

Red-kneed Dotterel. Number of records decreased this year with most observations at Hasties Swamp.

Red-necked Stint. Near-threatened. An increase in observations recorded from previous year with the majority at the Cairns Esplanade.

Red-rumped Swallow. Accidental. Six observations recorded this year; all at Tinnaburra.

Roseate Tern. 10 observations of up to three birds recorded offshore from August through January.

Rufous Fantail. Observations decreased slightly from previous year, and declining frequency of sightings reported anecdotally.

Rufous Shrikethrush. Records indicate the species is widespread across all areas, but as it is an edge species, it is also easily observed.

Sarus Crane. Species subject to an annual count on the Tablelands; eBird records this year increased.

Silver-crowned Friarbird. Mainly found outside the WET, but two observations recorded in the far north border area, as with the White-streaked Honeyeater.

Sooty Tern. High numbers at Michaelmas Cay were observed with peaks in spring and summer with estimates of 5,000 or more birds.

Southern Cassowary. Widespread distribution across WET, but mainly coastal observations recorded.

Spotted Dove. Introduced. Species widespread on coast. Increased observations from previous year.

Spotted Whistling Duck. 56 observations recorded; species becoming widespread and commonly encountered and breeding along coastal areas. Southernmost record was of 11 birds observed near Clemant SF just north of Townsville in January.

Square-tailed Kite. Observations recorded infrequently but widespread locations, mainly on the Tablelands.

Tahiti Petrel. Near-threatened. One observation of two birds recorded off Cairns in November, but no eBird comments provided to help verify observation.

Tooth-billed Bowerbird. Observations, mainly on the Tablelands, increased from previous year; species now subject to annual active breeding counts as there is concern about climate change impacts.

Torresian Imperial-Pigeon. Species subject to annual count; numbers increased this year over last with most observations at coastal locations.

Victoria's Riflebird. Records of this iconic, endemic species indicate it is widespread across the Tablelands.

Wandering Tattler. Not common in the region with only five observations recorded on Green Island and at Toolakea.

Wedge-tailed Eagle. Widespread observations recorded inland including frequently at Hasties Swamp and Wondecla.

White-eared Monarch. Records decreased from the previous year, but this species is a difficult-to-see canopy resident.

White-gaped Honeyeater. Most observations recorded in the southern coastal part of the region, but occasionally elsewhere.

White-tailed Tropicbird. A single bird recorded at Michaelmas Cay in January.

White-throated Treecreeper. Observations throughout upland areas increased from previous year for this smaller rainforest restricted population.

White-winged Tern. A total of nine observations recorded including two birds at Portsmouth in south Cairns in February and a flock of 25 at Orient Station in March.

White-winged Triller. Records decreased from the previous year but observations of mostly single birds widespread across WET although this is an uncommon bird in the bioregion.

Wood Sandpiper. Records increased to 51 observations mostly at Hasties Swamp but also Newell Beach.

Wompoo Fruit Dove. Records, mainly on the Tablelands, increased over last year.

Yellow Thornbill. One observation recorded, but this species is rarely accurately recorded on the Tablelands so the record at Hallorans Hill in Atherton is perhaps unlikely.

Yellow-tinted Honeyeater. Small number of observations recorded at Wondecla, but identification can be tricky and may be confused with Fuscous Honeyeater. Records of both honeyeater species are likely the undescribed Herberton honeyeater which is common at this location. More ornithological research needed to determine genetics.

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