



NEWSLETTER 159

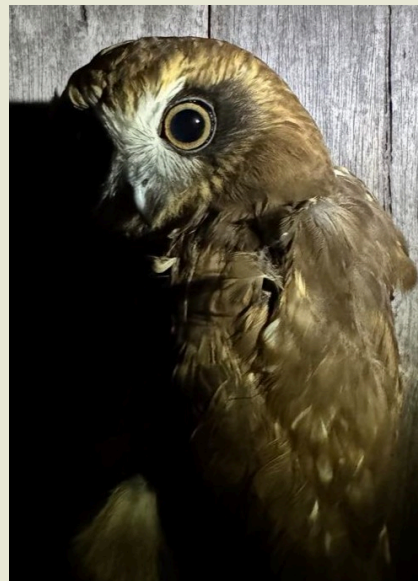


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Image by Jen Beeson



ABSA presentations

Over the past few months, ABSA has featured a compelling lineup of speakers in our Bird Research Presentations series, sharing new insights into some of Australia's most fascinating and threatened bird species.

We began with Dr Nick Leseberg for February, who presented his work on the elusive Night Parrot as well as several other rare and threatened birds including the Red Goshawk, Northern Masked Owl, and Carpentarian Grasswren. Drawing on his research through the University of Queensland's RARES group and conservation partnerships, Nick highlighted the challenges of studying cryptic species and the importance of targeted conservation efforts.

March's presentation was by Saskia Gerhardy, a PhD candidate at the University of Adelaide, took us into the open plains of South Australia to discuss her work on the Plains-wanderer. Her presentation explored the species' habitat use, genetic diversity, and movement ecology, providing much-needed data for the conservation of this critically endangered bird.

April's presentation was by E. Esteban Fuentes presented findings from a long-term research project on raptors of the ACT, undertaken in collaboration with the late Jerry Olsen, Susan Trost, and Stephen Debus. Esteban's talk highlighted the complexities of predator-prey dynamics, GPS tracking, and habitat management for birds of prey in a changing landscape.

Most recently, ABSA welcomed Dr Richard Noske for a relaxed and engaging "ornithological coffee chat." With decades of experience researching tropical birds across Australia and Indonesia, Richard shared reflections on bird behaviour, ecology, and the value of long-term monitoring and community science. Together, these presentations have offered a rich and varied look into the current landscape of Australian bird research and conservation.

In the next presentation, we're headed to the coast to look at a threatened sea bird that is benefiting from targeted research and community conservation efforts! Keep an eye out for when this is released on the last day of the month.

Public Webinar – Preparing for H5 Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

The Australian Government is holding a free online webinar to help the public understand and prepare for H5 avian influenza (bird flu). This session will provide updates on national preparedness activities and offer practical advice for how individuals and communities can get ready in case of an outbreak.

Experts from the government's agriculture, environment, and health departments will present the latest information on how Australia is planning for and managing the risk of bird flu. They will outline key initiatives currently underway and discuss how these efforts are coordinated across sectors. The session will include a short Q&A segment, giving participants the chance to ask questions and clarify concerns.

The webinar will be recorded and made available for viewing afterwards at birdflu.gov.au.

Webinar Details:

 Date: Thursday, 19 June 2025

 Time: 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM (AEST)

 Location: Online via Zoom

 Cost: Free to attend

 Register: events.humanitix.com/birdflu

For any questions, email hpai_taskforce2024@aff.gov.au or call the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on 1800 900 090.

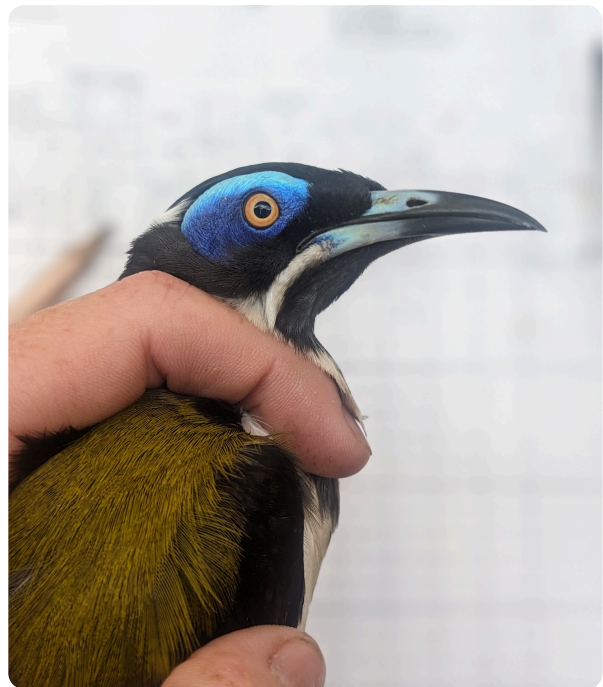
Birds on Country: a bird banding project in Central Arnhem Land

Written by Susie Stockwell

“*Birds on Country*” is our bird monitoring project, focused on building both ecological and cultural knowledge of tropical birds on Dalabon and Rembarrnga country in central Arnhem Land. Over time, we hope to build a two-way understanding of the assemblage and demographic of this bird community, their molt strategies and how these patterns correlate with age, sex and the timing of movement and/or breeding events. We also hope to increase the connection between birds and people in remote Arnhem Land through collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Based out of Bulman-Weemol communities in Central Arnhem Land, *Birds on Country* is the first time my love of bird banding and my love of living in remote locations have finally come together for me. It is often said here: “go slow to go fast”. That has certainly been my experience to date: initially, consultation, permitting and band ordering alone took 6 months alone and now I continue to focus on training banders and integrating the project into the local ranger and Learning on Country programs. So far, both the bird surveys and banding experiences have been an exciting two-way learning and engagement opportunity.

And while it’s still a little early to explore patterns in our data, we’ve had some fun catches! Gouldian Finch, Australasian Figbird and recently Blue-winged Kookaburra (Korrowkorrow)! Our most common captures are Crimson Finch (Ninhnhinh) and Peaceful Dove (Korloddok). Our most charming catch has been Torresian Crow (Wakwak) and our most bizarre would have to be an accidental (but not unwelcome) White-necked Heron!





Images by Susie Stockwell

With a large grant under our belt to run bird-focused camps, banding mornings and develop resources for teaching two-way ornithology in schools, we are open to help with running the mist nets. If you are interested in getting involved in the project, please contact Susie 0407449231 or susie.stockwell@mimal.org.au.

Acknowledgements: This project is based on Dalabon and Rembarrnga country in collaboration with community through Mimal Land Management Aboriginal Corporation. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Djunguyi of this beautiful Country and pay respect to Elders past and present. It is supported by Mimal, a Commonwealth Makers grant and BirdLife Top End.

Trip report - Herdsman Lake Banding Bonanza Weekend

16/05/25 - 18/05/25

Team: Bill Rutherford, Patrick Williams, Ethan Broom, Jennie Beeson



Image by Jen Beeson

Following a year of low numbers down at herdsman, the group decided to get in some longer banding sessions including some nocturnal sessions. The team was full of hope that it would be a big weekend, and that a variety of different species could be targeted.

We put the first nets up on the Friday afternoon in the usual locations of the carpark and the mound. We also set up the reed bed net in the hopes of catching some Australian Reed-warblers and Little Grassbirds.

Before nightfall the trainees learnt how to storm furl the nets which was a great learning opportunity. Another net was set on the mound in the late afternoon and furled until after nightfall, with the hope of being able to capture some nocturnal species.

To the teams dismay, a local Southern Boobook decided that the top of the net pole was a great vantage point for observing it's hunting ground and eluded capture in the net. The second night was more successful with the trainees having wised up to how to set an owl net, putting vegetation in the top of the poles and setting the net in front of a perching point. This led to the capture of a Southern Boobook in the last net round of the night before bed. Overall, the weekend was not as successful as we had hoped in terms of the numbers caught, with only 31 birds captured. However, despite the low abundance, the diversity was reasonable, totalling 13 species over the weekend. Several of which were banding ticks for the Ethan and Jen.

The species caught over the weekend were:

- Australian Reed Warbler (2)
- Brown Honeyeater (2)
- Kookaburra (2)
- Little Grassbird (1)
- Silvereye (4, including 1 retrap)
- Singing Honeyeater (3)
- Southern Boobook (1)
- Spotted Pardalote (1)

- Striated Pardalote (6)
- Weebill (3, including 2 retraps)
- Western Gerygone (4, including 1 retrap)
- Willie Wagtail (1)
- Yellow-rumped Thornbill (1)



Image by Jen Beeson

Trip report - Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve

Saturday 19 April: Site 2

10°C – 24°C, clear and still, 23 nets – 266m

Team: Rob, Graham, Liz, Louise, Greg, Judy, Sooraj, Elaine, Cyrus, Callum, Missy, Maggie, Brooke, Andry, Dean, McKinley, Cees, Doug, Marty



Image by Louise

We hit the ground running with large captures from the outset, mainly coming from Louise's nets to the West (a total of 72 birds) and Graham's (a total of 40 birds) to the north. Nets to the west also brought in good numbers to start with while the nets to the east, in the bush caught only 8 birds, one of which being a Laughing Kookaburra.

In total we captured 155 birds including Rock Warbler and Striated Hornbill.

Nets were closed at 1300 with the mercury hitting a pleasant 24°C

Marty and Doug joined us mid-morning while Callum, Missy and Dean arrived in the afternoon. After closing the nets and having lunch we moved to site 4 to set nets for the following day's banding.

Interesting captures and recoveries

- White-browed Scrubwren first banded by Rob and now aged 4+.
- Striated Thornbill first banded by Graham and now aged 9.
- Brown-headed Honeyeater first banded by Graham and now aged 8+.

A total of 52 bird species were seen or heard during the day including Wedge-tailed Eagle, Jacky Winter and Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

Sunday 20 April: Site 4

10°C – 23°C, partly cloudy, slight breeze, 24 nets – 265m

Team: Rob, Graham, Liz, Louise, Greg, Judy, Sooraj, Elaine, Cyrus, Callum, Missy, Maggie, Brooke, Andry, Dean, McKinley, Cees, Doug, Marty

Nets and opened up by 0615 and were spread across the site covering the usual areas except to the North where there was a smelly dead pig. We avoided erecting the usual 18m net at this spot. Nets were also placed to the north of the dam where there was a good amount of Grey Mistletoe and Banksia in flower. This area proved to be attractive to birds with 100 birds coming from nets near the dam and mistletoe. Over the course of the morning, we captured 145 birds including Black-chinned Honeyeater, Dusky Woodswallow and Buff-rumped Thornbill. There were also large numbers of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters present.

Nets were closed for lunch and then re-opened afterwards. Our other banding sites appeared to be very quiet, so we decided to leave the nets in place and band again here on Sunday.

Interesting captures and recoveries

- Black-chinned Honeyeater. Two birds were banded, the first to be caught here in over 15 years. Caught in a mixed flock with White-naped and White-plumed Honeyeaters.
- Red Wattlebird. We rarely capture these lovely birds. Louise had the pleasure of banding this feisty male, aged 2+ on plumage and measurements.
- Eastern Yellow Robin first banded by Petra in Dec 2014 at this site and now aged 11.

A total of bird 55 species were seen or heard at the banding station including Little Eagle, Brown Treecreeper, Horsefield's Bronze-cuckoo, Dusky Woodswallow, Fuscous Honeyeater and Little Raven.

Monday 21 April: Site 4

11°C – 20°C, overcast with drizzle, 22 nets – 241m

Team: Rob, Graham, Liz, Louise, Greg, Judy, Sooraj, Elaine, Cyrus, Callum, Missy, Maggie, Brooke, Andry, Dean, McKinley, Cees, Doug, Marty

We arrived on-site in the misty rain and decided to hold off opening the nets until the rain cleared at 0630. The sun appeared for short periods and the wind picked up in late morning. We consistently caught birds throughout the morning and closed all nets by mid afternoon. In total we banded over 100 birds including Striated Pardalote, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Dusky Woodswallow.

Interesting captures and recoveries

- Striated Pardalote ssp *substriatus* This is another bird we rarely catch. We banded 6 today and had both Striated and Spotted in hand at the same time.
- Eastern Yellow Robin first banded by Daryl in Nov 2013 at this site and now aged 13+.
- Striated Thornbill first banded by Graham in May 2018 at this site and now aged 7+.

A total of bird 43 species were seen or heard around banding station including White-browed Babbler, Musk Lorikeet, Speckled Warbler and White-winged Clough.

Michael Sharp from NPWS paid us a visit and got to see us in action with some interesting birds. Maggie and Brooke left at about 10am to head back up north and the most of the team started to make their way back to camp after lunch to pack for home.

After a busy day banding it's time for toasted marshmallows.

Tuesday 22 April: Site 2

10°C – 17°C, partly cloudy, strong breeze, 4 nets – 54m

Team: Rob, Louise

Louise and Rob stayed on an extra day and banded to the west of the campsite near a few clumps of Grey Mistletoe. We processed 23 birds in 4.5hrs with only 4 recoveries. The majority of the birds were Brown-headed Honeyeater along with Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Red-browed Finch, a Spotted Pardalote and a Superb Fairy-wren.

Weekend summary

In total, over four days, we banded more than 400 birds with many interesting recoveries.

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