

# Birdwatching

## Cooktown

Cooktown is an ideal place for bird watching because there are four main geographical regions that meet here, each with its own set of special birds – Wet Tropics rainforest, Cape York Peninsula forests, coastal wetlands and mangroves and the drier woodlands of Laura and Battlecamp escarpments. And that's without even counting the Great Barrier Reef and islands. We've suggested some day trips that can be based out of Cooktown that will give you a good selection of the diverse birds that the Cooktown district has to offer.

### Best time to visit

If you want to maximise your chances of seeing Cape York specialities and the northern wader migrants, then plan your trip for October – early December. This is when the New Guinea migrants have generally arrived back in this part of Queensland and the wet has not yet limited access to some locations. This is also when the waterbirds are at their most spectacular.

There is a great mix of species amongst the different habitats around Cooktown with about 150 species recorded. Some of the notable ones include the Cape York speciality Tropical Scrubwren.



White-throated Honeyeater

### 1. Botanic Gardens and Finch Bay

Hear the very vocal Yellow Oriole, Figbird, Varied Triller, Wompoo and Rose-crowned fruit doves, Yellow-spotted, Dusky and White-throated Honeyeaters, Helmeted Friarbird and Pied Imperial Pigeon in the wet season. Not as conspicuous are Leaden Flycatcher, Shining Flycatcher, Lovely Fairy-wren.

### 2. Mount Cook Walking Track

Patch of rainforest with notable Tropical Scrubwren, Lovely Fairy-wren, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Peregrine Falcon, Grey Goshawk, Macleay's Honeyeater, Barred Cuckoo-shrike, Noisy Pitta, Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher.

### 3. Adelaide Street to the Cemetery

Along the old Cooktown-Laura railway line through mangroves and salt pans you will find Waders, Terns, Nankeen Night-heron and Beach Stone-curlew.

### 4. Endeavour River Cruises

Waders, Black-necked Stork, Egrets, Great-billed Heron, Little Kingfisher, Mangrove Robin.

### 5. Quarantine Bay

Waterbirds, Kingfishers

### 6. Keating's Lagoon

A bird hide is available to view Ducks, Herons, Egrets, Jacana, Pygmy-Geese and Magpie-Geese

### 7. Archer Point

Beach Stone-curlew, Eastern Reef Egret, Varied Honeyeater, Waders

### 8. Annan River Gorge

Honeyeater species



Pied Imperial Pigeon



Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher



Double-eyed Fig Parrot



Black-winged Monarch



Darter



Magpie Geese



Helmeted Friarbird

## Hope Vale and Elim

### 13. Endeavour River Valley

Riverine forest with Tropical Scrubwren, Grey Whistler, Macleay's and Graceful Honeyeaters, Shining Flycatcher, Large-billed and Fairy Gerygone, Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo, Red Goshawk, Bustards, Black-throated Finch.

### 14. Endeavour River Escape

Lagoon and riverine rainforest species such as Tropical Scrubwren, Grey Whistler, Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo

### 15. Hope Vale and Elim Beach

White-streaked, Graceful, Macleay's Honeyeater, Waders



Blue-winged Kookaburra



Papuan Frogmouth



Blue-faced Honeyeater



Yellow Oriole



Wompoo Fruit Dove



Rainbow Beeeater

### 16. Mclvor River and Mt Webb National Park

Black-winged Monarch and Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher in wet season, Spectacled Monarch, Grey Whistler, Tropical Scrubwren, Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo, White-streaked Honeyeater.

## Rainforest Coast

The rainforest is home to such species as Macleay's Honeyeater, Bridled Honeyeater, Pied Monarch, Victoria's Riflebird, Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo, Yellow-breasted Boatbill and during the summer wet season – Pied Imperial Pigeons, Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher.

### 17. Bloomfield Falls

Mix of rainforest and drier eucalypt species, including Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher in wet season, Macleay's Graceful, Yellow-spotted, White-throated, Scarlet Honeyeaters, Lovely Fairy-wren.

### 18. Weary Bay

Waders and terns on the beach and in the freshwater swamps behind the beach, including Wood Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Grey-tailed Tattler

### 19. Hope Islands

Boat charter. Sooty and Pied Oystercatchers, Bridled, Sooty, Black-naped, Common, Lesser Crested and Crested Terns, Masked and Brown Booby.



Mistletoebird



Australian Bustard

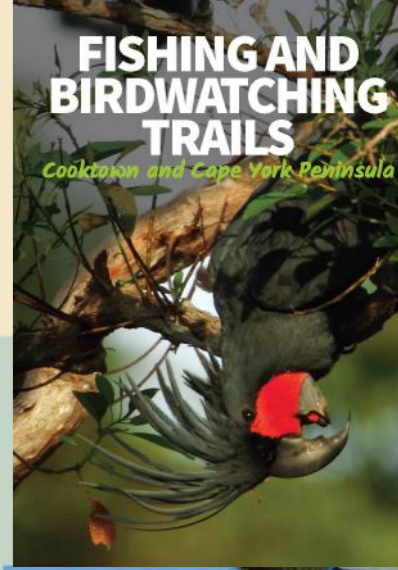


Golden-headed Cisticola

Crimson Finch



Crested Tern



Green Pygmy-geese



### 20. Home Rule

Rainforest species and Cassowary

### 21. Mungumby Lodge

High elevation rainforest species

### 22. Shipton's Flat

Two specialities here are Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo and White-streaked Honeyeater



**Cook Shire Council**  
Cape York & Cooktown  
Tropical North Queensland  
Adventures by nature

This brochure was produced with the assistance of Great Northern Tours, The Lure Shop, Birds Australia and Gone Fishing – Cooktown and www.anrm.com.au

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# River & Estuary Fishing

## Cooktown

### 1. Endeavour River

The Endeavour River is steeped in history, and a great example of how a tropical estuarine system should be - deep holes, submerged timber, sand flats, smaller inlets and tributaries, weed beds and all your mangrove species in one river. Brilliant family fishing can be had on the local wharf and immediate vicinity. Many big barramundi, spanish mackerel, queenfish and trevally are landed here throughout the year, as well as jacks, fingermark, bream, cod, flathead and the occasional black jewfish. A boat ramp is available close to the Cooktown Wharf.



Normanby River

### 2. Annan River

Situated 5 minutes south of Cooktown, the Annan River is a shorter estuarine system than the Endeavour and subtly different. Barra fishing can be had up and down the river and out into the mouth at Walker Bay where some big saltwater barra can be had both on lures, fly and live baits. Big jacks and fingermark are a common catch plus all your usual queenfish, trevallies etc. Good mud crabbing can be had especially after the first rains. There is a good boat ramp on the down side of the bridge.

### 3. Archer Point

Following the road south out of Cooktown for 12 kms will bring you to the Archer Point turn off. Throwing poppers around the reef areas especially on a good making tide can see you onto some world class sport fishing opponents and the odds are considerably stacked against the angler. More info can be sought from the Yuku Baja Muliku rangers.

## Wet Tropics Rainforest

### 4. Bloomfield River

A beautiful river set in the northern end of the wet tropics with a magnificent back drop of spectacular mountains and rainforest. Good land based fishing can be had at the mouth, the local wharf or Weary Bay. Barra, jacks, fingermark, trevally, queenfish and salmon are caught regularly throughout the system. Plenty of deep holes, weed beds and snags to explore with lures, fly and live baits. Camping / accommodation and boat ramp are available in Bloomfield and Ayton. Cooktown is 1hr drive away making it a great day out.



### 8. Starcke River

Lying about a 2 hour 4WD from Cooktown is the Starcke River and its tidal tributaries to the south. Some scintillating sport fishing can be had fishing for big barra and mangrove jack on fly and lure inside the mouths of some amazing tidal inlets. Plenty of good sized tarpon, trevally and queenies can be found to fill in the quieter times. Superb mud crabbing can be had in the tidal inlets. An all-weather boat ramp lies at the mouth with camping spots in close proximity.



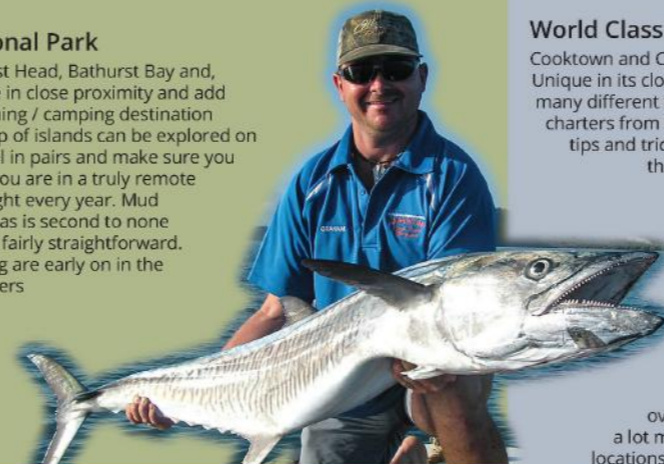
### 9. Princess Charlotte Bay

### 10. Bathurst Head

### 11. Bathurst Bay

### 12. Cape Melville National Park

Princess Charlotte Bay, Bathurst Head, Bathurst Bay and Cape Melville National Park are in close proximity and add up to being one of the best fishing / camping destination experiences. The Flinders group of islands can be explored on a good day in a tinnie but travel in pairs and make sure you have adequate safety gear as you are in a truly remote spot. Big coastal barra are caught every year. Mud crabbing in these areas is second to none so catching a feed is fairly straightforward. Best times for fishing are early on in the season when the rivers are running well or when it's stinking hot, although fishing in the middle of winter can also be outstanding.



# Inshore & Offshore Fishing

## World Class Fishing

Cooktown and Cape York Peninsula is famous as a world class fishing destination. Unique in its close proximity to a myriad of angling environments, you can experience many different types of fishing. A number of local operators offer guided river or reef charters from Cooktown, so make the most of their local experience and pick up some tips and tricks. Alternately hire a 'tinny' or bring your own boat up from Cairns on the Mulligan Highway which is sealed all the way to Cooktown.

Salt water crocodiles inhabit our waterways. Please seek local advice for up to date information on crocodiles, jellyfish and travelling safely in tropical destinations.

## Tropical Islands

Tropical Islands scatter the Great Barrier Reef and many are accessible by small and large boats. Cooktown is the closest town along the eastern seaboard to the iconic Great Barrier Reef, ensuring your fishing time is maximised. Inshore reefs lay just a couple of miles out and even though they are close shouldn't be overlooked. However, travelling 10-15 miles out will certainly open up a lot more possibilities. Strict regulations are in place to protect these stunning locations, for further info contact GBRMPA for zoning maps. Troll for spanish mackerel; drop bait for coral trout; sight cast on the flats for a big GT or go for a snorkel. Monster GTs, giant queenfish and the elusive bonefish patrol these areas but, like anywhere in the far north always beware of crocodiles.

## Reef Fishing

Fishing the reef is fairly straightforward - usually it's a matter of working out which way the current is running onto the face of the reef where the majority of predators and baitfish will be and dropping the anchor. Baits such as pilchards and squid work very well but those anglers wishing to experiment with soft plastics and jigs can also be rewarded with a multitude of species. Closed seasons (regulated waters) prevent people from fishing to protect species at vulnerable times in their life cycle, such as during spawning seasons. To find out when the reef closure dates for coral fin fish are, please contact [www.daff.qld.gov.au](http://www.daff.qld.gov.au).

## Game Fishing

Whether you choose light or heavy tackle, Cooktown, with its close proximity to the reef and the continental shelf offers the angler a world class destination. The variety of species on offer are outstanding. From September to December the marlin fleet from across the globe, converge on far north Queensland. Many choose Cooktown as their base, chasing the elusive 1000lb (Grander) black marlin and to fish the Annual Lizard Island Classic. Smaller boats can target sailfish, wahoo, yellow fin tuna, Spanish mackerel, mahi mahi, GT's and queenfish all year round with the right conditions, giving anglers an abundance of opportunities on a variety of budgets.

## Heli Fishing

Going in by chopper to that secret billabong, inaccessible headland or hard to access river mouth has to be one of the ultimate ways to travel and fish. Getting there is usually very quick and spectacular, flying over dramatic escarpments, stunning rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef. Half day charters through to extended holidays are available with several local companies offering packages for that once in a lifetime trip.



Cooktown wharf

## Key Species

### River & Estuarine

Fish for barramundi, mangrove jack, fingermark, tarpon, queenfish, trevally, salmon, cod, bream, grunter, flathead, jungle perch, sooty grunter. Don't forget barramundi season closes 1st November, midday - to 1st February, midday.

### Inshore / offshore

Target species include marlin, sailfish, wahoo, mackerel, Bluefin tuna, yellowfin tuna, coral trout, cod, red emperor, spangled emperor, sweetlip, fingermark, nannygai, queenfish, trevally, cobia.

### Dry season (May - October)

During the winter months rain is rare and the temperatures are very comfortable, however some years south-easterly trade winds can limit fishing for certain vessels. If you time your holiday with favourable conditions the results of 'winter fishing' can be amazing so check with local operators on the current conditions.

### Wet season (November - April)

This time of the year is the most dynamic time of the year to visit. Even though the humidity increases, winds decrease and the weather is at its tropical best. It does rain, but not all the time and days can roll into weeks of perfect conditions for the avid angler seeking to explore an array of piscatorial adventures.



## REMEMBER!

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