



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

To encourage the observation and study of the birds of the Toowoomba area.

No. 381
March 2009

Editorial

By Plaxy Barratt & Mick Atzeni

Hi folks. With Nicci away Mick has stepped into help so I'll let him have his say this month. Over to Mick...

Thanks Plax. Local bird movements are of increasing interest to me now that I live at Upper Lockyer. When trying to piece together local Grey Goshawk data recently to test a theory they are seasonal, it made me realise just how little I knew about bird movements.

Given our monthly species recording scheme has been in place since the club began in 1975, I regret not having had the foresight to identify and document local bird movements more accurately. But it's never too late!

With Summer over, you may have noticed the bird composition has changed dramatically. Autumn's a lot like Spring in reverse, only far more subtle; the Spring/Summer migrants disappear without notice.

To capture the succession of departures, we need some reverse thinking too. Unless we've made a conscious effort to record observation dates in the tail end of the season, we're always left wondering "Well when exactly did they go?" Say March is the last month for koels on an annually summary. Was it the 1st or the 31st? Or somewhere in between?

So, when *did* you last see or hear a koel, Channel-billed Cuckoo, Sacred Kingfisher, Dollarbird?

How long before the drongos leave the Lockyer? Before the Rufous Fantails, Barred Cuckoo-shrikes and Black-faced Monarchs vacate our escarpment parks?

Has anyone **EVER** seen a Satin Flycatcher locally in Summer or Autumn? If so, please step forward!

Then there are the arrivals; not necessarily different species, but marked increases in the likes of Scarlet Honeyeaters, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, friarbirds, whistlers, and Grey Fantails. When did they increase? Are they just in passage? How long will they stay?

To help improve our local state of knowledge, there are two forum topics on our website: "**Going, going, gone ...**" and "**They're back!**". Please keep an eye on it and give me a hand in putting the jigsaw together in future.

2009 Challenge

186 as of 06/04/09



TOOWOOMBA
BIRD OBSERVERS

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COMING EVENTS

21. April 2009 Avitourism presentation - By Greg Ford

7.00pm for 7.30pm start at
Wilsonton Uniting Church
Hall

(For more details see p7)

Sunday 26th April 2009 Lake Broadwater

Leader: Malcolm Wilson
Meet at the recreation area
at 7:30am

Contact: Kay Williams
46595475 /0429465954

(For further details see p8)

(An affiliated member of Bird Observation and Conservation Australia)

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www.toowoombabirdobservers.org

MEMBERSHIP: Adults/Families \$22, Students \$11

(Subscriptions due 31 August)

MURPHYS CREEK/UPPER LOCKYER OUTING – 22/02/08

By Mick Atzeni



Murphys Creek: Gathering opposite the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos Photo: K. Williams

A group of magnificent **Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos** entertained those who gathered at Murphys Creek railway station for the outing; a reward for the earlier than usual 6.30 pm start. When we eventually set off, the locals could have been forgiven for thinking a Dodgy Brothers funeral was in town, my little silver Suzuki Jimny leading the procession of cars to our first stop – the local cemetery. I'd seen a **Grey Goshawk** in nearby tall timber the day before which I had hoped would still be around. No such luck on the day though.

Double-barred Finches, Yellow-rumped Thornbills and **Superb Fairy-wrens** were amongst

the initial sightings. Then at a stop along Kherim Rd near the railway bridge, the list began ticking along nicely with the likes of **Scarlet Honeyeater, Striated Thornbill** and **Leaden Flycatcher**. An immature **Brown Falcon** atop a tall pine gave the beginners the chance to use the spotting scope to appreciate, not just their first Brown Falcon, but also its immature plumage characteristics, then eventually the diagnostic wing set and over arm wing action when it flew off. A family of **Jacky Winters** on the wires also generated much interest for the beginners, and rightly so. Sweet birds; as their name suggests. And no, not just a winter bird.

Next stop was White Mountain Rd which runs east off Fifteen Mile Rd about 7 km north of Murphys Creek township. Although a little quiet, with **Buff-rumped Thornbill** and **White-throated Honeyeaters** about the only additions to the list, the main reason for stopping there was to show the group this splendid habitat, much of it State Forest. Incidentally, White Mountain Rd is also about the only way into grid N4, a very poorly surveyed grid with much potential for anyone keen to adopt a grid and fill some knowledge gaps.



White Mountain Road, Fifteen Mile SEQ. Photo: K. Williams

Our final stop was "Tiddalac", Thomas Rd, Upper Lockyer, where I've been living since mid-January. There we enjoyed a long, leisurely, morning tea alongside Murphys Creek itself. The property has about 500 m of creek frontage and the creek has not run dry in living memory. The birds had gone quiet by that stage of the day, even the resident Azure Kingfisher chose not to present, but no one was complaining; just content to sit, chat and enjoy the tranquility, myself included.



Morning tea at "Tiddalac", Upper Lockyer SEQ. Photo: K. Williams

On a final note, it's heartening to see so many enjoying the educational and social aspects of birding. As a long term member, I'd say the last two outings have been two of our biggest. Thirty-three attended the beginners' outing in January; 31 this outing. Thanks to Gayle Lee our Media Officer for

flying the flag in the local papers! And whilst large attendances make showing individual birds to everyone virtually impossible, as I said at the start of this latest outing, they're as much about revealing places to bird. So, to the newcomers, I hope you've learnt well and are enjoying the therapeutic benefits of birding in your own time too. Happy birding!

Species List:

Australian Wood Duck	White-throated Treecreeper	Leaden Flycatcher
Pacific Black Duck	Superb Fairy-wren	Magpie-lark
Straw-necked Ibis	Variiegated Fairy-wren	Willie Wagtail
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Red-backed Fairy-wren	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Brown Falcon	Striated Pardalote	Cicadabird
Dusky Moorhen	White-browed Scrubwren	Figbird
Masked Lapwing	White-throated Gerygone	Grey Butcherbird
Rock Dove	Buff-rumped Thornbill	Pied Butcherbird
Spotted Turtle-Dove	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Australian Magpie
Crested Pigeon	Striate Thornbill	Pied Currawong
Peaceful Dove	Little Friarbird	Torresian Crow
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Blue-faced Honeyeater	Double-barred Finch
Galah	Noisy Miner	Red-browed Finch
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Lewin's Honeyeater	Mistletoebird
Cockatiel	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Welcome Swallow
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	White-throated Honeyeater	Tree Martin
Australian King-Parrot	White-naped Honeyeater	Golden-headed Cisticola
Pale-headed Rosella	Brown Honeyeater	Silvereye
Channel-billed Cuckoo	Scarlet Honeyeater	Common Myna
Laughing Kookaburra	Jacky Winter	
Sacred Kingfisher	Grey-crowned Babbler	Total: 63 species
Dollarbird	Eastern Whipbird	

Members' correspondence

From Liz Houston:

Driving up the range early Sunday morning (1/3/09) I was surprised coming around a bend in the 70km zone to see a large pile of feathers in the right hand lane. Fortunately I was in the left. Once I had time to register I could see that on the bottom was a large white bird and perched on top a **Grey Goshawk**. The Goshawk was attacking it with its beak and looked up with surprise as I rounded the corner. At that point it decided to take off and attempted to take the other bundle with it by grabbing it in its talons. Unfortunately the bundle was a bit on the big side and it dropped it onto the road. At that point the bundle made a vain attempt to stand up and managed to get on one leg and extend its wings (not quite dead yet). It was I believe a type of egret. I was still going up the range and so did not see if the next car managed to finish off the poor thing or if it died in fright but later that day it was lying dead on the side of the road. If it had been in a better spot I would have confirmed the ID (my daughter thought it had yellow legs and definitely had a long neck. It certainly looked a lot smaller than I had imagined it once lying by the side of the road). I can only guess that the Goshawk must have taken it down in flight. Not sure why an egret would be up that way but I guess they have to fly over the range at some point.

From Greg & Toni Campbell, Upper Flagstone Creek – 01.03.09:

Attached is our latest visitor... Photos were taken 1st March between 1.30 and 2.00 pm. It was about 37 degrees [Celsius]. The subject stayed for quite a while, not being too worried about Toni

taking photos and moving around inside. Toni did some book trolling, and came up with a juvenile **Brown Goshawk**. Without telling me of her deduction, and after checking out the great photos, I came to the same conclusion. ...it is a very exciting and extremely unexpected addition to our records. MAN WE LOVE LIVING HERE !!!!!!!!!!!

From Bill Jolly, "Abberton", Helidon:

24.02.09

We've had some marvellous rain, and I've been out there trying to keep the resultant growth at bay from the paths, and the house. If we went away for a couple weeks in summer, I think we'd have to hack our way through the jungle to get back to the front door!

But right now, as we move from late summer into autumn the weather is very pleasant – and birds are everywhere around the garden. Spangled Drongos, Dollarbirds and Sacred Kingfishers are around the house this-morning.

I took two photos of an immature [**Brown**] **Goshawk** on the verandah on Saturday morning (taken through the window), then a clearer pic when he moved to the fencing nearby.

31.03.09

I've just uploaded about 50 new photos to the Abberton website.

It's been a while since I did an update, so the pics are spread over a couple of pages - the most recent are on the latest page <http://www.abberton.org/birds2009.htm> and those from November and December are at <http://www.abberton.org/birds2008.htm> - it doesn't matter which page you go to, as there are links between them once you get into the website.

Photos include a **Black Bittern** from Abberton last week - they often fly by, but you have to be lucky to see one standing in the open, there are several different raptors, and the **Blue-billed Duck** that has been at Lake Galletly at Gatton on and off for several months now. And there's a lot more I hope you might enjoy.

From Gloria Glass – 30.03.09:

We've been watching two young **Channel-billed Cuckoos** being looked after by their **Torresian Crow** foster-parents for several weeks now, since seeing them just fledged (in a eucalypt we'd planted 25 years ago) while we were dog-walking early one morning. We and our Swedish visitors yesterday (30 March) watched the two young being fed as we walked below the hillside. Our visitors managed to get photos of the enormous foster-chicks as they sat in bare-branched trees. The 'chicks' are most noisy with their begging calls, and occasionally breaking into the proper Channel-bill call, and they still have bright red-pink inside their mouths. We wonder when all the adults are coming through to collect them for their northern sojourn.



Immature Brown Goshawk, cooling down on a very hot day. Photo: Toni Campbell



Immature Brown Goshawk in Bill's backyard. Photo: Bill Jolly

Birder in Focus – Mick Atzeni!
By Roving Reporter, Kay Williams

How did you get started?

Buried myself in bird books from the library as a kid, particularly ones about extinct and endangered species. There were no decent Australian field-guides though. Then when Slater's Vol 1 non-passerine field-guide was released in 1970, I spent countless hours in Myer's book department studying it until my parents eventually bought me a copy.

When did you join the club?

Around May 1979 after my first club outing, which was to Redwood Park.

How did you find out about the club?

I'd seen and kept the original snippet in the paper in 1975 announcing the Toowoomba Bird Club's (our original name) inaugural meeting. I didn't join straight away probably because I felt I was too young and inexperienced. I was so wrong.

Why did you join this club?

I was frustrated others were seeing all these great birds around Toowoomba (as reported in the newsletters) and I wasn't. After reading the monthly newsletter for four years at the city library I finally made the call and have never looked back!

Are you a lone birder in a family of non –birders?

Dad took an interest in later years; guess my enthusiasm rubbed off. No one in my own family is a birder but they know a few more species than most and enjoy having them around the yard.

What are the reactions of non-birding acquaintances to your birding activities?



Mick Atzeni (left) and Tom Tarrant (right) at Jandowae. Photo: Plaxy Barratt

Others often ask: "But what do you do? Do you photograph them?" They think there has to be some tangible evidence or there's not much point. It's hard to explain how it's a fabulous combination of visual, aural and mental stimulation on tap anytime, anywhere. That you're often in awe and have experienced many David Attenborough-like moments: You just don't have photos or video to prove it. Then try explaining how it's also your therapy, your secret to inner peace and happiness!

What is the best thing about birding?

It's a constant reminder that the simple things are the key to a happy, fulfilling life.

The worst thing?

Being stuck in a car with non-birders.

Where are some of your favourite birding spots?

Toowoomba escarpment parks, the Lockyer Valley, mulga & channel country in SW Qld.

When did you realise you were hooked on birding?

On my first club outing. The penny finally dropped that to see new species you didn't have to go far, but you did have to look beyond your backyard, the

local park and the farm.

What is on top of places to go birding in Australia? Overseas?

WA and the Top End – never been to either. Africa & South America – never been overseas.

Are you a twitcher?

No. I derive far more pleasure seeing new species locally than chasing vagrants. But I do enjoy the challenge of finding as many species as possible while birding, e.g. twitchathons.

What lists and records do you keep?

Monthly checklists for the club's survey area, trip lists, outing lists, home list, lists for various local sites. Also maintain the seasonal and Annual Challenge lists on our website forum. Used to keep a daily diary but now tend to post relevant observations directly to the forum. Realised a long time ago, my diary's not much use to anyone unless I pull the information together and present it in an accessible and interesting way. I'm hoping others follow suit.

Favourite bird?

Variegated Fairy-wren. Love their elfin qualities and that blue and russet colour combination.

Describe one of your best birding experiences.

The day a friend Noel Baker showed Pat McConnell and me a pair of Powerful Owls in Redwood Park. Perfect, eye-level views of a majestic species that I'd always wanted to see.

Top three species on your wish list?

Paradise Parrot, Night Parrot and Barking Owl (my bogey bird), preferably in that order!

Is there something for which you would sacrifice birding? Why or why not?

Nope, I'd go insane.

What's your vision for TBO?

That we strive to:

- Promote the benefits of bird watching to all ages more effectively.
- Continue monitoring and promoting our local birdlife to help ensure their long-term conservation.
- Improve how we gather, store and publish information, making it as easy as possible for members and non-members to share sightings and knowledge, and access data on the birds of the region, without reinventing the wheel.

Thankyou very much Mick for giving me this interview, it was great.

Until next time, The Roving Reporter.

Members' Bird Notes
By Pat McConnell

Great Crested Grebe (13)	25/02/2009	Lake Dyer, Laidley	NM
Glossy Ibis	23/02/2009	Hood's Dam Helidon	GG, ET, DW, HW
Royal Spoonbill	26/02/2009	"Abberton", Helidon	WJ
Spotted Harrier	23/02/2009	Gowrie Junction	DB, GG
Swamp Harrier	26/02/2009	"Abberton", Helidon	WJ
Spotless Crake	06/02/2009	Lake Broadwater	MW
Red-chested Button-Quail *	12/02/2009	Rocklyn St., Toowoomba	KM, AY
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	21/02/2009	Gowrie Junction	DB, GG

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	22/02/2009	Picnic Point	ET, HW
Oriental Cuckoo	16/02/2009	Upper Lockyer	MA
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	26/02/2009	"Abberton", Helidon	WJ
White-throated Nightjar	07/02/2009	Upper Lockyer	MA
Yellow-throated Miner	07/03/2009	Athol	RH
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	06/03/2009	Highfields	PM
Fuscous Honeyeater	17/02/2009	Upper Lockyer	MA
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	21/02/2009	Upper Lockyer	MA
Spotted Quail-thrush (2)	26/02/2009	Amos Rd. Withcott	DC
Ground Cuckoo-shrike (3)	08/03/2009	Murphy's Creek	MA
Ground Cuckoo-shrike (2)	15/03/2009	Murphy's Creek	PM, KO
White-winged Chough (7)	28/02/2009	Wilsonton, Toowoomba	SB

* Female

All sightings seen by, or reported to members of the Toowoomba Bird Observers. Accuracy not vouched for by the TBO. Please check with observer before citing.

MA, M. Atzeni; **DB**, D. Beal; **SB**, S. Burke; **DC**, D. Cleary; **GG**, G. Glass; **RH**, R. Hobson; **WJ**, W. Jolly; **PM**, P. McConnell; **KO**, K. O'Donnell; **NM**, N. McKilligan; **KM**, K. McKeown; **ET**, E. Townsend; **KW**, K. Williams; **DW**, D. Wilson; **HW**, H. Wilson; **MW**, M. Wilson; **AY**, A. Young.



Female Red-chested Button-quail found dead on Rocklyn S, Toowoomba. Photo: Helen Young.

Coming event - Avitourism presentation By Greg Ford

Bird-based tourism, or 'avitourism', is big business. Thousands of people travel the world annually, following their passion for bird watching, growing their 'life-lists' and chasing that ever-elusive rarity. Australia's domestic 'birding market' is no different, with plenty of avid 'birdos' travelling up and down the country year-round. One of the most successful, and still growing, aspects of avitourism in Australia is the development of local bird trails for 'self-guided' bird tourism. Bird trails and their associated brochures are much sought after by travelling birders. This is great for the birders, but they also provide local governments, conservation/bird groups and businesses with a prime opportunity to highlight local attractions and bring valuable tourism dollars into local economies. With a bit of thought, well-planned local bird trail projects can provide significant conservation benefits as well as adding tourism value to local economies.

Greg will deliver a presentation on avitourism to the club:

Date: 21. April 2009
Time: 7.00pm for 7.30pm start (tea and coffee will be available to help warm things up)
Where: Wilsonton Uniting Church Hall, cnr Tor and North Sts, Wilsonton
Bring: Plate of nibbles to share
Contacts: Olive Booth 4633 0553; Plaxy Barratt 0427 462 932

Non-members are welcome!

COMING EVENTS

Tuesday, 21 April 2009

Avitourism Presentation – Greg Ford

Time: 7.00pm for 7.30pm start (tea and coffee available)

Where: Wilsonton Uniting Church hall, cnr Tor and North Sts, Wilsonton

Bring: Plate of nibblies to share

Contacts: Olive Booth 4633 0553; Plaxy Barratt 0427 462 932

(For more details see p7)

Sunday, 26 April 2009

Lake Broadwater via Dalby

Leader: Malcolm Wilson

Meet at the recreation area at 7:30am.

Take the Moonie Highway west of Dalby to turnoff to Lake Broadwater on the left, approx. 25-30 km from Dalby.

Nearly 240 bird species have been recorded in this area! BYO everything, including insect repellent and scope if you have one.

Contact: Kay Williams 46595475 /0429465954

Executive meeting – new location

7.30 - 9.00pm first Wednesday of month

Now held in the *Groom Room*,

Toowoomba Town Hall, Ruthven St.

Contact Olive Booth (07) 4633 0553

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Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 15th April, 2009

Please e-mail or snail-mail your articles to Plaxy Barratt or Nicci Thompson

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Surface Mail