



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

No. 413
March 2012

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

Editorial

Steve Burke

This month's newsletter is a little different to all of my previous attempts and I am sure you will find it contains all of the information you will require to play an informed part in the discussion of, voting on and promulgation of any changes to the Club's structure brought about by the cessation of our links with the now defunct BOCA.

The Club's representative, Olive Booth, has been in consultation with Dezmond Wells of Birdlife Australia who has provided much of the information contained in this newsletter.

Dez holds the following qualifications: a Graduate Diploma in Education (specialising in science education), a Bachelor of Applied Science Parks and Recreation (specialising in aboriginal culture and fauna/flora ecology) and an Associate Diploma of Applied Science Rural Techniques (specialising in Wilderness Reserves and Wildlife).

Dezmond will be present at the Tor St Uniting Church Hall on Saturday April 14th at 2 pm to explain affiliation with Birdlife Australia to ALL Club members. Please attend.



Dezmond Wells.
Photo: Supplied.

2012 Challenge

Tally: 192 spp March 18th

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COMING EVENTS

April Outing
Saturday 28th
Venue: Glen Lomond Pk
Leader: TBA

May Outing
Sat/Sun 26th & 27th
Venue: Karara/Lake
Coolmunda
Leader: Steve Burke

June Outing
Sat/Sun 23rd & 24th
Venue: Raptor census
Leader: Pat McConnell



TOOWOOMBA
BIRD OBSERVERS

(An affiliated member of Bird Observation and Conservation Australia)

P.O. Box 4730, Toowoomba East 4350

www.toowoombabirdobservers.org

MEMBERSHIP: Adult/family \$30,

Pensioner/student \$25 (Subscriptions due 31 August)

Amalgamation.....Why?

By Dezmond Wells

Birds Australia Southern Queensland has a large overlap of many BOCA and Affiliates within our area, and we have taken the process of accepting all possible permutations and working with all groups as we are all now one bird family and ultimately, it is about providing birding opportunities for local birders. The issue now is about how branches can be formed to cater for the local birding community. Large branches now only exist if warranted. For example in highly populated coastal areas several branches may exist, while in outback areas a large branch maybe more suitable.

Our area of coverage extends from Bundaberg to the NSW border and then west to the Northern Territory and South Australia border. A very large area. Most of our previous membership existed in coastal towns.

From a National Office perspective it has always been agreed that any group who is able to stand financially on their own would be granted the right to be identified as a regional branch and therefore would organise the boundary of their token membership with National Office. Regional branches would deal directly with National Office.

Groups who could not handle their own finance or who were too small in membership (less than 20) would be encouraged to become local branches of a larger regional group. The regional branch would handle financial aspects on behalf of the local branch. Local branches would seek permission for spending and reimbursement for expenses from the Regional Branch and not from National Office.

It would be hoped that all the BOCA branches and BOCA affiliates within what was once a Regional Branch area of BA would come together to discuss how such arrangements might form. National Office will not dictate that a group will be here or there. National Office realises that many different structures may exist across Australia.

In Southeast Queensland this was certainly the case with five BOCA affiliates, two BOCA branches and one BA Regional Group.

I have spent the last couple of months travelling to all BOCA branches and most of the BOCA affiliates within the old BA regional group area to discuss all the options. These options were as follows:

- 1. Continue as an affiliate of BirdLife Australia. National Office will encourage the affiliate over time to become a full branch of BirdLife Australia but obviously this is not mandatory if you don't have an interest in this. The affiliate will pay a nominal affiliate fee for each non-BirdLife member (probably \$10 so if 50 members are non-BirdLife Australia then the affiliate pays \$500 per year) This fee is to cover all insurance. Under a recent BirdLife decision we are currently not accepting any new affiliates, but if you were already listed as an Affiliate of BOCA you can remain as an affiliate. Sunshine Coast Birders decided to continue with this arrangement. BirdLife Southern Queensland will develop an agreement with the affiliate to enhance birding opportunities. We have had discussions with the affiliate about where they perceive their members come from and through negotiation have decided on an agreed area. BirdLife Southern Queensland will not offer activities in this area but**

promote the activities of the affiliate group. **Toowoomba Bird Observers could follow this direction. You continue as you always have and retain your affiliate status with BirdLife Australia (Advantages: maintain your current status quo) (Disadvantages: if TBO members wish to be members of BirdLife Australia they have to pay a second membership fee).**

2. The BOCA Branch remains independent and deals directly with NO. NO in consultation with the branch will determine its area of membership coverage. BundyBOCA decided to follow this direction and is now BirdLife Bundaberg. This regional branch will extend from north of Bundaberg to Maryborough, but remain coastal. BirdLife Southern Queensland will not offer activities in this area and the area is removed from our area of coverage. **This does not affect TBO as not a BOCA Branch**

3. The affiliate becomes a BirdLife branch and deals directly with National Office. National Office in consultation with the branch will determine its area of membership coverage. In this case TBO would follow the rules and regulations for a branch, (I have attached the draft copy of these rules for your information) The name Toowoomba Bird Observers would change to “BirdLife Toowoomba Bird Observers” or “BirdLife Toowoomba” or a name chosen by your group. The logo would be the BirdLife logo but secondary logos (e.g. your current logo may be used in conjunction with the BirdLife Logo). You maintain your newsletter and eNews but use the templates provided by BirdLife Australia. These are sent to National Office who will email them to members or post them to members without email addresses (all printing is handled by the national office) You can use the BirdLife Australia website for your web or you can maintain a single page on the BirdLife website with a link to your own website. You maintain your own finances and bank account (but the name of the account changes to “BirdLife Australia (Toowoomba Bird Observers). You develop an annual operational plan with attached funding requirements, national office will then fund the branch based on these and negotiated operational plans. You can continue to receive in money from grants, for survey work and use this to run your group. (The main benefit with going this way is the added support you receive to operate and members who once held multiple memberships (TBO, BA and BOCA) will now only have one fee membership.

4. Become a Local Branch of a Regional Branch. These are for small groups who may not have a large membership or is a group that cannot form an executive committee with a treasurer. In our area this is what happened with the Gold Coast Birders a BOCA affiliate. After discussions with the group arrangements were put in place for them to be formed a s a Local Branch. They still run their activities as they always have but all assets and finances remain with BirdLife Southern Queensland, who manage these on the local branches behalf. We have also set up several new local branches by having discussions with local birders to see if they would be happy to form a local branch, as such we have now set up local branches in Brisbane South, Brisbane North, South Burnett and Sunshine Coast Hinterland. All of these groups’ activities appear on the BirdLife Southern Queensland calendar of events. **(I do not see this as an option for TBO but if you decide to do so we can have further discussions – basically TBO would operate as it always has but have the added advantage of being supported by the larger group – not a take-over but a working partnership) (Advantage do not have to worry about finance or running a committee – minimum requirement a convenor).**

5. Merge to become one Regional Branch. In our area this happened when the two large organisations Birds Australia Southern Queensland and BrisBOCA had many meetings about how to go forwarded. Initially it looked like we would form two Regional Branches covering

different areas. However after much discussion we merged the two committees together to form one new committee under the name of BirdLife Southern Queensland. **(I do not see this as an option for TBO but if you decide to do so we can have further discussions – basically the outings section of TBO would operate as a local branch. The TBO committee and finance would move to the BirdLife Southern Queensland committee and bank accounts. This is not a takeover but a merging of the two groups such that the committee would be staffed by members from across the Toowoomba and Brisbane regions. This committee would work with the Toowoomba local branch to fund its operations and help it function. (advantage one group with many local branches, one executive committee with representation from across Toowoomba and Brisbane and elsewhere to oversee local birding opportunities, conservation issues, grant writing and so on).**

6. Remain independent of BirdLife Australia with no interactions (in other words GO IT Alone). In our area Birds Queensland have decided to follow this path. **(Disadvantage become isolated from the main birding fraternity; have to find members to stand on the committee).**

The result is that the area that was once covered by the Regional Group Birds Australia Southern Queensland has been divided, so that it is now a composite of Regional Branches, Local Branches and BirdLife Affiliates. The benefits are that local birding is boosted and this should result in a greater partnership between the local birding community and local councils. While it appears we are divided we in fact are all promoting one united BirdLife voice.

To prevent this BirdLife Southern Queensland will continue to **establish more local branches in western towns** and also develop a process whereby a **BirdLife Queensland State-based committee** is established. The state-based committee will have representation from all regional branches and local branches across the state and this committee will function **to monitor areas not address with regularity** such as western and northern Queensland areas and coastal islands, **to handle Important Bird Areas** (establishment and on-going management), **State-based Conservation Issues** (e.g. stockroutes, mining, gas, threatened species) and **apply for and manage State-based Grants**. A paper on this committee will come to all groups in Queensland in the near future.

I hope this provides Birders in Toowoomba Bird Observers with an understanding of the new possible structures. We knew change would occur, we knew change would be difficult, we have decided to accept without malice the choice of all birding groups and work towards ensuring that all have an opportunity to bird and be managed as they wish.

More questions answered!

By Dezmond Wells

Answers to questions:

Remaining an affiliate you retain all that you are as a group, your logo, your way of doing things, your membership fee, your newsletter and so on. You would need to pay an affiliate fee of \$10 per non-member of BirdLife Australia. For example 50 non-members = \$500 for insurance cost. You maintain a link from www.birdLife.org.au to <http://toowoombabirdobservers.org.au/>

If you became a BirdLife regional Branch. You use the BirdLife logo on everything but can use a secondary logo (Black-shouldered Kite) if needed (for historical reasons), you still construct your newsletter with what you always have in the newsletter just with a different template. I have attached our latest newsletter so you can see the template. The material in the newsletter is as we have always put in. You are covered by insurance including any visiting volunteers. You handle your own finance. Membership benefits are:

- o *Australian BirdLife*, our quarterly magazine packed with photographs and articles to inspire and inform
- o Priority access to our websites including birdlife.org.au and birddata.com.au
- o Discounts on accommodation, education courses and tours at our observatories, sanctuaries and reserves
- o Free or discounted events across the country
- o Membership of the biggest bird-interest library in Australia
- o Discounted subscription to our ornithological journals *Emu - Austral Ornithology* and *Australian Field Ornithology*
- o Access to information, advice and expertise
- o Membership of a local group providing activities, newsletters and advice helping you to enjoy birds in your area

Costs: (incl *Australian Birdlife* quarterly magazine)

Individual \$75 (Concession \$55)*

Family (2 members at one address) \$119 (Concession \$96)*

Group / Business \$119

Library \$55

Student \$25** (includes free Electronic Emu subscription)

* Concession: Health Care/Pension card

Tracking down Tassie endemics.

By Jan Christensen

Crossing to Tassie on the Spirit of Tasmania proved a good move – they had a helpful book on Tassie birds that I saw nowhere else on the trip. I was equipped and ready to go.



Green Rosella.

Photo: Jan Christensen.

My sister gave a sigh and agreed to join in the hunt. My brother and his wife wondered what my problem was – that much excitement over a few birds that you might or might not see.

First endemic off the ranks was the **Tasmanian Native-hen**. I'd spent considerable time that day looking for it in what seemed likely places. My sister was visiting friends. As I joined her after a fruitless search, we looked out her friends' window, and there it was! I did get to see some other birds of interest to me: the first **Forest**

Raven I've been certain I've identified correctly (no other crows/ravens in Tasmania!), and a large flock of **Australian Shelducks**.

Next day, we drove out to Hollybank Forest, not far from Launceston, and wow! Those endemics showed up in style: **Green Rosella**, **Tasmanian Scrubwren**, **Yellow-throated Honeyeater**, **Yellow Wattlebird** and **Black Currawong**. Others of interest were the **Grey Currawong** (a new bird) and the lovely **Scarlet Robin**.

Our trip took us on to Bicheno. On the way, another lifer for me: the Crescent Honeyeater. With none of the fuss of Phillip Is, a Bicheno tour allowed us to see Little Penguins coming ashore. We stood perfectly still watching them, and so unfazed were they that one walked right over my foot on its way to its nest! As well as that great experience, Bicheno also served up a **Strong-billed Honeyeater**, another endemic, and a **Eurasian Skylark** soared up from a beach nearby into the sky. The next day, our trip to Freycinet National Park produced the endemic **Black-headed Honeyeater**, lots of beautiful scenery, but not a lot of birds. Eight endemics down, five to go and five days had passed. Since we were sightseeing as well as birding, we felt we were doing well.

In the next few days, we learned to tell a **Kelp Gull** from a **Pacific Gull**, but didn't see any new birds – though we saw plenty of lovely places and lovely birds. We decided to drive up Mt Wellington, and found a small park on the way down. There, along with an interesting selection of other birds, was our next endemic, the **Dusky Robin**. Then we travelled on to Bruny Is and a taste of luxury. We stayed at "Inala", and enjoyed an organised bird walk with an expert. And the very first bird we saw on our walk? The **Forty-spotted Pardalote**. How good was that? Other good sightings were **Flame Robin**, **Brush Bronzewing**, the **Tasmanian Thornbill** (another endemic), and more Scarlet Robins (so beautiful), the white morph of the **Grey Goshawk**, and a short glimpse of an **Olive Whistler**. As well, we got invaluable advice on where to find some of the other birds on our wish list, including the last remaining endemic, the Scrubtit.

Our guide had suggested we search for it at Russell Falls. If we failed to find it (apparently pretty likely) we would at least be seeing some spectacular scenery. So, we rose early and plunged into the dark bush. We could have stayed in bed longer! It was a great walk, and yes, we found a **Scrubtit**. Yay, our list was complete, and we had days to go on our trip. Another bird I really wanted to see was a **Pink Robin**. Our guide suggested Lake St Clair, and sure enough, we found it there. Way to go!!



Grey Goshawk (white morph).
Photo: Jan Christensen.

The rest of the trip produced more interesting birds, but I have to say, nothing quite beat finding all those endemics. Only one problem – what challenge will I set myself if I go to Tassie again?

Members' Bird Notes
By Pat McConnell

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES: 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.

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Stubble Quail	26/02/2012	Back Flagstone Ck. Road	MA
Intermediate Egret	1/03/2012	"Abberton" Helidon	BJ
Nankeen Night Heron	15/02/2012	Stockyard Creek	RH
Black Kite (4)	26/02/2012	"Abberton" Helidon	BJ
Emerald Dove	20/02/2012	Sawpit Gully Road	RH
Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	21/02/2012	Sawpit Gully Road	RH
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo (~12)	13/02/2012	Highfields	MM
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo	19/02/2012	Picnic Point Toowoomba	MM
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (6)	15/02/2012	Kearney Springs Toowoomba	MM
Glossy Black-Cockatoo (3)	16/02/2012	Glen Lomond Creek	RH
Glossy Black-Cockatoo (4)	4/03/2012	Hell Hole	RH
Little Corella (50+)	5/03/2012	USQ Toowoomba	PM; KO
Musk Lorikeet	16/02/2012	Rockmount	RH
Fork-tailed Swift (150+) *	10/03/2012	Woodgate	PM; KO
Noisy Pitta	22/02/2012	Sawpit Gully Road	RH
Dusky Woodswallow	20/02/2012	Preston	RH
Diamond Firetail	16/02/2012	Rockmount	RH
Tawny Grassbird	3/03/2012	Redwood Park Toowoomba	FEP Walk

* One large flock of more than 150 swifts was seen flying quite low (sometimes as low as 30m). They could clearly be heard calling and stayed around for more than 20 minutes. Later that day another 81 birds were seen nearby.

MA, M. Atzeni; **RH**, R. Hobson; **BJ**, B. Jolly; **PM**, P. McConnell; **MM**, M. McGoldrick; **KO**, K. O'Donnell.

Bird notes can be submitted by email to mcconnel@usq.edu.au, by post or via the forum www.toowoombabirdobservers.org/forum/index.php

Thanks

Pat McConnell

COMING CLUB EVENTS

April Outing

Saturday 28th April 2012

Venue: Glen Lomond Park

Time: 7 am

Meet: Burraway Court off Flagstone Creek Road

Leader: TBA

Phone: 4659 5475/0429 465 954

May Outing

Saturday/Sunday 26th & 27th May 2012

Venue: Karara/Lake Coolmunda

Time: 7 am

Meet: Karara Hall

Leader: Steve Burke

Phone: 4693 3811/0434 397 532

June Outing

Saturday/Sunday 23rd & 24th June 2012

Venue: Raptor census

Time: When suitable

Meet: Where suitable

Leader: Pat McConnell

Phone: 4631 5573

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Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 20th April 2012

Please e-mail or post articles to the Editor.

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Surface Mail