



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

No. 440
Aug '15

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

Editorial

Sandy Robertson

Hi all,

Welcome to this bumper edition. We have outing reports, new bird reports and lots of member photos to share. Also the TBO Library has been transferred to the Landcare Discovery Centre, 127b Campbell Street, Toowoomba and is available for borrowing.

The Landcare Discovery Centre is usually open between the hours of 8:30am and 4:30pm weekdays and members are welcome to not only browse and borrow TBO library books, but any of the other books and resources in the library.

The books have all been labelled with individual barcodes and are awaiting entry onto the library database. If there are any volunteers out there with experience in library type of data entry and who have a few hours to spare, you would be most welcome to come and assist with entering the library books onto the database. Training can be provided. Please give me a call if you are interested in helping out

Ph. 46376228 (WH)

Sandy Robertson

Oops! This beautiful bird is, of course, an Osprey, not a White-bellied Sea-eagle as labelled in last edition. They seem to be very photogenic birds, with another Osprey photo in the Members Photos section of this edition



Membership Fees for 2015/2016 are due at the end of August. Annual subscription remains at: \$45 for adults and families. \$40 for pensioners and students Fees can be paid by cheque or money order payable to Toowoomba Bird Observers Inc Fees can also be paid by direct transfer to Heritage Bank to:

BSB 638-070 A/c 4312503 S12
The PO Box is 4730
Toowoomba East

2015 Challenge

138 species as at 19th June

See full list at:

<http://toowoombabirdobservers.org.au>

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Outings calendar

Aug 29th Saw Pit Gully

Sept 26th (Sat) Lockyer Wetlands

Oct 14th AGM

Oct 23-26th Census

Nov 28th TBO 40th Anniversary celebration and Christmas breakup



TOOWOOMBA
BIRD OBSERVERS

P.O. Box 4730, Toowoomba East 4350
www.toowoombabirdobservers.org

MEMBERSHIP: Adult/family \$45
Pensioner/student \$40

July Outing Report

TRIP REPORT Stevenson Street, Toowoomba 25th JULY 2015

By Neil McKilligan

After rain overnight, the grey skies promised a wet morning, but it slowly cleared to bathe us in warm sunshine. The birds, as is usual in eucalypt forest, were patchily distributed, occurring in mixed species flocks, 'guilds' they used to be called. Each individual benefiting from the concerted effort to flush insect prey from cover. The 10 observers saw 27 species along Stevenson Street and a further 5 at the start of the Fantail Track on top of the escarpment (see Marie's list). The male Red-backed Fairy Wren, and male Golden Whistler were revealed in all their glory in close up view. Whilst the Eastern Whipbird delighted by emerging, only metres away from us, from the cover of lantana to forage vigorously under the flaky bark of a dead sapling. The birds of Stevenson St. certainly exceeded my expectations thanks to the sharp eyes and ears of the other observers.

By Marie Gittins

Yellow-faced honey-eater

Photo: Sandy Robertson

Bridle Trail Bird List

Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Laughing Kookaburra, White-throated Treecreeper, Variegated Fairy-wren, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill, Noisy Friarbird, Noisy Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-



naped Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, Eastern Yellow Robin, Eastern Whipbird, Varied Sittella, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, and Red-browed Finch. A short drive later, we added a few new birds to our list for the day on Pardalote and the beginning of Fantail walk. They were Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Willie Wagtail, Australian Magpie, and Silvereye.

On a dull morning we met to bird along the Picnic Point bridle trail. While we all appreciated an extra layer, the threatening rain held off and by 10.30 am it was a lovely sunny day. The Whipbird remained with us much of the morning so good viewing was possible for all. Later a little flock of varied Sittellas brought joy and the male variegated Fairy-wren confirmed that that probable female variegated wren really was not part of the Red-backed Fairy-wren family. Even the spotted Pardalote came down low enough for most of us to look down on it and enjoy spectacular viewing. A wonderful morning was had by all from the youngest, Dakota to the eldest.....!

Our special Thanks for Neil for his great leadership of our morning.

New Birds for Toowoomba

New Toowoomba Birds

It has been a while since the Club's new bird information was updated. Since the last report there have been three additional species added to the list. The Club has finally reached the 300 mark which is a fantastic effort for our local area.

Australian Bustard - New Toowoomba Bird - Number 300

Australian Bustard *Ardeotis australis*. A male observed by Rodney Hobson on 26 July 2013 at Shoesmith Road Westbrook.

Australian Bustard
Photo: TBO Photo library



Spotted Bowerbird - New Toowoomba Bird - Number 301

Toowoomba Bird Observers - Rare Bird Report Form

Name: John McAlpine

Address: Rockmount Road

Other Observers Present: None

Species Name: Spotted Bowerbird *Chlamydera maculata*

Date of Observation: 16th October 2014

Location: Rockmount Road Rockmount

Habitat Description: House yard adjacent to open eucalypt woodland and creek.

Sighting Conditions: Good, fine day, clear sky.

Optical Aids: 7.5 X 30 Binoculars.

Distance/Height from Bird: Approximately 25M – Bird in tree 2m from ground and on a garden structure 2m high.

Duration of Observation: Approximately 10 minutes.

Number of Birds Observed: 1

Description of Bird: Stoutly built – similar in shape to the Satin Bowerbirds that were close by. It was perhaps very slightly larger. Body – light tan, lighter towards the breast. Most distinctive were the spots down the back which were on the folded wing feathers. Spots were also noted all over its back.

How was it distinguished from similar species? Similar in build and size of Satin Bowerbirds but the colouration was markedly different and the distinct spotting on its back and wing feathers stood out.

What is the extent of your familiarity with this species? None

What was the activity of the bird under observation? Feeding on mulberries and perching.

Reference material used: “The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds” P.P. & R. Slater. Weldon Publishing, Sydney 1989.

Other comments: The bird didn't call at all and seemed to be relaxed in the presence of 2 – 3 Satin Bowerbirds.

Little Wattlebird New Toowoomba Bird – Number 302

Toowoomba Bird Observers - Rare Bird Report Form

Name: HOBSON Rodney

Address: Webb Street, Toowoomba Q4350

Other Observers Present: Alone at time of observation

Species: Little Wattlebird *Anthochaera chrysoptera*

Date of Observation: 03rd December 2014

Location: In front garden of residence in Long Street, Rangeville, Toowoomba SEQ at GDA94 – S27.57787deg. x E151.97560 deg. +/- 50 metres.



**Treasures of a spotted Bowerbirds Bower, consisting of predominantly bullet casings, glass and snail shells
Taken near St George, QLD
Photo: Sandy Robertson**



Habitat Description: Highly modified, suburban house yard heavily planted in exotic and native trees and shrubs; many in bloom. Neighbouring area generally highly vegetated with ornamental plantings.

Sighting Conditions (weather, visibility etc.): Late afternoon, no breeze and about 4/8-5/8 cloud. Visibility very good. Pre-storm, humid.

Optical Aids Used (Binoculars, telescope, camera): Zeiss 8 x 40 compact binoculars. I-pod with bird calls (Morcombe and Stewart) on hand at time of sighting, as well.

Distance/Height from Bird: Initially about 10 metres closing to five metres.

Duration of Observation: About eight-10 minutes excluding a few minutes search time after call first heard prior to sighting.

Number of Birds Observed: One (1)

Description of Bird: Size: Slightly larger than Noisy Miner but smaller than Noisy Friarbird, which were both present in close proximity. Long, somewhat elongate honeyeater; dull brown-grey generally with conspicuous white streaks (especially through binoculars) dorsally and ventrally. Strong, recurved bill. Long, graduated tail the feathers of which were clearly white-tipped. No sign of any wattles (as in Red Wattlebird). Busy, active and quite vocal being in turn harassed by and harassing a couple of Noisy Miners. Call corresponded to that on Morcombe's and Stewart's app for the species that I had with me at the time.

How was it distinguished from similar species? The only other species that are present in the general area and might possibly be confused are Red Wattlebird, Little Friarbird, Striped Honeyeater and Noisy Friarbird, in my opinion. The absence of wattles, yellow smudge on breast and size difference, as well as call separates it from Red Wattlebird. No bare skin on head, no bill knob, no throat plumes nor a red eye as in the Noisy Friarbird. Absence of the bare facial skin present in the Little Friarbird. Striped Honeyeater smaller and very much more boldly striped.

What is the extent of your familiarity with this species? I am very familiar with the Little Wattlebird having encountered it regularly during my eight years working on Fraser Island and in Cooloola. It is a common species there especially in the wet heaths where it regularly attends flowering *Banksia robur* and *Xanthorrhoea johnsonii*. The species used to be one of the most common birds around the barracks at Eurong during my six year's residence there. Red Wattlebird, conversely, was a quite rare visitor to the island. I've also seen it at other locations within and outside Queensland including in the Lockyer Siding area and along Bolingbroke Road near Atkinsons Dam SEQ.

What was the activity of the bird under observation? Calling initially then observed sporadically feeding between bouts of chasing and being chased by other birds present in shrub and surrounding greenery. Bird very active and responded to tape playback.

Reference material used: *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia* - Pizzey G. & Knight F. (1997). Harper Collins, Sydney.

Field Guide to Australian Birds – Morcombe M. (2000) – Steve Parish Publishing, Archerfield.

Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds – Christidis L. & Boles W.E. (2008) CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood.

Other comments: Searched for bird following two days in general area but did not find. Believe bird is a vagrant and, perhaps, blown up range into Toowoomba in recent unsettled weather?

If required, are you able to provide other evidence e.g. photograph, video or taped call of the bird you saw or heard? No.

Members' Photo Page



Black-shouldered Kite
Photo: Alan Young



Nankeen Kestrel
Photo: Alan Young



Black Kite
Photo: Alan Young



Brown Falcon
Photo: Alan Young



Osprey, Forster, NSW
Photo: Col Hughes



New Holland Honey-eater, Forster, NSW
Photo: Col Hughes

Update from Bill Jolly Abberton, Helidon

We've just passed our Winter Solstice, but it remains more autumnal than wintry so far.

Plenty of raptors passing through – not in the sense of migrating though, just passing through the garden or along the creek in their daily search for sustenance. A pair of Square-tailed Kites were cruising the tree-tops just along the road the other day, White-bellied Sea-eagles are daily along the creek, as are a pair(?) of Whistling Kites who seem to be spending a lot of time together in our biggest creek-side eucalyptus. We shall see if anything results from that.

Our regular accipiters were supplemented briefly last week by a Grey Goshawk, which paused for a while, amidst a flurry of complaint, in a big dead tree across the creek a little upstream from the house. The attached photo taken from the veranda is a bit distant, but it was the only chance he gave me.

Meanwhile, back at ground level, Black Nightshade is fruiting everywhere. It's a weed which I decline to pull out because its ripe berries are irresistible delicacies for Mistletoe birds among others. Evidence herewith.

Also, a couple of photos of a male Speckled Warbler bathing just outside my window. They had been long-established here, but we lost them for a couple of years following the flood in 2011. However, we have had a male and female about again for a year or so, and they are presently feeding around the place along with two youngsters. I just love these little birds, and I can't resist photographing them even if they are drenched through. I keep trying for a family group but although they stay loosely together they give the kids a long leash and I don't think I'll ever get them lined up just so! But who cares – the main thing is they're back! As are Koala (always in the trees somewhere) and Platypus (we watched one feeding in front of the house on an overcast morning at the weekend).

Azure Kingfisher is still here daily. Two together on the same creek side branch sometimes. My diaries record courtship displays in previous Mays and Junes. It's surprising just how many species are actively courting still. I'm beginning to suspect that some of our fairy-wrens never stop – Superb and Red-backed Fairy-wren males are still full-plumaged and chasing each other about, though resident Variegated Fairy-wren males have gone into eclipse plumage.

Bill Jolly
Abberton, Helidon, Qld
(27° 34' 21' S; 152° 08' 21' E)



Grey Goshawk
Photo: Bill Jolly



Mistletoe Bird
Photo: Bill Jolly



Speckled Warbler
Photo: Bill Jolly

And some more from Col Hughes.... this time taken between Toowoomba and Goomburra



Nankeen Kestrel
Brown Falcon
Fairy Wren
Photos: Col Hughes



Scarlet Honey-eater 2/8/15 and Wonga pigeon 9/8/15 both in my front yard, Hirstglen
Photo: Sandy Robertson

Raptor Census Report

Raptor Census June 2015 by Pat McConnell

Northern Section

Pat McConnell and Kath O'Donnell surveyed the northern section on Sunday 28 June. This section was divided into four sub-sections as in previous years. These were Highfields to Cooby Dam, Cooby Dam to Goombungee, Goombungee to Cooyar and Cooyar to Highfields. The survey was completed between 10.30am and 3.30pm. Seven species and 30 individual birds of prey were recorded which was three more species than in 2014 and six more individual birds. (See table below for summarised results). The weather during the survey was cool, overcast (~ 80% cloud cover) with a light breeze. One hundred and sixty eight kilometres were travelled. Highlights were a Spotted Harrier and a pair of Peregrine Falcons. Also of interest were seven Banded Lapwings and two Ground Cuckoo-shrikes.

Southern Section

The southern section was surveyed by Gayle Lee and Steve Zell on Saturday 27 June. They saw three species and 35 individual birds of prey which was one less species than in 2014 and six more individual birds of prey. The route they surveyed included Wyreema, Cambooya, Felton, the Cambooya/Felton Road, Umbirum and Westbrook.

Eastern Section

The eastern section was surveyed by Mick Atzeni, Laurie Atzeni and Kev & Kay Williams on Sunday 28 June from 10.00am until 3.00pm. They saw 12 species and 116 individual birds of prey which is five more species than in 2014 and 240 fewer individual birds of prey. The route they surveyed included Postman's Ridge, Helidon, Grantham, Gatton, Adare Road, Lake Clarendon, Lake Gellatly and Lake Apex. Highlights were Square-tailed Kite and Black Falcon.

Western Section

The western section was surveyed by Al Young, Olive Booth, Col Hughes and Marie Gittins on Saturday 27 June. They saw seven species and 67 individual birds of prey which was one more species than in 2014 and 90 fewer individual birds of prey. It should be noted that 2014 had large numbers of Black Kite records that explained the high numbers of birds seen in that year. The route they surveyed was Toowoomba – Oakey – Jondaryn – Bowenville – Formartin – Norwin – Cecil Plains – Dalby – Kaimkillenbun – Quinalow - Oakey - Toowoomba. The weather was cool with slight winds and 20-80% cloud cover. The highlight was two Spotted Harriers.

Table of Sightings for 27 – 28 June 2015

Species	N	S	E	W	Total
Black-shouldered Kite	2	8	6	6	22
Square-tailed Kite			2		2
Black Kite			77	25	102
Whistling Kite	1		9	1	11
Spotted Harrier	1			2	3
White-bellied Sea- Eagle			3		3
Brown Goshawk			1		1
Collared Sparrowhawk			1		1
Wedge-tailed Eagle	6		1		7
Little Eagle			2		2
Brown Falcon	2	2	2		6
Black Falcon			1		1
Peregrine Falcon	2				2
Nankeen Kestrel	16	25	11	33	85
Total number of raptors	30	35	116	67	248

The above table shows that 14 species were seen in 2015 which is six more species than in 2014. There were 248 individual birds of prey seen which was 313 less than in 2014. The fact that fewer individual birds of prey were seen in 2015 relates to the fact that large numbers of Black Kite (405) were recorded in 2014.

A big thank you to all involved especially the leaders.

Members' Bird Notes

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
Hoary-headed Grebe	16/05/2015	Ashlands Drive Reserve	KW, MA
Red-necked Avocet	16/05/2015	Ashlands Drive Reserve	KW, MA
Pacific Baza (3)	3/08/2015	Highfields	PM
Pacific Baza	15/05/2015	Withcott	DC, PC
Square-tailed Kite	24/06/2015	Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat	AY
Spotted Harrier	13/04/2015	Glenvale	MA
Little Eagle	13/05/2015	Murphys Creek	MA
Australian Hobby	4/04/2015	Highfields	PM
Australian Owlet-nightjar	15/05/2015	Withcott	DC, PC
Wonga Pigeon	18/06/2015	Flagstone	CD
Diamond Dove	18/05/2015	Ropley Road Dam	ED, MG
Red-Tailed Black-Cockatoo (4)	10/08/2015	Helidon	PM
Brown-headed Honeyeater	15/05/2015	Withcott	DC, PC
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	9/08/2015	Taylor St Toowoomba	PM, KO
Rose Robin	15/05/2015	Withcott	DC, PC
Rose Robin	20/06/2015	Tabletop	DG
White-winged Chough (4)	16/07/2015	Helidon	PM

MA, M. Atzeni; **DC**, D. Cleary; **PC**, P. Cleary; **CD**, C. Dove; **ED**, E. Dallinger; **DG**, D. Greenlees; **MG**, M. Gittins; **PM**, P. McConnell; **KO**, K. O'Donnell; **KW**, Kev. Williams; **AY**, A. Young.

If anyone wishes to submit bird notes they can do this directly to me at mcconnell@usq.edu.au or via the Club's mailing address.

Thanks
Pat McConnell

Bits and Pieces

Subscriptions are due at the end of August

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BSB 638-070 A/c 4312503 S12
The PO Box is 4730
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AGM

The club AGM is on Wednesday 14/10/2015. All positions will be declared vacant and members are requested to consider nominating for positions. An email will be forwarded with nomination forms closer to the time.

Please consider putting your hand up for one of the committee roles. Many hands make light work.

TBO Online

Website and facebook:

toowoombabirdobservers.org.au

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Toowoomba-Bird-Observers/175472075881350>

Coming Events

August Outing: Saturday 29th August

Location: Saw Pit Gully

Leader: Mick Atzeni

Details: Meet 7am at Stockyard Hall, Stockyard Creek Rd (off Flagstone Creek Rd). Contacts mobile 0408155528 or phone 46305737 (H)

For club outings, please advise the Outing Leader if you will be attending so that car pooling can be arranged where possible and Leaders can start the outing when all attendees have safely arrived, (or advise every one of any last minute cancellations due to inclement weather).

Committee Members

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Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is Wednesday 30th September 2015

Please e-mail or post articles and photos to the Editor.

**If undeliverable return to
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PO Box 4730, Toowoomba East Q 4350**

Surface Mail