



NEWS-SHEET No. 101

MAY 1984

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

## toowoomba bird club

### Postal Address

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### Club Officers

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### Annual Subscription

Ordinary/Family membership ..... \$8.00  
Student membership ..... \$4.00

### Activities

Field Outing and Monthly Meeting - 4th Sunday of each  
month - usually leave from Pigott's Car Park at 7.30 am.

Camping trips, film and slide evenings.

### News-sheet

Published monthly, before the outing. Articles have a dead-  
line of the last day of the month and should be mailed to  
the editor.

EDITORIAL

The cold weather is catching up with us, however, for me that is just another reason to enjoy my birdwatching. I'm able to stay in bed that little bit longer as the birds dislike the winter mornings as much as I do. Then I choose my spot with care. It has to be down range where it's warmer, and it has to be a lovely sheltered place. Flagstone Creek always fills that bill, and I never tire of birding in that area. I leave my adventuring farther afield for the summer.

John and I had a really lovely Easter by joining the Chinchilla Field Naturalists at their camp on the Auburn River. They are a fun-loving group and made sure that our stay was a memorable one. Saturday was mainly rained out but as the sun started to peak through about 2pm we set off for a small jaunt around the property "Bottletree". Having never been in that area of the country before my eyes were opened to the fauna and flora to be found. That evening we were entertained with a variety show consisting of local talent. Despite the cool weather it was an uproarious interlude. Sunday saw us at the Auburn River National Park. This is a very tiny park where the Auburn River flows through a small gorge. The rock formation is really interesting with great boulders everywhere and the Auburn trickling under and over the rocks to form refreshing swimming holes. It was a peaceful, mind-refreshing day. We arrived back at camp with enough time for John and I to take a quiet stroll along the banks of the Auburn where we were camped. The majestic trees and the quiet river were a perfect setting and we saw a variety of birds; White-faced Heron, Restless Flycatcher, Jacky Winter, Rufous Whistler, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Willie Wagtail, Little Cuckoo-shrike, Striped Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo to name some. Monday morning we had enough time to take a quick trip to a large dam on the property before returning home. I hope you all had as pleasant a holiday as ourselves.

Lesley Beaton, Editor

--ooOoo--

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Toowoomba will celebrate World Environment Day at Picnic Point on the 3rd June. We have been invited to participate. Bird walks around the vicinity have been organized for early in the morning. Displays from many interested associations will be set up from 10.00 am. We would appreciate some help from our members to operate our small display. Considering the success of our stand at the Hobby 'n' Craft Show we feel it is of great importance to keep ourselves before the public eye. Phone Marilyn if you can help out on Sunday:-

10.00 am. - 12 noon

12 noon - 2.00 pm.

2.00 pm. - 4.00 pm.

There will be many things going on to keep you entertained so it should be a fun time and not a chore.

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GREEN WATCH PLANT SALE

The plant sale was highly successful, raising about \$1 000 for the waterbird habitat.

--ooOoo--

### PHOTOGRAPHIC PRIZE

Congratulations to Ray Viljoen for submitting the winning photograph in the Green Week competition. Anyone who saw the Rufous Fantail print would thoroughly agree with the judges.

--ooOoo--

### AN OWLING STORY

Recently the plague of crickets enticed a Frogmouth to partake of the many, attracted to the lights along the awning of a tiny railway station. The 'owl', sitting on the edge of the cement platform after having heartily dined, was reluctant to fly at the approach of a diesel. However, a slight miscalculation resulted in one owl flapping madly between the station wall and the noisy, shiny aluminium wheat wagons rumbling along. This wiley old bird decided the only solid and safe perch was the head of the attending night officer who walked some 10 paces, with an owl where a cap should have been, to carefully persuade it to fly past the end of the building to safety. Some days later the results of strong sharp claws could still be felt each time a comb passed that way.

Jim Corbin

--ooOoo--

### NOT JUST BIRDWATCHING

If we followed the Chinese system of naming the year after some species of the animal world I think we would be justified in naming this year in honour of the spider. It would be interesting to know if the same over-abundance to the normal was occurring Australia wide. It is certainly in evidence in the environs of Brisbane and up to 100kms outside. I first became aware of the infestation, if that is the correct term, when visiting a friend in New Farm just before Christmas. In his garden were two citrus trees about two metres apart and en route to the Hills hoist. It seemed that because it was a human passageway they had spun their webs over head height purposefully. Normally it could be expected to see at least one web and spider in such a situation, but there were six or seven large engineering wonders in very close, parallel proximity, and each web occupied by a reasonably large spider with a leg spread of about 8-10cms. The species of spider which seems most prevalent in this population explosion has bright shiny thinnish legs which alternate in sections of colour from yellow ochre to a dark rich resinous brown, and an oversize abdomen of a dull blue-grey gun-metal hue.

In recounting my bird stories to a spider-loving friend I was informed the species is called Nephilia. Although it was spelt out for me I feel it should be queried and no doubt a more knowledgeable person in these matters can put it to right.

The spider connection with birdwatching took place on a friend's property just outside Jimboomba. I saw a bird go into a tree considering it to be a Striped Honeyeater or Olive-backed Oriole which are very numerous in the area. When I got my binoculars on it I totally forgot about identifying it as my interest was taken solely by the fact that it had caught a large spider, almost as large, it seemed, as its own head. Rather like seabirds with caught fish lying laterally between the mandibles, it was see-sawing its head and quickly opening and shutting its beak in an endeavour to reposition the spider so that it would go down its throat head first. Suddenly in the struggle the spider was able to escape but sometime prior to doing so had attached its silken cord to the bird's lower mandible, so the spider's quick descent came to a sudden halt about two metres

NOT JUST BIRDWATCHING CONT'D

down. The bird was totally perplexed having this weight attached to its bill and in jerking to free itself only caused more confusion as the spider bobbed up and down at the end of its cord. Having escaped almost certain death I found it rather amusing that the spider began to ascend its cord back to the bird, but the episode came to an end when the spider's cord either broke or it decided to bail out within 10cm from the bird's beak. As the spider fell to earth the bird made a desperate inside loop curve to catch it but it would appear the spider won the day.

Whilst staying with other friends on a property outside Kalbar near Boonah we made it a habit to glance at two young Bunya Pines growing close to the house. In it a pair of Zebra Finches were nesting. We were setting out for a walk to do some 'birding' when we noticed this small fledgling hanging head downwards and desperately trying to escape from the spider's web mesh that was holding it so firmly. With the aid of a tall friend and an even taller plastic tube we were able to get the tiny bird safely to the ground. Its head and beak, legs and tail feathers were inextricably entwined in the very sticky and very strong silk. We carefully removed it all by patience on both sides. This tiny 5cm fledgling was almost exhausted and we placed it on a bed of straw on the roof near its nest and on the return from our walk it was not in evidence. We chose to think it had recovered and returned to its nest.

My spider loving friend informed me that in all likelihood the spider would have attacked the bird when it had become totally exhausted and killed it and used it as food as it does with other prey.

Roy Beaton

---ooOoo---

CLUB BAGS

We have made some very nice shoulder bags, fully lined, with the club logo on them. They are suitable for carrying your binoculars, a bird book and a packet of sandwiches. In order to raise some funds they are being sold at \$4.00 each. There is a limited number as this is only a trial offer, so please order now!



---ooOoo---

FILM EVENING

A film evening is being organized for Tuesday, 17th July. As yet the films to be shown are unknown, but keep the date in your diary. Further details will be in next months news-sheet.

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FIELD OUTING - TOOWOOMBA'S EASTERN ESCARPMENT 29.4.84.

Eleven members were tempted out on a fresh but fine autumn morning to be greeted and seen off from Pigotts by Marilyn Jacobs, Club President, who would rejoin us later. A walk along parts of the eastern escarpment was rewarded by a variety of birds in good viewing conditions with scarcely a leaf stirring.

The top corner of Jubilee Park, in local study area 3, made an ideal starting place. Walking slowly down the track, where, in spite of looking up against a bright sky, we quickly spotted a female Golden Whistler and Rose Robin and a number of honeyeaters. The antics of a tail-less Grey Fantail which couldn't quite make the usual manoeuvres kept us intrigued for several minutes . . . . By what mischance had he or she lost its beautiful fan? A White-throated Treecreeper could be easily observed and listened to close by and there was plenty of activity high in the gum trees. Noticeable was a dearth of wrens, apart from the odd White-browed Scrubwren.

We next visited Prince Henry Drive, thinking to make merely a slow drive with few stops, but soon found that there were many good birds around starting with a Varied Triller and female Regent and Satin Bowerbirds. Moving on a member's sharp eye spotted a bird of prey below us following the contours of the Range. Could it be a Grey Goshawk? A few minutes later another raptor, but no chance to verify identification, and then a third; a Collared Sparrowhawk; while the brilliant colour of a Variegated Fairy-wren with its family could be seen in the lantana beside the road.

A little further on we were puzzled by a single-note, mournful call, coming from below and frequently repeated. Lesley Beaton managed to call it up by skilful mimicry. To our delight it was a Fan-tailed Cuckoo which soon came to give us a close inspection, later giving its more usual downward trill and thus confirming an earlier suspected identification.

Having spent longer than anticipated in Prince Henry Drive we then moved on directly to Marilyn and Sandy's home further along the escarpment for morning tea and were greeted by both of them and Sandy's mother, Margo Pottinger. Chairs set out in readiness for a welcome sit in the sun and being treated to home made sultana damper while we discussed the morning's sightings, completed the occasion. Bounding off a short but most enjoyable morning's birdwatching. Our thanks to Marilyn and Sandy for their hospitality.

Ann Shore

Members:- Joyce Bartenstein, Lesley Beaton, Ron & Elaine Box, Ron Colpus, Jane & Jim Corbin, Joe Deuble, Gloria Glass, Marilyn Jacobs, Margo & Sandy Pottinger, Ann & John Shore.

Bird List: Area 3

Straw-necked Ibis, Collared Sparrowhawk, Grey Goshawk, Masked Lapwing, Feral Pigeon, Galah, Pale-headed Rosella, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Kookaburra, Welcome Swallow, Varied Triller, Rose Robin, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Variegated Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, White-throated Warbler, Brown Thornbill, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, White-throated Treecreeper, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-throated Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Scarlet Honeyeater, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, Silvereye, Red-browed Firetail, Starling, Mynah, Satin Bowerbird, Regent Bowerbird, Magpie-lark, Grey Butcherbird, Magpie, Currawong, Crow.

44 species

FIELD OUTING CONT'D

Bird List: Area 4

White-faced Heron, Galah, Pale-headed Rosella, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Whipbird, White-throated Treecreeper, Noisy Friarbird, Noisy Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, Red-browed Firetail, Starling, Magpie-lark, Currawong, Crow.

19 species

Total 48 species

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MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

Black-necked Stork. 24.4.84. Condamine River, Killarney. RGH.  
Chestnut Teal. 25.3.84. Lytton. AHS.  
Musk Duck. 4.3.84. Hood's Lagoon. AHS.  
Collared Sparrowhawk. 17.3.84. Toowoomba Golf Club. GG, AK.  
" " 21 & 25.3.84. " " GG.  
Grey "Goshawk. " 15.2.84. Ocean St, T'mba. JCC, JEC.  
" " 29.4.84. Prince Henry Drive. LB.  
Black Falcon (Feeding on Eastern Rosella). 24.4.84. Killarney. RGH  
Buff-banded Rail. 7.5.84. Highvale. RGH.  
Dusky Moorhen (dead). 5.3.84. Rowbotham/Prescott Sts. MJ, SP.  
(near Picnic Point)  
Topknot Pigeon (1). 27.4.84. Foot of Mt Kynoch, T'mba. JEC.  
Squatter Pigeon. 21.4.84. Helidon. MA.  
White-headed Pigeon (2). 18.4.84. Foot of Mt Kynoch, T'mba. JEC.  
Azure Kingfisher. 29.4.84. Cooby Dam. JD.  
Noisy Pitta. 7.5.84. Mt. Glorious. RGH.

MA: Michael Atzeni, LB: Lesley Beaton, JCC: Jane Corbin, JEC: Jim Corbin, JD: Joe Deuble, GG: Gloria Glass, RGH: Rod Hobson, MJ: Marilyn Jacobs, AK: Angela Kilmartin, SP: Sandy Pottinger, AHS: Ann Shore.

--ooOoo--

ERRATUM

Another mistake! Michael says we got a first for Queensland on last month's outing. Please could you correct Fairy Tern which should have read Little Tern.

--ooOoo--

MAY FIELD OUTING

Date: Sunday, 27th May 1984 Place: Lockyer Valley Wetlands

Assembly Point: Pigotts Car Park.

Time: 7.15 am. for departure at 7.30 am. sharp.

Marilyn Jacobs will be our leader and she will be taking us to some of the lagoons and swamps that she covers in the Q.O.S. bird-count. These are mainly south of Gatton.

--ooOoo--

NEW MEMBER

Another member from farther afield, this time Mitchell.

Mrs K.J. White. Mitchell.

--ooOoo--