



NEWS-SHEET No. 105

SEPTEMBER 1984

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

Toowoomba bird club

Postal Address

P.O. Box 67, DARLING HEIGHTS. Q. 4350

Club Officers

President:

Marilyn Jacobs.
21 Sylvan Court, T'mba. 4350
Ph: 35 85 94

Secretary/Treasurer:

Ann Shore.
"Shorelands", Withcott,
M.S. 224, T'mba. 4352
Ph: 30 3207

Records Officer:

Michael Atzeni.
2 Memory St, T'mba. 4350
Ph: 35 9433

Editor:

Lesley Beaton.
15 Dunmore St, T'mba. 4350
Ph: 32 6262

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

Sunday, 25th August, and the last day of the quail and duck shooting season. I went down to Hood's Lagoon to see how things were progressing there. Unfortunately the duck shooters had been there before me. Floating in the water near the dam wall was a Magpie-lark and an Australasian Grebe. Lying in a nearby paddock was a dead Little Pied Cormorant. All three had been shot. The blood was still quite fresh. The dam wall was littered with empty cartridges. I have always abhorred the idea of killing living animals for sport. It made my blood boil! To make matters worse, as I was walking back to the car through the long grass below the dam wall, I flushed a Whistling-duck. I had been within a metre of it and it ran to further cover across the paddock. It had a damaged wing.

I can only hope that the Toowoomba City Council swings its whole support behind the proposed Waterbird Habitat so that some form of sanctuary is available to these birds during the duck shooting season. Those property owners who allow no shooting are also to be commended.

Lesley Beaton, Editor

--ooOoo--

MEMBERS' NOTES

It is now 3 years since I first began identifying the many varieties of birds on our property at Withcott and much to my delight I'm still sighting more.

July 21st, while bush-walking, our dog located two Tawny Frogmouth on the ground (probably feeding - was about 10am). What a fantastic camouflage, they blended perfectly with the dead leaves, twigs and branches on the ground, I had absolutely no idea what the dog was stalking until they flew onto nearby tree branches. The dog was only about three feet away from the birds before they decided to move and once they settled down into their "broken limbs" position I was able to approach for a closer inspection. I ventured to about 5 feet away from one and the only movement was the eyes, occasionally looking down at me.

July 22nd, (Field day for our Club), 8 members visited our property even though weather conditions were overcast and damp, but enthusiasm was high and we sighted many species, one being the Yellow-Billed Spoonbill which I've never seen here before. This bird flew over as Club members were about to depart.

July 23rd, another first sighting, this time a Southern Figbird and what a beautiful bird it is. Have been waiting a long time for this sighting and I wasn't disappointed, indeed a beautiful bird. What an unusual variety of calls though, and squeaky.

July 25th, after 3 days of rain, I sighted a large bird drying off as it perched on a low tree branch. Feathers fluffed up and constantly being preened. It was a Pheasant Coucal and I was quite amazed at the paleness of its feathers this time of year, very much lighter than my previous sightings of this species.

MEMBERS NOTES CONT'D

July 30th, Early this morning I was drawn to the verandah by loud calls of Currawongs. On the driveway I could see 2 kookaburras stretching (or arguing over?) a 10" or 12" (snake or ground worm?), quite a tug-of-war was going on, much to the delight of 4 kookaburras who had taken up positions on a nearby log and they were very well-behaved spectators, not so the Currawongs, about 2 dozen of them in trees observing the goings-on and they were extremely rowdy. Brought to mind a noisy football match with spectators shouting out and urging their team on. Unfortunately I can't tell the end of this tale, the birds all took off when John started his car to leave for work, one kookaburra had the object dangling from its beak, the other birds followed. Maybe it was a snake, after 3 days of rain it could have been forced into the open area.

Lorraine Wilson

--ooOoo--

WHITE-HEADED PIGEON SURVEY

I have been surprised with the glut of sightings of White-headed Pigeons in Toowoomba City and its suburbs in the last few months. This species is a rainforest fruit pigeon, but has acquired a palate for the fruit of the introduced camphor laurel which lines many of our city's streets, resulting in 'corridors' to and from the birds' natural habitat of the escarpment.

My interest lies in identifying as many locations as possible where the species has been seen within Toowoomba in the past and to maintain this mapping exercise in the future.

I hope to gain some idea of the distances they will fly from their regular habitat and also their abundance when invading the camphor laurels.

The species is often observed perched on powerlines, but the untrained eye might dismiss them as feral pigeons. It would be appreciated if members could list all locations they have observed this species within Toowoomba, providing dates and numbers if known. Please forward this information to any of the executive.

Michael Atzeni.

--ooOoo--

BIRD SHISHKABAB

My wife and I for some time now have been in the habit of making bird lists at the various places at which we stay from time to time. Some of our hosts have these lists either forced on them or left with them. I might add however that a farmer friend near Kalbar, and the owner of the caravan park at Atkinson's Waters, Atkinson's Dam, have actually asked us to compile lists of birds seen in their areas. Don't mention the Garganey Ducks to Michael!

One such list in the 'forced on' category happens to be with our eldest son who has a unit on the banks of the Brisbane River opposite the University. There are quite a number of local bird inhabitants which we see on every visit, and they to-and-fro about their business up and down the river-bank. A favourite perch is a tree on the river edge in the next-door high rise garden, where several branches bare of foliage overhang the water. On this one occasion, reading left to right on the one branch and in close proximity, was a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, four Rainbow Bee-eaters, Sacred Kingfisher and a Willie Wagtail.

Roy Beaton

GOING NORTH IN WINTER

Although July is not the best time to head north from a birding point of view, Terry Reis, Brian Foulis and myself decided to head in that direction because the weather should be good, and there were still new birds up there for us.

We took a leisurely two days to reach Eungella where we hoped to see our first new bird - Eungella honeyeater. This locally common bird can be hard to track down in winter, and after several hours of scanning the tree tops, depression turned to jubilation when fair views were obtained of one bird. But one is enough so we continued north to Mt Spec. Here we were lucky enough to obtain good views of the Red-browed form of the Fig parrot, but unlucky in that we couldn't get any food. Tea consisted of a pepperoni salami which had been stationed in the glove-box for such an emergency.

One third of a small salami doesn't go far, and after a big breakfast at Proserpine, we headed towards Mission Beach. Here I hoped to list Cassowary, and thus join Terry and Brian in the "three ratite club" (emu, cassowary, ostrich). Of all the potential new birds on the trip, this one had a special attraction for me. Near South Mission Beach, an area of thick scrub looked promising. Here we had excellent looks at several birds of varying ages, and for me this made the trip worthwhile.

Wasting no time, we headed for Cairns to book on the Michaelmas Cay trip and to get in a couple of hours' birding before dark. Michaelmas Cay provided new birds for Terry and Brian only, best birds being Greater frigatebird and Black-naped tern. From a birding and snorkeling point of view, this trip is always unforgettable.

After spending the night at Julatten, we headed towards Musgrave, a birding area new to us all. Unfortunately, the road became too bad just past Laura and we had to turn back. Black-backed butcherbirds are supposed to be 'chooks' at Laura - "See them from the pub", we were told. This sounded good to us. After giving this habitat a thorough going over without success, we managed to find them on the outskirts of town. A frustrating day came to an end on a good note by getting Red-necked rail and Large-tailed nightjar back at Julatten.

The Tablelands provided other good birds in White-browed robin, Little treecreeper, Tooth-billed catbird and Papuan frogmouth. Mammals seen included Herbert River ringtail, Lemuroid ringtail, Spectacled flying fox and Musky rat-kangaroo.

Constant rain drove us away from the Cairns area without giving us a chance to look for Blue-faced parrot finch and Golden bower bird. However, the rain brought out the Banded land-rails and on one stretch of road near Atherton on which we had to drive over on three occasions we saw twenty-nine of them.

Next across to Karumba where we hoped for new birds and fine weather. Birds of interest here were Burdekin duck, White-breasted whistler and Yellow white-eye.

Mt Isa was our only major stop left. Here we found a magnificent little birding spot. Sitting near a section of reeds we could see two Marsh crakes, a Spotted crake and there was a Black bittern calling in the reeds. This bird later showed itself briefly. On

GOING NORTH IN WINTER CONT'D

the rocks on the far bank were Painted finches, while behind us Black-tailed treecreepers and Varied lorikeets afforded us good views. Later that day Cloncurry parrots and a Peregrine falcon flew over and nearby a Plumed pigeon was seen.

From here it was back to Toowoomba with some 250 birds for the trip. Not a high total, but considering the weather we were fairly happy with it.

Pat McConnell

--ooOoo--

FIELD OUTING REPORT - PUMICESTONE PASSAGE 26.8.84.

Due to time and circumstance, it has been some years since I have had the privilege to act as leader to a Toowoomba Bird Club outing. It was with some little trepidation then, that my wife and I awaited the arrival of members at the Apex Park, Caboolture on the morning of August 26. The mellow pre-Spring weather augured a fine day ahead, so that it was an optimistic party that set forth, despite the fact that members had already been on the road for two hours. In retrospect I am sure no person bemoaned the early rising and my trepidation, as leader, now appears as diaphanous as that early Spring morning.

Our first "good bird" was a Magpie Goose some ten minutes along the Pacific Highway. No time or opportunity to stop and admire, however. This visitor proved a precursor of a northern invasion to our outing area. As the day proceeded, one could have been lulled into a false belief that we were surveying the Townsville Common and not a mere hour's drive north of Brisbane. The rich areas of wetland surrounding Donneybrook and Toorbul presented such "top-enders" as Brolga, Glossy Ibis and Magpie Goose. Later in the day Bracken Ridge provided a nesting Black-necked Stork with one chick and Sandgate Lagoon turned on a riot of Magpie Geese and Wandering Whistling-duck.

It is not only bream fishermen and mud crabbers who are wont to spend a weekend idyll among the mud flats and mangroves of Pumicestone Passage. It's a haven for bird watchers and, wildlife aside, you can spend many a restful hour soaking up the atmosphere of this area. Sway-backed horses retired to pasture; derelict boat sheds and rust-red corrugated iron fishermen's huts and, all over, the ubiquitous Moreton Bay figs; mangoes and bananas; the place oozes the Queensland of a past era.

Unfortunately the tides and time of year were not ideal for waders. The "mud was wrong" and those few on display were of the common genre but the variety of other types that went into compiling the day's records more than compensated.

I remember, at Donnybrook, following the flight of a Caspian Tern etched against a crystal clear backdrop of the Glasshouse Mountains - one of those rare, poignant interludes that make for those special moments. I do hope the Toowoomba Bird Club come here again. Let the day's list speak for itself and the birds, in variety and number, can make a more eloquent statement than it is in my power to do.

Rod Hobson

FIELD OUTING REPORT CONT'D

Members present: Michael Atzeni, Lesley Beaton, Graham, Jane & Jim Corbin, Rod Hobson, Poppy Levonis, Pat McConnell, Ena McCulloch, Lyn & Lee-anne Rowan.

Species List: Australian Pelican, Darter, Great, Little Black & Little Pied Cormorant, White-faced Heron, Cattle, Great & Little Egret, Mangrove Heron, Black-necked Stork (breeding), Glossy, Sacred & Straw-necked Ibis, Royal & Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Magpie Goose, Wandering Whistling-duck, Black Swan, Pacific Black Duck, Grey & Chestnut Teal, Hardhead, Maned Duck, Brahminy & Whistling Kite, Australian Kestrel, Osprey (breeding), Buff-banded Rail, Dusky Moorhen, Purple Swamphen, Eurasian Coot, Comb-crested Jacana, Brolga, Masked Lapwing (with young), Black-fronted Plover, Black-winged Stilt, Latham's Snipe, Pied Oystercatcher, Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Green-shank, * Bar-tailed Godwit, Silver Gull, Caspian, Gull-billed & Crested Tern, Topknot & Feral Pigeon, Peaceful & Bar-shouldered Dove, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Rainbow Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Pheasant Coucal, Laughing Kookaburra, Mangrove & Sacred Kingfisher, Rainbow Bee-eater, Welcome Swallow, Tree & Fairy Martin, Richard's Pipit, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Grey Shrike-thrush, Leaden Flycatcher, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Mangrove Warbler, Noise Friarbird, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Noise Miner, White-cheeked, Mangrove, White-throated, Brown & Scarlet Honeyeater, Mistletoebird, Striated Pardalote, Little Wattlebird, Silvereye, House Sparrow, Double-barred Finch, Common Starling, Common Mynah, **Australian Magpie-lark, White-breasted Woodswallow, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Torresian Crow. * Grey-tailed Tattler, ** Spangled Drongo.

(94 species)

--ooOoo--

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

Black Bittern 11.5.84 St Lucia, Brisbane, PB, RRB
Burdekin (Rajah) Shelduck 18.7.84 Karumba, BF, PM, TR
Cotton Pygmy Goose 18.7.84 Cole's Rd Swamp, via Gatton, AHS
Spotted (Australian) Crake 19.7.84 Mt Isa, BF, PM, TR
Pink Cockatoo 25.3.84 Roma Rd, Charlebille, PB, RRB
Yellow Rosella 12.7.84 Hay, PB, RRB
Regent Parrot 21.7.84 Hattah Lakes N.P., PB, RRB
Large-tailed Nightjar 12.7.84 Julatten, BF, PM, TR
Barn Owl 31.7.84 (7 pm) Cnr Herries & Ruthven Sts Toowoomba, GG
White-breasted Whistler 18.7.84 Karumba, BF, PM, TR
Chestnut-crowned Babbler 19.7.84 Ouyen, RRB
Black-tailed Treecreeper 19.7.84 Mt Isa, BF, PM, TR
Eungella Honeyeater 8.7.84 Eungella N.P., BF, PM, TR
Black-backed Butcherbird 12.7.84 Laura, BF, PM, TR
White-backed Magpie 15.7.84 Mt Molloy, N.Q., BF, PM, TR
Paradise Riflebird 20.7.84 Ravensbourne, AHS

PB: Peggy Beaton BF: Brian Foulis PM: Pat McConnell
RRB: Roy Beaton GG: Gloria Glass TR: Terry Reis
AHS: Ann Shore

CLUB NOTES

The film evening was very enjoyable, although, as usual there was a poor attendance. Bob Dorricott's anecdotes that went along with his two films were very amusing. We all were entertained with his photography, particularly his light-hearted look at wildlife photography.

Margo and Sandy Pottinger provided the cakes for the two raffles. Ann Shore and Gloria Glass were our lucky winners. Thanks Margo and Sandy, and thanks to the people who supported it so well.

Nominations are being called for the positions on the Club executive. Neither Michael or myself are seeking re-election due to personal commitments. The Club fills a vital niche in our community with the information it gathers on local birdlife. So please think of taking a position, none of them are very arduous and take very little of your time. Support the Club!

President: jack-of-all-trades; co-ordinating outings, film evenings, spokesperson for the Club.

Secretary/Treasurer: handling a small amount of correspondence, keeping the Club accounts, writing the minutes of the meetings.

Records Officer/Librarian: collating all the members bird notes and reporting on them: holding the Club library and supervising library loans.

Editor: co-ordinating the monthly newsletter, organising the printing at the Toowoomba Education Centre, collating and delivery of the newsletters.

Thanks to Lorraine Wilson and Gloria Glass for typing the newsletter in such an efficient manner. You do not realize how grateful I am for this important work. If anybody else is able to help out, please get in touch with me.

--ooOoo--

OCTOBER

S.S.S. MONTH

Remember that October is our Seasonal Species Survey month for Spring. This is an important month as it is when our migrants return. Noisy Pittas, Rainbow Bee-eaters and Flycatchers have already returned to their favourite haunts.

Michael is very happy with the records so far and urges members to keep a special look out next month.

A.G.M.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday, 9th October at our President's home.

Place: 21 Sylvan Court (the end of the cul-de-sac).

Time: 7.30 pm.

Members, please bring a small plate for supper.

BIRD COUNT

This year we hope to take part in the Q.O.S. bird count which is being held on Sunday, 21st October. Details at the A.G.M.

SEPTEMBER

BEGINNERS' BIRD OUTING (SEPTEMBER FIELD OUTING)

Date: Sunday, 23rd September 1984 Place: Stockyard Creek

Assembly Point: Pigott's Car Park.

Time: 7.15 am for departure at 7.30 am sharp

This outing was very successful last year and so we have decided to repeat it. Please bring any friends, neighbours, work colleagues, etc. Who have shown any interest in birding. We suggest you bring both morning tea and lunch.

Any spare pairs of binoculars would be gratefully borrowed.

Leaders: the Executive. Phone Ann 30 3207 if transport is needed.

--ooOoo--

PHOTOGRAPHIC CLUB CAMP

Ray Butler has kindly invited the Toowoomba Bird Club to join the Photographic Club camp on his property in Helidon.

Weekend of September 28th - 30th.

Phone Marilyn, 35 85 94, for details.

--ooOoo--

LIBRARY NOTES

Books from the Ron Colpus Memorial Library are already being borrowed. It is rewarding to see this collection being used. A library is just a set of books if members don't take advantage of their availability.

Ena McCulloch, one of our Brisbane members, has kindly donated a large number of back issues of The Bird Observer. They range from the mid-1950s to 1975. As soon as we receive these they will be available for borrowing.

Roy and Peggie Beaton have also donated a subscription to the World Wildlife Fund Australia. This entitles us to a quarterly newsletter and an annual report that outlines the fund's conservation programs.

Australian Wildlife Club Newsletter No. 1. August 1984.

(A conservation club for younger members, jointly run by the ABC and World Wildlife Fund Australia)

The Bird Observer. August 1984. No. 631.

The Darling Downs Naturalist. September 1984. No. 364.

Q.O.S. Newsletter. September 1984. Vol. 15, No. 8.

Urimbirra. August 1984. Vol. 18, No. 8.

World Wildlife Fund Australia Newsletter. April - June 1984. No. 19
July - Sept. 1984. No. 20

World Wildlife Fund Australia Conservation Programme 1984.

--ooOoo--