



NEWS-SHEET No. 106
OCTOBER 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

It is with a certain amount of sadness that I write this last editorial as my 'stint' at editorship draws to a close. Although there have been times when, as the deadline looms closer, I have felt a little frazzled it has always been a pleasure to be involved with the club in this way. I get a great deal of satisfaction when someone, particularly when he/she is unknown to me, mentions an article in the news-sheet.

The news-sheet is read widely. We not only circulate to some fifty-odd members, but also to other bird clubs and field naturalists clubs throughout Australia, plus the Toowoomba City and Darling Downs Institute libraries and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

If you are readers of 'The Chronicle' you will have noticed that the 'Town Topics' column quotes snippets from our articles. This goes to show that not only birdos are interested in our very valuable efforts at increasing bird knowledge.

I guess you realize by now that this little spell is a build-up to request one of you to take over this task. It is not a difficult job, especially since Gloria and Lorraine are doing the typing so well. I won't try and con you that sometimes it isn't a bit of a nuisance, however the reward is that it is an exceedingly satisfying load to bear.

Think about it, maybe a friend and yourself would like to get together and share the responsibility. Come along to the A.G.M., enjoy yourself, watch a couple of good films and talk to me about any aspects of being editor. I'm more than willing to help.

I'm sure you'll find it all worthwhile!

Lesley Beaton, Editor

--ooOoo--

OUR FIRST EXPERIENCE - WITH A BEAUTIFUL BARN OWL. (Tyto Alba)

One Tuesday morning, under our back Pepperina trees, a host of passerine birds were flapping about, and our dog Bella was barking excitedly. On the ground a Barn Owl was hopping, frantically about, hurt wing stretched out - its mate hovering in the tree above, obviously concerned and loyal. We called Bella away and using a large, light cloth, threw this gently over the bird and bundled "him" into a basket. On careful inspection we discovered "his" hurt wing was badly broken, the radius was quite snapped in two.

What would we do? We rang a few people who might help -

1. A local bird lover suggested, from his experience, that the wing should be amputated if the owl was to survive;
2. Marilyn Jacobs suggested Fay Reid;
3. The Vet who suggested bringing him right over.

So "Artful", as we called him, went to the Vet. He didn't really object to being handled, but found a dark corner behind the basket and cloth in the car hoot. The Vet's diagnosis was to pin the wing and keep Artful overnight and give him antibiotics to stave off infection.

Meanwhile, on the Tuesday night his mate was hovering about outside near the trees. Wednesday and Thursday night we looked for the mate, but "she" wasn't to be found.

CONT'D

Artful became an inpatient until Friday morning when we set out to collect him. There he was, bandaged heavily and he'd been fed by the Vet's assistant and had become quite docile - except when the Vet tried to pick him up - he was disturbed by this. No one had thought or mentioned that Artful could be in a state of shock, not even the Vet.

Well his wing was badly bruised and it was pinned with wire. It all sounded hurtful and hopeless. I wasn't very confident about his future. His wing was to be bandaged for a week, or at least 4 - 5 days.

What should we do? It was decided to take him home, his mate was there, it would be good to bring them together again. We had an old cocky's cage we thought, to keep him confined, however, he was obviously distressed by the bars on the cage and he started pecking at them. We collected 3 mice - warmly lying on the bottom of the cage and gave him water.

I rang Fay Reid. Here was good, practical advice. I made a list:-

- * dropper for water
- * mince
- * liver, chopped very fine

I was to feed him small amounts, maybe a teaspoonful at a time, about every two hours. I had to prise open his beak, using chopsticks if necessary. After 3 or 4 days dry bread could be mixed in and perhaps add honey to the water. Fay also gave some of the most useful pieces of advice that even now still come back to me.

- * they (Barn Owls) make beautiful house guests.
- * they need to be WARM.
- * they're not really survivors - she'd seen quite badly damaged birds survive and not so badly hurt ones just drop dead. They suffer from shock and this would make Artful docile and sleepy for the moment. We were to be prepared for him to just go quite suddenly.
- * they hate being caged, simply cannot cope with bars before their eyes.
- * they will only be hand fed because of their normal habit of catching their victims on the wing and swallowing the mouse, moth, insect, etc. whole.
- * always give water with the meal.

So, our task was ahead of us. We had to try to build up his strength, then remove his restrictive bandages, let him have space to fly short distances at first before setting him free.

He had to be kept warm. So out of the cage and into the office, then the laundry and finally the pantry in the kitchen. By 9.30 Friday night he was warm, settled in the pantry and confined to the kitchen. He was quite drowsy and we guessed it was his reaction to the shocks his system had endured.

About 10.30 we went looking for his mate and as if she knew we were searching, she flew down from the silos and landed on the auger in front of us, quite confident in the torchlight, not moving. She was to stay around every night after that.

Our feeding routine started in earnest on Saturday, every 2 hours. He was very obliging. We had to push the meat right down his throat with the dropper, then squirt in the water. He happily gulped at this food Saturday and Sunday. After each meal we'd let him go gently and he'd hop away from us quickly heading back to the security of the pantry.

CONT'D

Sunday evening we left him at home by himself and went out visiting friends, returning about 10pm. Artful had been out exploring the kitchen. He'd left little messy spots in several places and was standing under the table peering out. He was fed and put back into the pantry. In the middle of the night we heard a terrible crash coming from the kitchen. Artful had tried to hop onto the bookcase, knocking over bits and pieces of pottery for his effort and was lying on his side.

Monday morning he was missing but was soon found perched on the edge of a basket holding a lily-pilly shrub. He'd found the closest thing to a perch in the indoor environment he was bound to. Tuesday found him very busy, hopping from one "perch" to another. He started playing with his food and clacking his beak at us. We were hopeful that he was feeling better. However I was aware of a smell about him and wondered if the bandage should be removed. He was active Wednesday morning but by late afternoon he was staying in the one spot on his "tree". The smelly odour was still there. I was away Wednesday night and Bruce was out until late. When he came in Artful looked very weak and he'd moved himself back into the furthest corner of the pantry. It was here that Bruce found him, Thursday morning, on his side. He was very weak and as Bruce was making him more comfortable, he died, almost one would say, in his sleep.

Well, by this time both Bruce and I were emotionally involved with this beautiful bird, feeling quite let down and sad for Artful, as if we'd failed him in some way. Bruce now unwrapped the damaged wing; it hadn't set and was gangrenous just at the end of the bone.

We carefully buried him under the Pepperina tree where we found him. His mate was about for only one more night after that. She stopped coming out for us, as if she knew. She's still around the house and is seen on the odd occasion. We think she has a new mate.?

Questions we asked;

- * did we keep the bandages on too long?
- * was he getting enough nutrition?
- * should we have tried to save him at all?

DI MUIRHEAD

--ooOoo--

HIGHWAY WANDERINGS

As Roy and I wend our way over to W. Australia, having a leisurely look at Australia, we find there are many stretches of road which stretch too long and are somewhat monotonous, not to say boring. So when it comes time to switch drivers, we traverse what we cynically call the "Tourist Strip" bordering the road to see what there is to see beyond. Sadly enough, quite often, it is quite devastating - outside Dubbo, all the native shrubs, some just coming into flower, had been ruthlessly bulldozed into piles and all the topsoil stripped for several acres. In Tasmania we saw the devastation caused by the woodchip industry. But always these stops have shown us something of interest. Between Forbes and W. Wyalong on a lagoon were flocks of 100 and more Pelicans. Out of W. Wyalong we were fortunate to see a Superb Parrot, a female. We waited quite some time but did not see the male.

However it was the saltbush plains beyond Hay which gave us our greatest pleasure - we walked a few yards into the bush and were surrounded by the little White Wing Wrens. Groups of both males and females were flitting in the bushes around us. They seemed to have no fear of us at all and we watched them with delight for quite a considerable time. The colour of the males is quite brilliant.

HIGHWAY WANDERINGS CONT'D

The next day our walk brought us within 6ft of a tree where perched a Little Eagle who was as interested in us, as we in him and corkscrewed his head right round, but made no attempt to fly, possibly these birds are not used to humans on foot!

Not so the hundreds of Cormorants, Pied and Black, that were on the lake at Hattah-Kulkyne Nat. Park. They flew off at the slightest movement. But never have we seen so many White-Winged Choughs as are at the camping ground there. They even outnumbered the Noisy Miners and were very much noisier.

On our travels around Roy and I find that there are stretches of highways which are deadly monotonous. One which did not fill one with undue enthusiasm to travel on it was the Newell Highway. Possibly because every time we have been on it, it has been very, very hot. The journey back from Tasmania in 1982 left me with memories of dead and dying stock, the latter trying to find fodder in the cracked red earth, 2 skeletons which some humorist had strung up alongside the stock route and morages shimmering in the heat from horizon to horizon.

So I settled back to endure the journey as I left Miles one early morning recently. But I was overwhelmed with what I saw. The heavy rains had transformed the countryside. On either side of the highway the run-offs, or drains, were full of water extending into wide billabongs surrounded by reeds and wattles in flower.

In th the reeds and on the surrounding banks were White-Necked and White-Faced Herons, White and Straw-Necked Ibis, Yellow-Billed and Royal Spoonbills, Dusky Moorhens and Coots scuttled in and out of the reeds. Australian Grebes swam and dived alongside the road, as did a whole flotilla of Hoary-Headed Grebe. Pied Cormorants and Darters perched on dead logs as Black Duck and Musk Duck swam in the lagoons. Wood Ducks and Egrets were on the banks. Spur-Winged Plovers screamed at us and Grey Teal swam out to the centres of the lagoons.

Flocks of Red Rumped Parrots, Galahs, Cockatiels, and some Sulphur Crested Cockatoos flew through in the sunlight. A Harrier guested over a nearby paddock. Also in full fig were all the "Penny Ordinaries" - Magpies, Crows, Willie Wagtails etc.

And as for "hot, hot weather":- at Mt. Kapatur National Park out of Narrabrie our home, for the first time in its 4 years of travel, had snow on its roof and icicles hanging therefrom! And all we saw in the mist and snow were Pied Currawong. We were glad to descend again to the Newell Highway which I find a very interesting road to travel on.

PEGGIE BEATON

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BEGINNERS' OUTING REPORT

It was a very disappointing turn-out for the outing with only five members of the public turning up. A far cry from last year. This was put down to two factors - 1) the weather, cool and windy; and 2) being Carnival of Flowers Sunday. However the trip was not a loss as we gained one new member, Nancy Gooding, who had travelled from beyond Warwick to join us. Also Pat McConnell caught a glimpse of a Black Bittern at Flagstone Creek Weir. This was confirmed by Pat and Michael later in the week. It is good news that the bittern is still using its old stamping grounds.

CUTTING REPORT CONT'D

Species List: Grebe, Little Pied Cormorant, White-faced Heron, Sacred Ibis, Straw-necked Ibis, Black Bittern, Black and Wood Duck, Little Black Cormorant, Intermediate Egret, Kestrel, Moorhen, Coot, Bar-shouldered and Peaceful Dove, Crested and Feral Pigeon, Galah, Pale-headed Rosella, Azure Kingfisher, Kookaburra, Spotted Turtledove, Rainbow Bee-eater, Grey and Pied Butcherbird, Cisticola, Crow, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Pied Currawong, Dollarbird, Grey Fantail, Fig-bird, Double-barred Finch, Red-browed Firetail, Leaden Flycatcher, Little Friarbird, Noisy Friarbird, Brown Honeyeater, Lewin's, Yellow-faced and Scarlet Honeyeater, Mistletoe bird, Magpie, Magpie-lark, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, Fairy Martin, Noisy Miner, Common Mynah, Olive-backed Oriole, Spotted and Striated Pardalote, Pipit, Masked Lapwing, White-browed Scrubwren, Silvereye, Sparrow, Starling, Welcome and White-backed Swallow, Brown Thornbill, Willie Wagtail, White-throated Warbler, Whipbird, Rufous Whistler, Red-backed, Superb Blue and Variegated Wren, Varied Sitella, White-throated Treecreeper, Golden Whistler, Satin Bowerbird, Rufous Songlark.

73 species

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MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

Little Pied Cormorant. July 84. Lake Annand, T'mba. GG.
Grey Goshawk. 21.7.84. Mt Kynoch. JB, LB.
White-headed Pigeon. 2.7.84. Margaret & Mary Sts. DG.
" " " (1). 11.8.84. Mackenzie/Campbell Sts. MA, LB.
" " " 10.7.84. Hume/Campbell Sts. JD.
Bourke's Parrot. (avairy escapee) 23.9.84. 2 Memory St. LA, MA, PM.
Crimson Rosella. 22.9.84. Preston Rd. LB.
Eastern Rosella.(2). 1.7.84. Preston Rd. JB, LB.
Rose Robin. 8.7.84. Picnic Point, T'mba. DG.
Pheasant Coucal. 26.6.84. Glen Lomond Park, T'mba. GG.
White-winged Fairy-wren. 12.7.84. Sturt H'way, via Hay. PB, RRB.
Striated Thornbill. 2.7.84. Jubilee Park, T'mba. DG.
Satin Bowerbird.(20). 27.7.84. Spring St, T'mba Golf Course. GG.

LA: Laurie Atzeni, MA: Michael Atzeni, JB: John Ball, LB: Lesley Beaton, PB, Peggie Beaton, RRB: Roy Beaton, JD: Joe Deuble, DG: Don Gaydon, GG: Gloria Glass, PM: Pat McConnell.

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OCTOBER

S.S.S. MONTH

Please make a special note of the birds around you this month.

AGM

Place: 21 Sylvan Court (the end of the cul-de-sac)
Time: 7.30 pm.

Two films will be shown after the meeting - one from Canada about the Pied Heron - and the other on birds of the tide in Port Phillip Bay.

Members, please bring a small plate for supper.

Q.O.S. BIRDCOUNT & B.O.C. PROJECT PELICAN

More information about these at the A.G.M.

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