

APRIL 1985



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

toowoomba bird club

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Annual Subscription

Ordinary / Family Membership	\$8.00
Student Membership	\$4.00

Activities

Field Outings and Monthly Meeting - 4th Sunday of each month usually leave from Pigotts' car park at 7.30 am.

Camping trips, film and slide evenings.

News-Sheet

Published monthly, before the outing. Articles have a deadline of the last day of the month, and should be mailed to the Editor.

EDITORIAL

The beauty of the Australian bush has always filled me with wonder, and never more than today. What started out to be a day of birdwatching for me became a day of joy.

The New England Highway offered no new discoveries, until we turned off at Jones's Gully. The white gravel road wound its way along the quiet valley, and gradually we began to climb to the top of the range. The vista at the top was breathtaking. We were looking out over Pierce's Creek to the Anduramba Range. For once birds were forgotten.

"Just walk through, and follow the track along the ridge, where those bloodwoods are in flower," we were told. The bloodwoods stood out like giant balls of cotton wool. Their branches were so heavy with flowers that I felt some branches must break.

Along the track we found other trees and shrubs, all new to me: a wattle with dolphin-shaped leaves, a small yellow pea bush, and a ground cover with golden flowers. Around every bend in the road something new and different.

But take heart, my fellow Birdos, we looked at birds as well - about 54 species in all - but the Little Lorikeets would have to be the birds of the day.

ANGELA KILMARTIN, Editor

New Member: Mrs J. Ezzy

LIBRARY NOTES

- Birds (RSPB magazine), Winter 1984, Vol 10, No 4.
- The Bird Observer, March 1985, No 638.
- The Darling Downs Naturalist, March 1985, No 369
- Q.O.S. Newsletter, February 1985, Vol 16, No 2.
- The Sunbird (Q.O.S. Journal), December 1984, Vol 14, No 4.
- Urimbirra, March 1985, Vol 19, No 3.

There is the usual abundance of interesting articles in the above newsletters and journal.

Also in the library this month is a travel brochure from Peregrine Bird Tours for 1985/86. Those people with the time and money may be interested in the very exciting tours available.

Would those members who have borrowed library items for more than one month please get in touch with me, and if necessary, I shall collect or exchange them.

LESLEY BEATON, Librarian

1985 CALENDAR

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- | | |
|--------------|--|
| April 28 | Flagstone Creek |
| May 26 | Laidley Creek |
| June 23 | Hogarth's Swamp, Pittsworth |
| July 28 | Blanchview and Airedale |
| August 25 | Jones Gully or Banarkin State Forest |
| September 15 | Beginners' Outing - Ramsay |
| October | Q.O.S. Bird Count |
| November 24 | Christmas Break-up - Outing to Killarney |

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SORTING OUT TOOWOOMBA'S TERRIBLE TRIO

Three small birds which have always caused problems in identification due to their basically similar looks and habits are the Brown-headed, White-naped and White-throated Honeyeaters.

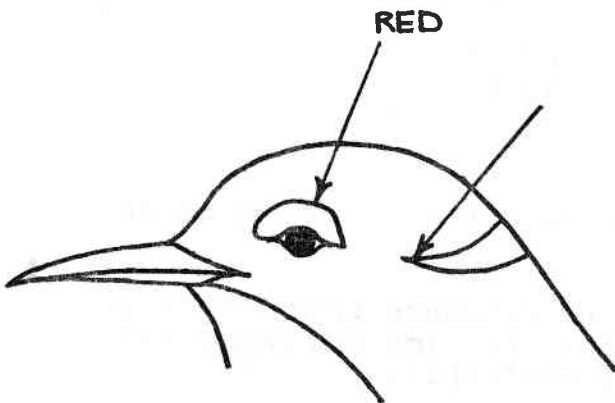
The confusion is understandable as the three birds all belong to the same Genus (Melithriptus) and, at a glance, all appear to look the same. To add to problems, they seem to be incapable of staying in the one spot for more than ten seconds, and so more than ever it is necessary that the observer knows exactly what to look for in obtaining a correct identification.

On sighting one of these birds, the only thing that concerns me in its identification is the head. This is because as far as is practicable, the bodies are the same in all three species. The Brown-headed Honeyeater is relatively easy to distinguish from the other two. The head of this species is quite distinctly brown, not black as in the other two, and so if the observer can see that the head is brown, then really the identification is finished: Brown-headed Honeyeater.

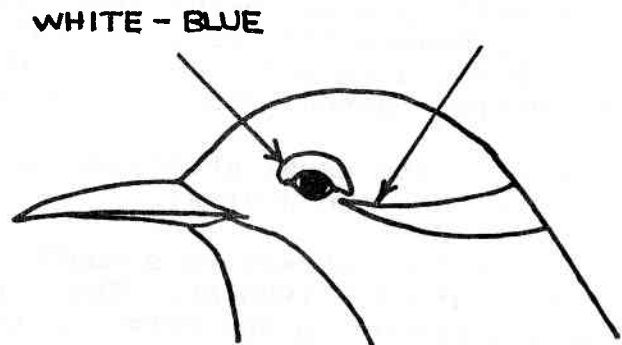
Unfortunately, the other two are not so easy. Both the White-naped and White-throated Honeyeaters have black heads, and both have an annoying tendency to feed at or near the tops of gums, making identification rather tedious, but not impossible.

These are the things to remember:

1. The white band at the back of their heads is one distinguishing point. The White-naped Honeyeater has the band ending well before its eye, whereas the White-throated has the band ending directly behind the eye. This is a good point to remember as it remains constant and is reliable.



**WHITE - NAPED
HONEYEATER**



**WHITE - THROATED
HONEYEATER**

2. The second point concerns the colour of the small patch of skin above the eye. The colour in the case of the White-naped is red, whereas in the White-throated's case the colour is white, sometimes tinged with blue.

Both (1) and (2) are quite valid, but I personally like (1) because it is reliable. Point (2) is generally reliable, but can be misleading because the eye patches of some White-naped Honeyeaters become faded almost to white, still retaining a slightly orangey tint. At a fair distance this can be hard to tell from a bluey tint, so always check with point (1) as well.

WADER OUTING to REDCLIFFE 24 MARCH 1985

Mother Nature keeps a special pot of cinnamon-rufous to deck out her waders for their nuptials!

That was the message received by a country-dweller whose limited forays to the coast seemed always to have been in the cooler months. "Godwits," I could intone authoritatively (hadn't I watched them for years on the edge of Lake Moondarra?), "are speckled, black, white and grey, Colour? No, not really, pink on the bill if you look closely." Well, we all learn.

There we all were, some fifteen of us, bus travellers with assorted friends, loosely hidden behind the sesbania plants at Scarborough, binoculars and borrowed telescopes at the ready, with our kind, patient and learned mentor Ian Venables pointing out a wonderful collection of waders feeding and resting near the shallow water.

Lesley had expressed a wish to see Terek Sandpipers, and here they were with their upturned bills and orange legs, feeding quite close to us. Curlew Sandpipers with downturned bills were identified wading up to their tummies in amongst the Stilts on the far side.

"What about all those coloured ones, Ian?" There were Mongolian Dotterels standing about, a bit away from the water, cinnamon-rufous breast-bands now being worn; Ruddy Turnstones, in their harlequin markings, liberally painted with 'ruddy'; and, surprise, surprise, those larger, fat, round birds, resting with bill tucked under wing, were actually Bar-tailed Godwits! Completely cinnamon-rufous - as if they had been dipped in the pot of colour - with their dark markings showing through.

There were however, a few who seemed to have missed out on the colour - Red-necked Stints, whose turn at the paint pot must surely come later, busily feeding; a few Grey-tailed Tattlers, in their neat sober grey. Then there were the resting Terns: Crested, White-fronted ('new' for many of us) and Little.

The Scarborough sandmarsh, not far from the trawler wharves, provided the best waders, but we also stopped at Redcliffe, daringly taking our bus around behind a little brick building at the top of the cliff. Extras here were Pied Oystercatchers, Pied Cormorants, and a Whimbrel or two, resting on a rocky outcrop. Great Knots were identified further along on the shore.

The Sandgate Lagoon (No 2) was our lunch stop, with good freshwater birds - ducks, including Wandering Whistling Duck, Jacanas with young, plenty of Coots and Dusky Moorhens, and with a Whiskered Tern behaving rather like a Fairy Martin. Trees on the island in the lagoon were full of egrets and cormorants, and some Black Swans were rather slumming it with the domestic ducks on the far side.

Ian had suggested we take the Brisbane River ferry across to Lytton to look at the wader areas there, but we were disappointed to find the ferry didn't operate on Sundays.

However, we took a jaunt to the Queensland University, which was interesting for us, and a stop beside their lagoon, for an unsuccessful search for their Black Bittern. To follow was another treat - afternoon tea with Peggy and Roy Beaton in their son's unit on the bank of the Brisbane River, where we were able to admire Peggy's needlework and Roy's wood-sculpture, as well as the view. Then home to our mountain city via Mt Crosby and Colleges Crossing.

Special thanks to Ian for sharing some of his vast knowledge with us, and we trust we can arrange another sea bird outing with him in the near future. To Peter, our capable and obliging bus driver, we say thank you, and hope to see you and Ann again shortly. And thanks to Angela, for her concept of taking a bus, for organising it all, even to being prepared to drive the bus herself. It was all a most memorable outing, giving us all plenty of time to talk to each other, as well as seeing the birds.

Cinnamon-rufous ... the colour for March!

Members present: Lesley Beaton, Peggy and Roy Beaton, Gloria Glass, Nancy & Ron Gooding, Angela Kilmartin, Lyn and Leanne Rowan, Ann Shore.

Species List

Scarborough-Redcliffe Area: Pied & Little Cormorant Mangrove Heron, Great & Little Egret, Sacred & Straw-necked Ibis, Whistling Kite, Pied Oystercatcher, Masked Lapwing, Mongolian Plover (Breeding plumage) Black-winged Stilt, Ruddy Turnstone (B), Whimbrel, Grey-tailed Tattler, Terek Sandpiper, Bar-tailed Godwit (B), Great Knot, Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Silver Gull, Common, White-fronted, Little & Crested Tern, Feral Pigeon, Spotted Turtledove, Peaceful Dove, Welcome Swallow, Willie Wagtail, Tawny Grassbird, House Sparrow, Torresian Crow.

Sandgate Lagoon Area: Australasian Grebe, Great, Pied, Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants, Wandering Whistling-duck, Black Swan, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead, Dusky Moorhen, Purple Swamphen, Eurasian Coot, Comb-crested Jacana (with 4 chicks), Whiskered Tern, Crested Pigeon, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Welcome Swallow, Fairy Martin, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, Little Friarbird, Noisy Miner, Striated Pardalote, Common Starling, Common Mynah, Australian Magpie-lark, Grey Butcherbird, Australian Magpie.

St Lucia: Figbird extra.

En route, Plainland-Marburg area: Cattle Egret, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Australian Kestrel, Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. (63 species)

Gloria Glass

A MOST DELIGHTFUL EVENING

Although we have been members of the Bird Club for some years, Roy and I have never attended a Film Evening. This has caused us some regret as we have heard of the excellence of the films, and we also know of the effort Marilyn puts into obtaining these very interesting films for our enjoyment. Therefore we decided to attend the last film evening and came up from Brisbane to do so.

What a worthwhile trip it was. The films we saw were:

"The Year of the Kings" - an Alaskan film of a year in the life of the King Penguins on Macquarie Island.

"A Property in the Country" - showing the various habitats needed for the continued existence of various species of birds in the United Kingdom and what the R.S.P.B. is doing to ensure this - the manufacturing of islands, beds of reeds and rushes and other places of sanctuary. (Oh! to have the available money this organisation has to do this type of work here!)

"The Great Blue Heron" - A short Canadian film on these graceful birds.

"The Flight of the Snows" - Another Canadian film on the migration of these birds from Carolina to the harsh environment of the north and the very limited time they have to incubate their eggs and rear the nestlings before the advent of the harsh winter and their return flight south.

The photography in the films was beautiful: the soaring mating flight of the albatrosses around Macquarie Island, the colourful penguins themselves, the predatory skuas continually on the hunt for unattended eggs or young, the skeins of snow geese in flight.

In addition to the films we had a pleasant social evening, with coffee and the sampling of the contents of 'plates' brought by members.

We would like to thank Angela for her contribution of a delightful box of assorted biscuits for raffling - which we all sampled after it had been won by Gloria. They were delicious.

Also our sincere thanks go to Marilyn for arranging the film evening and selecting the films and running them through the projector for us. All this entails a lot of work on her part. Perhaps on the next film evening, we may have a larger attendance of members (and friends are welcome, too) to enjoy what was a very pleasant evening - and all for free!

PEGGY BEATON

FIELD DAY FOR APRIL

Date: SUNDAY, 28 APRIL 1985 Place: FLAGSTONE CREEK
Assembly Point: PIGOTTS' CAR PARK
7.15 am for departure at 7.30 am SHARP

Flagstone Creek is a good birding district, and we are assured of a good spot for lunch for those that would like to picnic.

Anyone wishing transport, please phone Ann on 303207 or Angela on 321540.

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FIELD DAY FOR MAY 1985

Date: Sunday, 26 May 1985 Place: LAIDLEY CREEK
Assembly Point: PIGOTT'S CAR PARK
Time: 7.15 am for 7.30 am SHARP

This area has an abundance of dams and swamps, so we can hope for water birds as well as the usual bush birds on this outing, so bring your lunch and enjoy the day.

Anyone wishing transport, please phone Ann on 303207 or Angela on 321540.

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S.S.S.

Members, don't forget April is Seasonal Species Survey, so let's make this S.S.S. a good count.