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January 1986

toowoomba bird club

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

Postal Address

P.O. Box 67
DARLING HEIGHTS Q 4350

President

Lesley Beaton
15 Dunmore Street
Toowoomba 4350
Phone 32 6262

Secretary

Ann Shore
"Shorelands", Withcott
M.S. 224, Toowoomba 4352
Phone 30 3207

Records Officer

Angela Kilmartin
40 Mabel Street
Toowoomba 4350
Phone 38 2404

Treasurer

Diana Beal
M.S. 1049
Toowoomba 4352
Phone 30 7054

Editor

Ron Hopkinson
50 Bass Street
Toowoomba 4350
Phone 35 4952

Librarian

Nancy Belcher
2 Gilmour Court
Toowoomba 4350
Phone 38 4047

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. JANUARY 1986.

The unfortunate incident of the crocodile at Daintree in December seems, in microcosm , to contain the basic elements of the conservation struggle.

While, naturally I have sympathy for the luckless victim and her relatives, one can't help but feel dismay at the over-reaction of the Minister for the Environment and Administrative Services, Mr. Martin Tenni.

First reports from the various media were confused as to just how the lady was taken. Whether she was actually in the water or on a landing was not clear, and the "eye-witnesses" only saw a swirl of water. No doubt it probably was a crocodile, but this was not,so far as I can tell anyway, definitely established. After all it was late evening at a Christmas party and people were "cooling off" at the waters edge, not really something one should do in the Daintree. However people are people and it does happen. The point so far is that it was a simple, slightly silly, human activity that went wrong.

It is Mr. Tenni's response that perturbs me. He wants to "eradicate" crocodiles from certain areas of the North and decrees that any one who does not agree is "stupid".

Well, Mr. Tenni, I don't agree and I resent being called stupid.

There are a lot of risks in this life and I for one do not see as an answer eradicating creatures such as crocodiles simply because a few people go beyond the bounds of common sense and one of them pays the penalty. As far as I can gather only one person was taken by a crocodile over the holiday period (and this was the first for about ten years) while many times this number died, and will yet die, on the highways. It seems to me that our roads are more significantly a part of the environment to more people than the Daintree River is to the comparatively few folk who live there. Mr. Tenni would be better employed directing whatever talents he may have to eradicating the immeasurably greater risks you and I face every time we drive.

I don't have statistics on the matter but I would suggest that very few people succumb to crocodile attack, or shark attack, or snake bite, or bee sting, or box jelly-fish or any of the possibly similar natural dangers. However if Mr. Tenni's convoluted thinking is extended further then perhaps we shall see the eradication of all the above creatures simply because of their potential danger. But why stop there ? Are not some motorists potentially dangerous ? Perhaps Mr. Tenni will eradicate them from the roads. That WOULD save lives.

Emotive stuff ? Perhaps, but I make no apology, because the treatment handed out by Mr. Tenni and his ilk to the environment raises emotions in me (and I hope, you) that perhaps someday will right some of the thinking that pervades the corridors of Government, Federal, State and Local.

To me the environment is not you and I safe from crocodiles, but you and I AND crocodiles, or any other creature, each playing a role in the scheme.

The simple fact that escapes Mr. Tenni is that mankind is not God's only creation.

Ron Hopkinson.

RENEWAL OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

IT IS THAT TIME OF YEAR. Attached to your news-sheet this month is a subscription renewal slip. We ask you to forward it together with the fee to the Secretary. Thank you.

The Executive

BIRDS AND FLIGHT.

Few wonders touch man as deeply as the power of natural flight. Our mechanical approximations are coarse by comparison and we are well aware of it. Natural flight joins creature and sky. There is no intrusion. No bird is foreign to the wind. When we lift ourselves away from the earth it is our superb intelligence that is putting us there but there is not intelligence enough to find a way in for us. We can never really join the sky. We understand many of its forces and we can call upon them with steel and glass and tons of wire and rivets. But our sense of alienation is never alleviated.

We have been watching birds since before we were men. They flicked their shadows across our path with elegant disdain when we were yet without language. We listened to the wind in their feathers from our perches in trees. And when we progressed enough we marvelled at their beauty of colour and form. Man has always wondered about the bird. It would be a tragedy beyond measure, far beyond comprehension, if the course we have set should leave us nothing to wonder about but ourselves. Indeed, then, man might well wonder about man. In the meantime prayer would not seem out of order. We might well pray that our intelligence not have as its end product the elimination of beauty from earth, and bird from sky.

(Introduction to the book "Birds and Flight" by Roger Caras. Published by Westover Publishing Co.)

FLIGHT.

To watch an eagle soaring above us is possibly one of the most appealing aspects of bird watching. The bird's mastery of the sky leaves us earth-bound observers envious. Not for him the trip to the airline office weeks beforehand to save money by advance booking, or the long wait at the airport for stand-by seats. With the eagle, or any other bird (except for certain flightless species) it is simply "up, up and away".

But how is it done? That question must have puzzled many observers in the days before the science of aerodynamics. Over the years the principles involved have been discovered, studied and applied to man's machines. But the rigid wing of a fixed wing aircraft with its two or three movable features is a simple device compared to the wing of a bird.

American aircraft designers installed instruments and a camera in an aircraft and sent it aloft to follow a bird of prey so that they could measure and record data of its flight. The bird they tested was an American Black Vulture (Coragyps atratus), which is not generally considered a good soarer. The results of the experiment astonished the designers. The resistance of the bird's body to the air was practically nil, like a thin plate. The vulture's wing was later tested in a wind tunnel, used for measuring airflow around aircraft wings. There, the results were so poor that an aircraft given a similar aerofoil could not have left the ground. The experiment proved the superiority of the living creature which can mould and alter the wing to the resistance of the surrounding air.

This same ability has frustrated pilots of sports gliders seeking thermal updrafts that make their soaring faster and easier. It sometimes happens that the pilots share a thermal with a soaring raptor. But because of the bird's ability to adjust its aerodynamic qualities it can increase its rate

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of climb and is soon circling high above the glider. Try as he might the pilot is left behind.

Wings of birds and aircraft share the same general aerofoil shape, with a thickened leading edge and tapered trailing edge, creating a streamlined shape with a convex upper surface and concave undersurface. Air flowing past the upper surface travels faster than air flowing beneath. This phenomenon creates a lower air pressure above the wing. The difference in the pressures above and below creates lift.

If the wing is tilted upwards in relation to the airflow greater force is created on the wing underside thus increasing lift. The degree of tilt is called the angle of attack. However when a certain point of tilt is reached air can no longer flow smoothly over the upper surface and the turbulence thus caused destroys lift and initiates stall. On the leading edge of a bird's wing is a group of feathers (the alula or bastard wing) which keeps the airflow smooth as the wing tilts, thus permitting a steeper angle of attack.

The ratio between the length and breadth of the wing is the aspect ratio. Thus a long, narrow wing would have a high aspect ratio, which makes it more efficient for sustained gliding and soaring (the Wandering Albatross is a good example). All birds, of course, reflect an adaptation to a particular mode of existence and compromises made in wing shape and body weight to suit the environmental niche exploited by the particular species, give birds varied flight capabilities. Thus an eagle has a wing of lower aspect ratio than the albatross, but the eagle can still soar and glide very well and can take off and alight in more restricted conditions than are required by the big sea bird.

Wing loading is an important factor controlling the flying performance. It is the weight carried by a given unit area of wing and varies with the weight of the bird and the area of the wing. Birds with a different aspect ratio could have a similar wing loading. Generally, a lower wing loading enables a much slower flight ability. A higher loading assists high speed diving. The flight patterns of a Spotted Harrier and Peregrine Falcon illustrate this point. The long, broad wings of the Harrier have to support a smaller proportion of body weight than does a similar area of the Falcon's pointed wings.Wing loading also governs the diameter of the turning circle: the lower the loading the smaller the circle. Smaller soaring birds thus could utilize smaller thermals earlier in the day than bigger birds with higher wing loading.

Basically the wings lift and propel the bird and the tail steers but the functions overlap, as do the rudder and aileron in a fixed wing aircraft. Tails are important for steering in confined areas such as among trees. The Goshawk is the example here: its tail is longer in proportion to body size than the tail of a bird which does not need to turn sharply in and out of forested areas.

I have touched here on just a few of the factors that get our big raptor soaring above us. It is an interesting subject with many complexities. When we compare the helicopters of the bird world, the tiny hummingbirds with their 70 wingbeats per second, to the dynamic soaring ability of the albatross at sea where there are few, if any, thermal updrafts, we see a vast subject which defies critical analysis.

For us earthlings the answer is perhaps after all to trudge down to the airline office and make advance bookings.

References: The Birds (Life Nature Library). Roger Tory Peterson.
Birds of Prey of Britain and Europe. Dr. M. Bouchner. Hamlyn.
Dell Encyclopedia of Birds. Bertel Bruun. Delacorte Press.
Birds of Prey, Ecology and Biology. L. Brown. Hamlyn.
Birds of Prey of the World. Grossman and Hamlet. Bonanza Books.

Ron Hopkinson

EXECUTIVE REPORT.

a) As many of you know, the Executive sent a letter to the Toowoomba City Council regarding the naming of the Waterbird Habitat. We requested that the Council not automatically accept the name Reedy Lagoons put forward by the Bicentennial Committee. We felt a more historic name reflecting the origins of Toowoomba was more in keeping with a Bicentennial project.

   Ann and Marilyn delivered this personally to the Deputy Town Clerk. A petition was also started and about 175 names were collected. These were handed to Alderman Ian Knight. So far we have achieved the aim of getting the Council to consider alternatives and the matter is to be dealt with in committee on 20th January.

b) Diana requested that we change our bank account from the Commonwealth to the National Bank, as the latter has a branch at the Wilsonton Shopping Centre, which would be more convenient for her. This was agreed upon.

c) The Club is hoping to get a mist-netting and bird-banding project started in our area. I have written to the Australian Bird and Bat-banding Scheme requesting a bander's licence. Mike Hines who was at the R.A.O.U. camp is happy to give a demonstration week-end in April. A number of Bird Club members and Toowoomba Field Nats have shown interest in the project.

d) Those people who were at the film evening are already aware that this year we have been asked to join Greenwatch and the Toowoomba Field Naturalists Club in a joint display at the Hobby-n-Craft Spectacular. The theme will be the Waterbird Habitat. PLEASE PHONE ME, 32 6262, IF YOU ARE ABLE TO HELP ON THAT WEEK-END FEBRUARY 14-15-16th.

Lesley Beaton, President.

FIELD DAY REPORT.

Ron and Nancy Gooding's property, Killarney district. 24/11/85.

A prompt meeting, in Warwick at 8.15am., of a large group of Club members, made a good beginning to the day we had looked forward to with lots of pleasant anticipation and some trepidation. It was a sunny, cool morning but would the many varieties of birds we had seen in the various areas put themselves on show today?

First stop, some 20 kilometres along the road in a lightly forested area didn't produce much in variety of numbers. So on we went to the homestead for an early morning tea and an introduction to the Kookaburra hatched the previous fortnight in a convenient hole in a Pepperina tree behind the house. But even he was shy and hid in shadow.

Then we drove up the mountain road to mountain forest and scrub and beautiful scenery but no sign of Spotted Quail-thrush we had hoped to show off.

The distinctive call of the Red Wattlebird was apparent but it was some time before we saw several. A Fantail Cuckoo had all members confused by his unfamiliar call.

Back at the homestead lunch was interrupted by a phone call from a neighbour, Ann, which had everyone tumbling downstairs to catch a brief sight of four Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos! Was it good enough for a positive identification? A hurried drive up the paddock to try to see them closer wasn't successful. A ramble up the creek was more productive--a Koala--but even the little regulars like Red-browed Firetails were reticent. Then, at the very last moment, there was a Tawny Frogmouth sitting on a nest in the fork of a Eucalypt. A ray of sunlight shone on the egg, which

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appeared to be balancing precariously on the edge of the nest and hardly in a suitable position for successful incubation. I have been able to observe the bird and nest from the homestead verandah, and she seemed to sit for another week or so and then was gone.

A successful day? Yes, and most enjoyable.

Nancy Gooding.

SPECIES LIST. 24/11/85.
W= En route Warwick. G= Gooding's property.

Australasian Grebe(G)
Great Cormorant(W)
White-faced Heron(GW)
Sacred Ibis(W)
Straw-necked Ibis(G)
Pacific Black Duck(W)
Maned Duck(GW)
Blk-shlrd. Kite(W)
Aust. Kestrel(GW)
Aust. Brush-turkey(G)
Masked Lapwing(W)
Feral Pigeon(W)
Bar-shldrd. Dove(G)
Crested Pigeon(GW)
Wonga Pigeon(G)
Yellow-tld BlackC'too(G)
Galah(GW)
Sulphur-crstd C'too(GW)
Scaly-brstd Lorikeet(W)
Aust. King Parrot(G)
Cockatiel(GW)
Crimson Rosella(G)
Eastern Rosella(GW)
Pale-hd Rosella(W)

Red-rmpd Parrot(GW)
Fan-tld Cuckoo(G)
Common Koel(G)
Channel-bld Cuckoo(G)
Pheasant Coucal(W)
Tawny Frogmouth(G)
Laughing Kookaburra(GW)
Sacred Kingfisher(G)
Dollarbird(G)
Welcome Swallow(G)
Fairy Martin(W)
Blk-fcd Cuckoo-Shrike(GW)
Yellow-eyed C/shrike(G)
Cicadabird(G)
Golden Whistler(G)
Rufous Whistler(G)
Grey Shrike-thrush(G)
Grey Fantail(G)
Willie Wagtail(G)
Eastern Whipbird(G)
Superb Fairy-wren(G)
White-browed Scrubwren(G)
Brown Gerygone(G)
White-thrtd Gerygone(G)

Brown Thornbill(G)
Yellow-rmpd Thornbill(G)
White-thrtd Treecreeper(G)
Red Wattlebird(G)
Spiny-chkd Honeyeater(G)
Striped Honeyeater(G)
Noisy Miner(G)
Lewin's Honeyeater(G)
Yellow-fcd Honeyeater(G)
Brown-hded Honeyeater(G)
Scarlet Honeyeater(G)
Spotted Pardalote(G)
Striated Pardalote(G)
Silvereye(G)
House Sparrow(GW)
Red-brwd Firetail(G)
Common Starling(W)
Olive-bckd Oriole(G)
Satin Bowerbird(G)
Aust. Magpie-lark(GW)
Blk-fcd Woodswallow(W)
Pied Butcherbird(GW)
Aust. Magpie(GW)
Pied Currawong(G)
Torresian Crow(GW)

73 Spesies.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

Cattle Egret/Great Egret/Little Egret/Intermediate Egret: 14.1.86. All four present at Hood's Lagoon. LB. REH. AK.

Australian Hobby: 9.1.86. Soda Springs Road.(Hunting a Martin). LB. AK.

Whiskered Tern: 14.1.86. Hood's Lagoon (11 birds) . LB. REH. AK.

Eastern Grass Owl: 8.1.86. "Belvedere ", Condamine flats, Killarney. NG. RG.

Crested Bellbird: 4.8.85. Dirranbandi Q. (male). JW. RW.

White-browed Babbler: 18.7.85. Little Desert, Vic. (flock) JW. RW.

Chestnut-crowned Babbler: 3.8.85. MacQuarie Marshes, NSW. JW. RW.

Little Grassbird: 13.1.86. Welcamp/Westbrook Road. Boundary of Sectors 1&2 LB. REH. AK.

Calamanthus: 23.7.85. Port Campbell N.P. Vic. JW. RW.

LB: Lesley Beaton. NG: Nancy Gooding. RG: Ron Gooding. REH: Ron Hopkinson. AK: Angela Kilmartin. JW: John Walter. RW: Ruth Walter.

FIELD DAY FOR JANUARY 1986.

Date: Sunday January 26th 1986.
Place: Redwood Park.
Assembly Point: Pigott's car park.
Time: 7.15am for departure 7.30am SHARP.
Leader: Lesley Beaton.

For this time of year this will be a morning outing, finishing about mid-morning. Of course, you are welcome to press on if so inclined.

FIELD DAY FOR FEBRUARY 1986.

Date:Sunday, February 23rd 1986. Beginners Outing.
Place: Picnic Point/South St. area.
Assembly Point: Pigott's car park.
Time: 7.15am for departure 7.30am SHARP.
Leaders: Angela Kilmartin & Ron Hopkinson.

This is the Beginners outing following on from interest created at the Hobby-n-Craft Spectacular.

LIBRARY NOTES.

The Club now has a copy of the R.A.O.U. Atlas of Australian Birds. This is available for borrowing from the Librarian.

Publications Received.

The Darling Downs Naturalist Newsletter: No. 375. September 1985.
No. 376. October 1985
No. 377 November 1985
No. 378 December 1985
The Darling Downs Naturalist "Journal". Vol. 8. No. 2. December 1985
World Wildlife Fund, Australia. No. 25, October-December, 1985
The Bird Observer. No. 644. September 1985.
No. 645. October 1985
No. 646. November 1985
No. 647. December 1985
The Australian Bird Watcher. Vol. 11, No. 4. December 1985
Urimbirra. Vol. 19 No. 9. September 1985
Vol. 19 No. 10 October 1985
Vol. 19 No. 11 November 1985
Q.O.S. Newsletter Vol. 16 No. 8. September 1985
Vol. 16 No. 9 October 1985
Vol. 16 No. 10 November 1985
Vol. 16 No. 11 December 1985
Out of the West (B.O.C. young members newsletter) No. 5 November 1985

Nancy Belcher

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