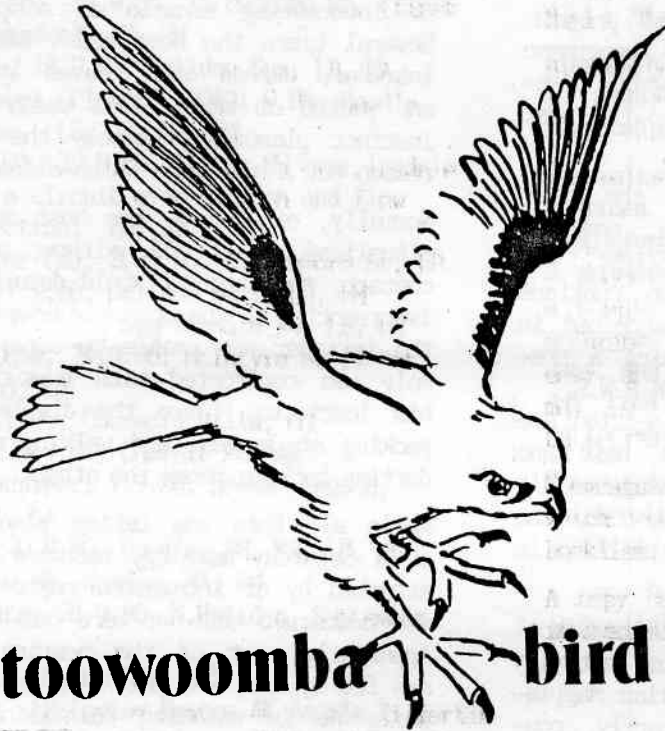


NEWS-SHEET No.130

OCTOBER 1986



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

## toowoomba bird club

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### Annual Subscription

Ordinary Membership \$10; Family Membership \$12; Student M'ship \$5.

### Activities

Field Outings and Monthly Meeting - 4th Sunday of each month usually leaving from McDonnell & East car park at 7.30 am.

### 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.

## "THE BEST LAID PLANS"

On a recent Saturday morning, Angela Kilmartin and I took part in the Club's "helping hand" project which assists the Q.N.P.W.S. with its programme of trapping nesting Australian Magpies which dive-bomb people (particularly children) near the nest site.

The plan involves placing a trap near the site, catching the male Magpie, banding him, removing certain primary feathers (to permit flight, but prevent diving), and releasing him to continue the nesting process. The trap is constructed in three sections, the centre one containing a previously trapped Magpie (trapped by the Q.N.P.W.S., that is). Either side of this centre section are the traps which contain suitable meat bait and a drop down wooden door. The nesting Magpies fly down to investigate the intruder, walk into the trap, peck at the bait, and presto! the trap is sprung!

Not so, I'm afraid. We visited Ramsay State School first, at 6.30 a.m. The first nesting activity we found was that of a pair of Australian Magpie-larks. In a nearby Eucalypt was a partly constructed Magpie nest, but no sign of Magpies. We doubted that the nest had proceeded to the stage of being defended.

We tested several sites before we came upon a couple of Magpie onlookers. Setting the trap we withdrew to a discreet distance to await results. Angela had advanced the theory that at least some of the offending birds were "Monday to Friday" Magpies; that is, they respond to the stimulus of torment by the children during the week and at the week-ends are quite docile. I agree with this. It certainly seemed to be the case with this pair. If ever a pair of Magpies could be called "imps", then this was the pair.

At one point, one of the Magpies was about to enter the trap when the Magpie-larks swooped, and away went our intended captive, breaking even time to the shelter of the next paddock. At another point they were set upon by Noisy Miners, fierce birds, if ever there were, at least according to our Magpie pair; away they went again.

After a couple of hours of this we had to conclude that perhaps the pupils of the school could not differentiate between Magpies and Magpie-larks, and we moved on to our next site.

This was in Hume Street, about mid-way between Long and Perth Streets. We soon found the nest in a Camphor Laurel tree and the male resting on the cross-bar of a utility pole. He was a fine specimen and ready for business. While we were still at the trap, setting it, he swooped and alighted on the ground near us. This won't take long, we thought.

The best laid plans of mice and bird trappers, oft go awry (with apologies to Robbie Burns).

This male was quite aggressive to our imprisoned caller bird, pecking at the sides of the cage, as required by his instincts. However here we had an interesting example of displacement activity. Several times the host male, after pecking at the intruder, turned over leaves lying on the ground and pecked at them. This seems to show a lack of instinct plasticity whereby the bird is unable to reason out a situation which differs from the normal.

Normally, of course, the host male would make his ritualized attack and, without any actual physical contact, the intruder would depart, as his instinctive reaction to the attack. However in our situation the intruder was unable to depart so the attacking male was confronted with a situation abnormal to his instincts, hence the displacement activity of pecking at leaves, and walking away, pausing, then darting back to renew the attack.

While all this was taking place (in Hume Street on a Saturday morning, remember), we were ritually attacked by an interested resident of the area who was concerned that we were out to harm his Magpie. Apparently, out of the nesting season the birds are fed by him, and they even venture into the house while he is watching television. Some of their favourite shows include "The Early Bird Show", "Captain Cookaburra" and "Wombat". Least favoured is "Fat Cat and Friends"!

Another ritual attack was made on us by a car with blue lights on the roof. It made a U-turn near us and halted near our car and the trap. The vehicle contained a Senior Sergeant of Police and a Senior Constable. We explained who we were and what we were up to. This satisfied their instincts and they made their ritual departure.

Unfortunately, none of this led to the capture of any Magpies so we had to give it away at lunchtime. We regretted that we had been unable to assist the Q.N.P.W.S. or the victims of Magpie attack.

The next day, Sunday, while Angela was attending to the needs of the captive bird, he decided that he had no need of her ministrations and, seizing a momentary opportunity, escaped through the open door of the cage.

Robbie Burns certainly knew how things were when he said, "The best-laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-gley".

Ron Hopkinson

## FIELD DAY FOR OCTOBER

Date: Sunday October 26th  
Place: Glen Lomond - Upper Flagstone Ck  
Assembly Point: McDonnell & East Car Park  
Time: 7.15 am for departure 7.30 sharp  
Leader: Angela Kilmartin  
For this Field Day we are combining with Toowoomba Field Naturalists Club

## MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (2), 10.9.86, St Joseph's College, Mackenzie St. LB, JB  
Rufous Whistler (f), 13.9.86, 15 Dummore St. (first sighting for garden), LB, JB  
Common Sandpiper, 18.9.86, Helidon Spa, LB, MA,  
Red-capped Dotterel (Plover), 20&21.9.86, Hood's Lagoon, Helidon. LB, JB, MA, PM  
Sacred Ibis (100+), 20.9.86, Flying NW over Iredale Tearooms, did a circuit over Helidon and flew off in SE direction. LB, JB  
Scarlet Honeyeater (m), 20.9.86, 15 Dummore St, LB  
Black Bittern, 21.9.86, Helidon Weir, LB, PM  
Spotless Crane, 21.9.86, Spa-Iredale Rd, LB, PM  
Bar-shouldered Dove, 24.9.86, McIntyre St (first time for garden), LR  
Apostlebird, 30.9.86, Cotswold Hills, GG  
Golden Whistler, 9.9.86, Chevell St, AK  
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, 7.9.86, Hoods' Lagoon, Helidon, PM, MA, LA  
Brown Songlark, 20.9.86, Hood's, PM, MA, LB, JB  
Glossy Ibis, 27.9.86, Hood's, MA, PM  
Square-tailed Kite, 28.9.86, N.Helidon, September Club outing  
Pelican (4), 27.9.86, Helidon, JD  
LA Lawrie Atzeni LB Lesley Beaton AK Angela Kilmartin  
MA Michael Atzeni JD Joe Deuble PM Pat McConnell  
JB John Ball GG Gloria Glass LR Lyn Rowan

From Lorraine Wilson:

June 1986 - Pelicans, 2 flocks overhead, 7 in one flock and 8 in the other, gliding on thermals, meeting, separating and flying higher and higher until blending into the blue sky, then totally out of sight.

June 1986 - Ground Cuckoo-shrikes, Flock of 6 feeding on grass near house, until Magpie began chasing them from one area to another, then Butcherbird joined in chasing them until they decided to leave this area (what a shame). Beautiful birds, such vivid coloration (ie, sharp contrast of dark and light areas) while being looked down upon from verandah. Overcast day. Pale eyes most noticeable and slightly forked tail.

July 1986 - Magpies, Territory row, this time with the plovers! One plover had a sore leg and that's the one selected to be harrassed - it didn't work! Every time the Magpie approached, the Plover turned towards her and walked in the Magpie's direction quite defiantly. Magpie backed off.

Brought to mind the antics of a plover years ago (while I was travelling on a dusty outback track). A plover stood defiantly in the middle of the car track and repeatedly attacked the car - obviously its nest was nearby.

What chance did the Magpie have!

### Report of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The front page of the News-Sheet shows the Club Officers elected. The audited Financial Statement is included in this News-Sheet. The President's Report will appear in the November News-Sheet.

## BOOK REVIEW

"Bushwalks in the Toowoomba Region", Neil McKilligan, D.D.I.A.E. Press.

Birdwatchers and bushwalkers have many things in common and this pocket-size book will prove invaluable to both groups.

The walks suggested by Neil McKilligan are clearly outlined and illustrated with sketch maps and photographs. Neil has graded the walks, easy - moderate - hard, and from my experience with a couple of them his "subjective assessment" is accurate. I found no great difficulty in the easy and easy-moderate walks. However, birdos may find the walking times given will have to be increased to allow for birdwatching.

Congratulations to Neil for this excellent book which will be a useful addition to any birdo's booklist.

A copy has been donated to the Club Library and is available to members.

Lesley Beaton

## LIBRARY NOTES - NEW PUBLICATIONS

Wildlife Australia, Spring 1986

Birds (R.S.P.B.), Summer 1986

"Bushwalks in the Toowoomba Region" by Neil McKilligan

Qld Natl Parks & Wildlife Service

November 1985, "Nature Conservation and the R.A.S. of Qld, Toowoomba"

Urimbirra, Nos 8&9, Aug & Sept 1986

Q.O.S. Newsletter, Vol 17 No 7, Aug 1986

Birdwatcher, Vol 11 No 7, Sept 1986

The Bird Observer, Nos 655 & 656, Aug & Sept 1986

The Darling Downs Naturalist,

Nos 386 & 387, Sept & Oct 1986

Nancy Belcher

## PROPOSED ALTERATION TO THE CONSTITUTION of the TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB

At the General Meeting of the Club on Sunday 23rd October 1986, it is proposed to discuss a change to our Constitution.

Therefore, in accordance with the Constitution, at least one month's notice is hereby given.

The proposed change is:

### Para.3 Membership:

Clause (c) - Delete "1st January" and insert "1st November and that the Club's financial year shall be from 1st November in one year to 31 October in the following year."

The purpose of this change is to bring the financial year into line with the current practice of holding the Annual General Meeting during October.

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB

STATEMENT of INCOME & EXPENDITURE

For Year ended 8 September 1986

EXPENDITURE		INCOME	
Printing	343.79	Subscr'ns 85/86	360.00
Postage	189.90	Subscr'ns 86/87	40.00
Stationery	32.85	Sales Merchandise	172.00
Library	70.80	Raffle Takings	98.55
Displays	40.00	Donations	31.00
Purchases		Special Purpose	
Merchandise	136.00	Collections	60.00
Purchases Raffles	8.00	Interest Received	1.30
Federal Govt Tax	1.55		
Donations	70.00	Deficit for year	130.04
	<u>\$892.89</u>		<u>\$892.89</u>

FUNDS REPORT

Balance 12 September 1985	206.50
Less Deficit for year	<u>130.04</u>
Balance 8 September 1986	<u>\$ 76.46</u>

D.J. Beal, B.Econ., B. Com  
Hon. Treasurer

I have examined the Books and Papers of the Toowoomba Bird Club and am of the opinion that the Statement hereon represents a true and correct view of the Income & Expenditure for year ended 8th September 1986.

L.B. Atzeni, Honorary Auditor

FIELD OUTING - 28.9.86 - HELIDON

There were plenty of rewards for the small group of eight as we checked out popular birding sites around Helidon.

Hood's Lagoon was first off the rank, and as usual had something of interest, namely the TBC's fourth record of a Jabiru which later soared majestically to a pinpoint in the sky. Other unusual species included Glossy Ibis, Pelican and Pacific Baza.

Some bushbirding at the Helidon Dip area produced excellent views of a Brown-headed Honeyeater feeding an immature, and a male Scarlet Honeyeater cooperating for its admirers in a low dead branch.

Driving past the ammunitions dump, cars abruptly came to a halt as the bird of the day - a Square-tailed Kite - soared across the road, settling in a tree briefly, before affording everyone a brilliant view as he circled a few metres above us seemingly very curious about our small convoy.

Last stop before lunch was the Helido Spa where we set the telescopes on the Common Sandpiper, a recent addition to the Club's list.

A lunchtime tally revealed we were six short of a hundred species, so a brief stop at Redwood Park saw us safely to the 'ton' and capped off a very enjoyable and productive outing.

Members present: Angela Kilmartin, Nancy & Frank Belcher, Joan White, Lyn Rowan, Michael Atzeni, Pat McConnell, Gloria Glass.

Michael Atzeni

Species observed will be carried over to the November News-Sheet due to lack of space.

KALBAR BIRDWATCH

As Roy and I were out birdwatching recently, we turned down a hitherto unexplored road which took us over a very full and running creek - a welcome and unusual sight in these very dry times.

We turned off onto an agricultural track alongside the creek. It led to a beautiful wide stretch of water, on either side of which were calistemons, melaleucas and eucalypts in full flower.

We stood entranced to watch scores of Scarlet Honeyeaters busy in the flowers, and flashing to and fro across the water. I would not have believed that we could have seen so many in one spot.

We stayed there for the better part of the morning watching the wonderful display of birds: several varieties of honeyeaters and waterbirds, a Pacific Heron, Pardalotes, vivid green Figbirds with their red eye patches, some Lorikeets, Whip-birds, Rufous Whistlers, a Yellow Robin - and another flash of vivid scarlet: a Red-backed Wren, and many others.

We were be-dazzled by it all.

And also very thankful to think that there are still these oases of peace and natural beauty to be found.

Peggy Beaton

INVITATION TO ALL T.B.C. MEMBERS  
AND THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS

LAMB-ON-A-SPIT

To help raise funds for the Bicentennial Water Bird Habitat, the Toowoomba Field Naturalists Club is arranging this LAMB-ON-A-SPIT.

DATE: Saturday, October 25th

PLACE: Mary Ann & Don Law's Home, 226 Ramsay Street

TIME: 4.00 pm

TICKETS: \$10 adults

\$5 children, up to and including schoolage

Fruit juice will be provided, and wine will be served with the meal.

A walk to the Habitat is planned before dinner.

Contact Lesley Beaton (326262) for your ticket.

Q.O.S. BIRD COUNT

Our Club usually takes part in this Queensland Ornithological Society project. This year the dates - 25 & 26 October clash with a number of Club interests. However, if YOU could take part - or on days close to these dates, please contact a member of the Executive or Marilyn Jacobs (35 8594) who is our organiser.