

toowoomba bird club

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

NEWSLETTER No. 133 JANUARY 1987

FIELD DAY for JANUARY

Date: Sunday, January 25
Place: Jubilee Park, Toowoomba
Assembly Point: McDonnell & East car park
Time: 7.15 am assembly for departure
at 7.30 am SHARP
Leader: Angela Kilmartin

Visitors Welcome!

CLUB OFFICERS

President	Lesley Beaton	Phone 32 6262
Secretary	Ann Shore	Phone 30 3207
Treasurer	Lyn Rowan	Phone 35 9118
Records Officer	Angela Kilmartin	Phone 38 2404
Librarian	Nancy Belcher	Phone 38 4047
Editor	Gloria Glass	Phone 30 7054

Activities Field Day and Monthly Meeting - 4th Sunday of each month. Usually depart from McDonnell & East car park at 7.30 am.

Camping trips and film and slide evenings.

Newsletter Published monthly, prior to the Field Day. Contributions should be mailed to the P.O. Box. Deadline is the last day of the month.

Annual Subscription Ordinary Membership \$10.00
Family Membership \$12.00
Student Membership \$ 5.00

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

There were no winners of December's quiz, despite a record number of answers. However the answers printed below are interesting, especially in the right-hand column. So those of us who got some answers 'wrong' probably weren't far out.

Where these birds forage most frequently:	Ground	Under-story	Tree-tops	% of * Observations at that level
Aust. Magpie	X			98
Superb Fairy-wren	X			80
Silvereye		X		43
Grey Fantail		X		43
Rufous Fantail		X		74
Crimson Rosella			X	90
Striated Pardalote			X	79
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike			X	89
Spotted Pardalote			X	79
Rufous Whistler			X	77
Golden Whistler		X		52
Eastern Whipbird		X		58
Rose Robin		X		55
Eastern Yellow Robin	X			77
White-browed Scrub-wren	X			75
Dusky Woodswallow			X	47
Eastern Spinebill		X		99
White-winged Chough	X			100

*These foraging frequency observations were taken from Recher & Holmes: "Foraging Ecology and Seasonal Patterns of Abundance in a Forest Avifauna" in "Birds of Eucalypt Forests and Woodlands: Ecology, Conservation, Management", Surrey Beatty & Sons Pty Ltd & R.A.O.U., Chipping Norton, 1985.

AVIAN SUNBATHERS

Sunbathing by birds is thought to be just one of the options available to birds to keep the body surface in good condition. Other options are preening, oiling, bathing and anting.

Preening is the most important activity in feather care and can be performed by the bird itself or by a friend. Oiling is often carried out in conjunction with preening, and the preen oil is milked from the oil gland on the back at the base of the tail. (Remember the anatomical details of the last chook you plucked!)

Bathing is obviously enjoyed, especially on hot days, but ice in the water in winter is no bar to a good splash around. Anting is done either passively (letting the ants crawl through the feathers) or actively, actually spreading formic acid-producing ants over the feathers.

But back to sunbathing. Sunbathing may consist of a gentle fluff-up of feathers on a good sunny perch or a full-blown sunbathe with gusto. This full-intensity posture involves being spread-eagled on the ground with wings fully stretched and tail completely spread

And this is the activity I've noticed lately. First there were two Pied Butcherbirds, a parent and one of this year's young. The parent shuffled around and flopped into the spread-eagled position, then Baby mooched around for a bit, found the right posie and flopped down, squiggled a little and then assumed full-blown position. They held this "two aircraft parked on the runway" position for 2-3 minutes. Their sunning position was a patch of light-coloured exposed bare earth facing the western sun.

Next we saw a Striped Honeyeater doing the same thing in almost the same place. Both occasions were on one of those days we've had recently when the temperature reached 35-37 degrees.

Today (37 degrees) I saw an Australian Magpie and friend sunning on a heap of light coloured soil on a building block.

This is an interesting activity to observe and study. What species have you seen in the act?

Diana Beal

QUIZZICAL'S QUIZ No.6

This month, we have another foraging set of questions. Long-time birdos probably won't have much trouble with these, but ALL members and readers are encouraged to send in their answers before the end of January.

Birds may forage on the ground (G), on the bark of tree trunks (BT), on the bark of branches (BB), on loose hanging bark of Eucalypts (BL) among the leaves and twigs (L), among flowers (F), among seed capsules (c), or in the air (A).

Where would you expect to find the following birds foraging for the greater proportion of the time?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| White-throated Tree-creeper | Crimson Rosella |
| Gang-gang Cockatoo | Red Wattlebird |
| Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike | Grey Fantail |
| Eastern Spinebill | Satin Flycatcher |
| Dusky Woodswallow | Rose Robin |
| White-eared Honeyeater | Varied Sitella |
| Crested Shrike-tit | Golden Whistler |
| White-naped Honeyeater | Silvereye |
| Yellow-faced Honeyeater | Rufous Whistler |

Send in your answers before the end of January, and if they're correct, you'll be able to see your name in print in the February Newsletter!

FUTURE OUTING DATES

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| March 1 | Wader outing to the coast |
| March 28-29 | Camp-out at Lake Broadwater near Dalby |
| April 26 | Toowoomba region |
| May 24 | Cooby Creek and Dam |
| June 28 | Ma Ma Creek |

FIELD OUTING - January 25

Angela, our leader, hopes we will see some of the Summer seasonal visitors: trillers, flycatchers and monarchs, pitta, drongo, dollarbird.

Jubilee is in our city's ring of parklands, and there are several entrances to it in the north-east of Toowoomba. We will be using the Bridge Street entrance.

See the front page box for details of the outing.

As I have travelled around, it has been my practice to make a list of birds particular to a district through which I am travelling, or to which I am going: Tasmania, Western Australia, various National Parks, etc. Now, however, bird observers travelling to Western Australia have it all handed to them on a silver platter in "Where to Find Birds in Western Australia" by Noela Marr, Kangaroo Press.

It is a must for observers travelling to this area. The book is a very handy size for slipping into a bag. It has maps of 40 different areas and an overall map showing the location in W.A. of these areas. Each map has an accompanying write-up on Accommodation, Vegetation (which I found most interesting), Birds of the area, and finally a section "Ticks for Twitchers" - in Area No.3 even a 'mega-tick' for a bird I looked for but unfortunately did not see, the Noisy Scrub-bird.

There are colour photographs of birds and some of the very beautiful areas referred to. And also four or five locations within Perth, or easy bus ride of Perth, if you are merely visiting Perth.

Names of birds and vegetation are listed in the back under common and Latin names.

I feel that more books of this nature would be of great help to observers travelling around. Thank you, Noela!

Peggy Beaton

Editor's Note: The publisher has very kindly sent the Club a copy of this book, which is now in our library. Copies may be obtained on a sale or return basis from Kangaroo Press Pty Ltd, PO Box 75, Kenthurst NSW 2154 at \$12.95 each.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

Wedge-tailed Eagle, 1,1,&2 on 28.12.86, 30.12.86, 4.1.87 resp, Gilmour Ct, FB,NB

Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, 2 & 4 on 27.11 & 15.12.86 resp, Gilmour Ct, FB,NB

King Parrot, 17.12.86, Hume St, S.T'ba, LR

Eastern Rosella, 26.12.86, Jones Road, Withcott, AS

Clamorous Reed Warbler, 26.12.86, Jones Road, Withcott, AS

Fuscous Honeyeater, 6.1.86, Lockyer Siding, AS, LB, LR, AK

Tawny Grassbird, 7.1.86, Spring Ck, LB, LR, AK

Black-shouldered Kite, adult & 2 young, Spring Ck, LB, LR, AK

Peregrine Falcon, 7.1.86, Lions Park, south of Toowoomba, LB, LR, AK

Koel, one young being fed by Aust. Magpie-larks, Gowrie Jct, EB, DB, GG

Clamorous Reed-warbler, **Great Cormorant**, **Red Wattle-bird**, **Plumed Whistling-duck**, **Waterbird Habitat**, AK, LR

DB Diana Beal

FB Enid Beal

LB Lesley Beaton

FB Frank Belcher

NB Nancy Belcher

GG Gloria Glass

AK Angela Kilmartin

LR Lyn Rowan

AS Ann Shore

"FEBRUARY" Wader Outing to the Coast

The date is MARCH 1st

Living away from the coast, we don't see very many of the migratory wading birds. Most of these spend summer in Australia, and fly off to Japan or Siberia to breed in the northern summer. Consequently, it is generally only at the beginning and end of their time in Australia that we can see these waders in their brighter nuptial plumage.

Cinnamon-rufous will be the colour to look for, and some waders to study up beforehand could be: **Terek and Curlew Sandpipers**, **Mongolian Dotterel**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Red-necked Stint**, **Grey-tailed Tattler**, **Crested**, **White-fronted** and **Little Terns** and both **Oystercatchers**.

We will be hiring a mini-bus. Please let Lesley know if you think you will be coming. If we have 15 people the cost will be only \$10 each, whereas if we have 8 people the cost will be \$16 per person.

WATERBIRD HABITAT TREE-PLANTING

The third public tree-planting will take place, with special help from the Schools of the city, and open to any member of the public, on **Thursday, 29th January** at 9.30 am.

If you are free at this time and go along to help, there is the bonus of an inside look at the habitat, which is not yet open to the public.

See 'Members' Birdnotes' for the more unusual birds seen there recently.

Notes from Gilmour Court

We had not seen the **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo** for months until 6 o'clock one foggy November morning. I was awakened by screeches way up high in the large eucalypt tree at the back of the house. I grabbed the binoculars, to view a large black cockatoo with yellow markings underneath its long tail. (It really is large too, when you have been used to viewing the little bush birds.) It had a mate and they soon disappeared into the fog.

Excitement again, two weeks later on another foggy morning, when a group of four **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** landed on the same tree, amid lots of commotion, and left just as quickly - again disappearing into the fog.

They have been seen in the Highlands area, so could have been flying across the valley to Highlands.

The **Wedge-tailed Eagles** are back again soaring over the valley in the late afternoon. I was surprised to see **three**, mid morning on a cloudy day. Because I was above, looking down on them, I couldn't help but notice the beautiful bronze markings across the top of the wings of the largest eagle. These large graceful birds can soar up into the heavens within minutes, to be a black speck in the sky.

Nancy Belcher

(I wonder if they were the same three that appeared at Gowrie Junction one day at the end of December. These landed on the ground not far from houses in 'suburban' Gowrie J. Ed.)

JANUARY is one - the month in the middle of summer.

What is SSS? - "Seasonal Species Survey".

There are four SSS months, one in the middle of each season when the Club hopes you will jot down the birds you see in our local study area. See or phone Angela (382404) if you would like a bird list to use.

HOBBY & CRAFT SHOW 20-22 FEBRUARY

Our Club is taking part again, with the feature this year the Waterbird Habitat. Please ring Lesley (326262) if you are able to help on the stall; otherwise make sure you visit. It's in the Founders' Pavilion at the new Showgrounds, in Glenvale Road.

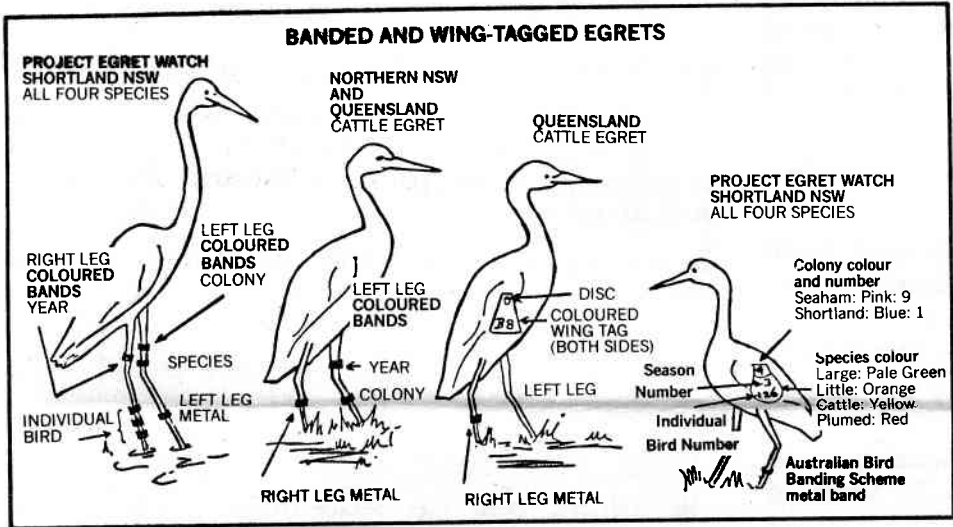
EGRET BANDING and TAGGING SCHEME

The **Hunter Wetlands Trust** was a recipient of a grant from the Bird Observers Club's **Australian Bird Environment Fund**. The grant enabled the "Project Egret Watch" to begin banding and wing tagging Egrets at the Shortland Wetland Centre at Newcastle during the nesting season of January-February 1986.

Sighting reports are now coming in from as far afield at Huonville, south of Hobart, Peats Ridge, NSW, and Nambucca Heads, NSW.

Sightings of birds banded in Queensland, separately, at **Gatton, Doboy and Nambour**, have been made at the Largs area, near Maitland, and also at the Shortlands Wetlands, near Newcastle.

The project relies on sightings made by volunteer observers, so here is an area where we can help. When you are out and about, have a long, hard look at any of the four species of Egret. The following information should accompany any sightings you make.



Location details.

Number of Egrets: in company or lone.

Habitat type: pasture, swamp margin, water, etc.

Other birds in company: Herons, Ibis, Spoonbills, etc.

Behaviour: feeding, roosting, nesting.

Sightings can be notified to:

The Australian Bird Banding Scheme, PO Box 8, Canberra, ACT, 2601.

Ron Hopkinson

SECRET OF SUCCESS

However much we might regret the introduction of that unwanted pest, the House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) to this country, a detached viewpoint can see the reasons for their successful colonization of this land. This success stems, at least in part, from their ability to utilize man-given food sources and nesting sites.

I saw a good example of this ability recently at Cobar (NSW). My car was parked at a service station rest area, while I sat at a nearby table "taking five". A Sparrow alighted on a log bordering the area in front of the vehicle and promptly flew up and into the opening in the air dam, behind the number plate. It shortly emerged with part of an insect in its beak. The morsel must have been plucked from the radiator core.

The Sparrow then flew about thirty metres to a nearby house where it disappeared through a hole in the end gable of the roof. Feeding young was my guess. The bird then returned to the car, and in the same deliberate fashion, repeated the process. It was now joined by the other half of the pair who also took part in the harvest. Both birds seemed quite deliberate in their actions of entering the air dam and emerging with insects.

It would be a reasonable assumption that somewhere along their way they have learned to associate that portion of a vehicle with insects. During the ten minutes or so that I watched, they made eight trips from house to car, to house. As the car had been driven from Adelaide that day, the radiator would have been quite hot, so this would have required quite deft movements to pluck the insects from the core.

Ron Hopkinson

Australia Day Holiday Bird Count

The eighth Australia Day holiday garden bird count of birds in urban areas will take place on January 26, 1987. Facts obtained from these counts help in our nature conservation work.

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia is asking any interested person in an urban area to walk around the garden between 7 and 8 am on the Australia Day Holiday and record the kinds of birds seen, and also the numbers present or flying over during that time. If a bird cannot be identified, a description will allow us to make an identification.

The results should be posted to the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia at Box 3428 GPO Sydney NSW 2001, together with the address and postcode of the observer.

If you would like a copy of the results of the bird count, send also a stamped addressed envelope.

Vincent Serventy

 * **SUBSCRIPTIONS** are now due. If *
 * you haven't already sent your *
 * sub, NOW is the time to do it. *
