



toowoomba bird club

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

NEWSLETTER No. 134 FEBRUARY 1987

FIELD DAY for "FEBRUARY"

Date: SUNDAY, MARCH 1st PLEASE NOTE THE DATE!
Place: Moreton Bay coastal areas
Assembly Point: McDonnell & East car park
Time: 7.15 am assembly
Bus departs at 7.30 am SHARP
Leader: Lesley Beaton, Ph 32 6262
RING LESLEY and BOOK YOUR SEAT

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.

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRDS

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249 AUSTRALIAN CRAKE (*Porzana fluminea*)

17.8.86, Spa-Iredale Road, Helidon.
Pat McConnell, Michael Atzeni, Laurie Atzeni, Ian Kennedy.

Two birds were seen on edge of reed bed. Underparts slate-grey; lower abdomen and vent black, barred white; undertail white; upperparts brown prominently flecked white and black; bill pale green; base of upper mandible red-orange; tail flicked regularly.

250 COMMON SANDPIPER (*Tringa hypoleucos*)

18.9.86, Helidon Spa.
Michael Atzeni, Pat McConnell, Lesley Beaton.

Single bird. Upperparts brown-olive; underparts white with brownish clouding on side of breast; faint white eyebrow; distinct white median wingbar seen in flight; characteristic teetering habit observed as well as stiffly held wings when flying.

MIGRANTS RETURN

Stop press! The "Jollybirds" have been sighted again in Withcott!! Welcome back to the founder of the Toowoomba Bird Club, Bill Jolly, and his family who have returned to their old roosting place "Ringmere", Jones Road, Withcott, M.S. 224, Toowoomba 4352, phone 303269, after some years of wandering down south in Tasmania and the A.C.T. They are looking forward to renewing old friendships and to making new ones of the human and feathered varieties. There's no habitat like sunny Queensland, it seems!

Ann Shore

* SUBSCRIPTIONS are overdue. *
* If you aren't already FULLY *
* PAID-UP, please renew NOW. *
* See front page for rates *
* and Club address. *

WATERBIRD HABITAT

It is difficult to believe that it is only a year until the official opening of the Bicentennial Waterbird Habitat. Much has been done, but there is still a great deal to do.

About 1500 trees and shrubs have been planted by citizens of Toowoomba. Members of the Council Parks and Recreation department have watered the trees regularly so that there have been very few losses.

The two observation decks on Aberdeen Street are nearing completion and will soon be open to the public. Meanwhile, the Habitat itself will remain closed. This is to allow the birds time to recognise the area as a haven, without the presence of dogs or humans.

So far, nearly all the birds seen in the former swampy area prior to the reconstruction have returned to

the Habitat, with a number of them breeding - Australasian Grebe, Manded Duck, Black Duck, Golden-headed Cisticola, and Clamorous Reed-Warbler.

Birds that have never been recorded there by our Club are also now being sighted, eg, Great Cormorant, Plumed Whistling-duck, Black-winged Stilt, Black-fronted Plover and Silver Gull to name a few. One can already envisage the many hours of enjoyment our members will have birding at this magnificent spot.

As I mentioned before, there is still more to be done, such as provision of a path, picnic furniture, internal fencing and hides. So far, funds have come from the Toowoomba City Council and the Australian Bicentennial Committee.

The public appeal is being launched this month, calling on Toowoomba citizens to support their bicentennial project and ensure its complete success. The appeal committee is giving a sticker of a Straw-necked Ibis (the emblem of the Habitat) to those that donate between \$1 and \$25, while those who give over \$25 will be given a certificate as well.

Our Bird Club hopes to raise enough money to provide one hide with an information board to help viewers identify some of the more commonly seen birds. In order to do this we have to raise money, and we are calling on all our members to help. Plans are being made to put on a Bush-dance to raise funds.

But we need donations too. Whatever else we do, if the Bird Club consists of genuine bird lovers and watchers, then we must support this project. Hobbies cost money. Pretend you are buying a new lens for your camera, or a new widget for your gadget! Give a generous donation so that our Club can support this project in the manner it deserves.

Send your donation to our Treasurer, NOW!

Lesley Beaton, President

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

Leaden Flycatcher, 6.1.87, Lockyer Sdg, AS
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, 30.1.87, Shorelands, Withcott, AS

Eastern Rosella, 22.12.86 and regularly since, Ringmere, Withcott, WJ,EJ

Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo, 26.12.86, Ringmere, Withcott, WJ,EJ,OJ

Whistling Kite, 22.12.86, Ringmere, Withcott, WJ,EJ

Cicadabird (2), 11.1.87, Ringmere, Withcott, EJ

Plumed Whistling-duck (12), in residence, Jan.87, Ringmere, Withcott, WJ,EJ

EJ Eileen Jolly WJ Bill Jolly
OJ Owen Jolly AS Ann Shore

QUIZZICAL'S QUIZ and your BEST BIRD TREE aren't appearing in this issue, due partly to lack of space! So there is still time for knowledgeable (and guessable) birdos to send in their answers to January's quiz. And what about your best bird tree? (See December's issue.) Articles on this and other bird subjects are requested.

The first Bird-walk for the year was well attended with thirteen members - a little unexpected because of the hot, dry weather. Alison and Lance Box were welcomed to their first birdwatching outing.

At Jubilee Park, some members were interested in finding out about the Bridge Street entrance to Redwood Park, as well as that of Jubilee.

Jubilee Park produced the birds of the day - **Red-backed Wren, Brown Cuckoo-dove and Spangled Drongo.**

As numbers of birds were low, we went on to Picnic Point, where, apart from the usual birds seen there, most members had good views of both of our Toowoomba **Pardalotes.**

Jane and Angela finished the day at the Waterbird Habitat, where we had good views of the **Clamorous Reed-warbler.**

Angela Kilmartin

At Jubilee Park & Picnic Point: 21 species

At Waterbird Habitat: 10 species. Total 31 species.

The full species list is held by the Records Officer.

FAST FOOD!

While we were travelling west of Dalby the other day, our car disturbed a small flock of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos feeding by the side of the road.

One of them packed his lunch before taking off on his flight - he carried off in his claws a full sunflower head with about thirty centimetres of stalk!

THE JOKE'S ON US

Diana Beal

There's not much to laugh at in politics or conservation, but sometimes it seems that the most humorous fact to emerge from the conservation battle is that nature has bestowed on us enough intelligence to invent technology but has withheld the bit extra we need to develop a socio-political system that will apply our technology in such a way that we will not need to destroy our environment to satisfy our material needs.

After all, we have had social systems (what some fondly call civilization) since long before we had technology, yet our technological development has outstripped our development of a workable system of survival, as a race, without destroying our Good Green Earth.

One sad aspect of the sort of political thinking that is leading us to the big crisis of racial survival is evident in the quotation attributed to Sir Robert Sparkes (State President of the National Party). When predicting that the Federal Government intended to nominate our State's rainforest for World Heritage listing, Sir Robert is reported to have said, "Queensland will be a certain target because of its policies of balancing development and conservation against those who believe every tree is some sort of sacred ecological site."

Read that quotation again, for it must be one of the sorriest things to appear in print over the recent holiday period.

Rainforest is quite simply irreplaceable. There can be no "development" (in Sir Robert's interpretation) of rainforest. With all our technological advances we cannot propagate rainforest. It is not a renewable resource. We can plant pine plantations for harvest later, then replant them. If we apply ourselves we can replace the Eucalypt forests we destroy, although of course, this would require many years. But we are quite unable to duplicate the conditions which give rise to rainforest.

Scientific evidence now seems to indicate that the Eucalypt and Acacia bush which we all associate with Australia may have sprung from rainforest, and therefore rainforest is the precursor of our Australian biota. Rainforest is our richest storehouse of plant and animal communities. Haven't you walked through rainforest and experienced the feeling that you were somehow in the midst of something primordial? I know I have, and I suggest that any sensitive birder has.

Yet in our bumbling system of management, the power to destroy such a priceless, primeval heritage has descended into the hands of politicians such as Sir Robert Sparkes. With their inability to see beyond the next election, such people allow bulldozers into Cape Tribulation for roads, or other tracts of rainforest for timber, or land clearing for agriculture.

In fact, when dealing with rainforest, EVERY TREE IS A SACRED ECOLOGICAL SITE. But the little people who can spell 'progress' only with vertical strokes through the last two letters, will destroy it, if we allow them.

What good is it for men to walk on the moon, when in the foreseeable future, we will not walk on the earth?

Ron Hopkinson

HOBBY & CRAFT SHOW - 20-22 FEB

This is at the new Toowoomba Showgrounds in Glenvale Road. Our Club is taking part again, combining with the Toowoomba Field Naturalists Club and Greenwatch in promoting the Waterbird Habitat.

If you can help man our part of the stall, please arrange a time by phoning Lesley (32 6262). Otherwise, be sure to visit!

WILDLIFE in the LUCERNE

Irrigated lucerne paddocks are cut every five or six weeks during the period from September to May, and somewhat less frequently during the remaining colder period. So you would not think wildlife would find these paddocks very salubrious residences.

However, this is not so. I, as a lucerne hay-maker, am continually astounded at the quantity and variety of wildlife which emerges as I drive round and round cutting the crop.

Usually the first to emerge are Stubble Quail. They either run through the crop away from the cutter or emerge (or explode) upwards with rapid wingbeats to drop sharply a little distance away in an uncut portion of the crop.

Driving a tractor round and round in ever-decreasing circles can be a very boring job. But the need to look out for small animals does add some interest to the task. Often the top of the crop waving in front of the cutter is the only indication of an animal's being present and in danger. Young animals are especially at risk. A sighting of a movement could mean quail, hares, ducks or bushlarks. A little care on the part of the tractor driver by slowing down at the appropriate moment can save the lives of these young animals.

Young hares are especially in danger for they tend to freeze rather than run. Hares are precocious animals, unlike rabbits; the young are born under a bush virtually "ready to go". Rabbits, on the other hand, are born pink and helpless and as well-concealed as possible in burrows. Baby hares are beautiful animals, perfect miniatures. A tiny hare, as big as a tea-cup, will sit shivering in your hand as you carry it to safety at the edge of the crop.

Singing bushlarks also tend to freeze but as the danger draws nearer will fly up in a fluttery, rather inefficient-looking manner, before dropping down again a short distance away.

Snakes are common inhabitants of lucerne crops and have the rather unfortunate habit of sticking their heads up in the air while keeping their bodies still. The tractor driver has little chance of seeing them to avoid them and usually only becomes aware of their presence on the next time around when the slowly flickering body with a two-inch section of neatly severed head next to it comes into view.

Black duck often nest in lucerne crops and indeed can nest in crops a surprising distance from water. I always cut around the section where the nest is and leave that area undisturbed. It does not do any good, however, as any such nests have never yet come to successful fruition. Every time the eggs are found, usually that same night, by a fox. The bush-craft of the fox is to be admired.

Foxes, too, regularly emerge from lucerne. Usually there is no indication of their presence until the crop has been cut right to the very centre. Then the fox will emerge and explode away in a flash of red to the nearest cover.

After the cutter has passed and the cut lucerne is thrown out behind the machine in a windrow, another group of birds soon gather.

Magpies, those most successful birds in contemporary Australia, arrive to peer quizzically among the cut stems for insects and small animals thus exposed. In one of our paddocks a family appeared regularly to feed, and one of the young was a beautiful rusty-auburn colour rather than the more usual light and mottled grey.

Torresian crows often appear in very large numbers. They fly around after the tractor instead of settling in one area as do the magpies. I have counted up to 40 crows at one time wheeling and squabbling, all wanting to be first to an unfortunate snake or hare.

Once the tractor has left the paddock, the Masked Lapwings appear. A pair regularly arrive to examine the paddock just as I am driving away home.

The hay takes about 4 days to cure and is baled and carted away. Irrigation pipes are then set out and irrigation takes place over the next five to eight days. A new set of birds arrive to feed as the irrigation marches steadily across the paddock, leaving lovely wet areas teeming with insect life.

Straw-necked Ibis (up to 30 in number) and Sacred Ibis (usually 5 to 10 birds) arrive and feed as a cohesive group. The ground where they have been feeding is a mass of pock-marks where they have pushed their bills into the ground to feed.

A single stately White-faced Heron often stands aloof watching the army of ibis.

Echidnas love to fossick in lucerne which has been grazed and has plenty of hard cowpats in it. They flip the cowpats up to get at ants and larvae underneath, and in doing so, do farmers a great service, for this loosening of the cowpat from its adherence to the ground allows the plants to shoot, where otherwise they would have been defeated by the hard-stuck cowpat.

While evidence of echidnas' presence is often very obvious, they are seldom seen by the lucerne cutter as they prefer dull days or dusk to come out to fossick, and it is a brave (or foolish) haymaker who ignores the old adage - "Make hay while the sun shines"!

Diana Beal

FUTURE OUTING DATES

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

"FEBRUARY" WADER OUTING

The date is MARCH 1st

See January's newsletter for details of what birds we hope (expect?) to see.

As we are hiring a Mini-bus, it is important that you BOOK YOUR SEAT on it, as early as possible. Ring Lesley to do this.

Rod Hobson, one of our Club members, will be our guide and mentor. He says some of the good haunts around the Wynnum and Thornside areas could produce the best waders.

LAKE BROADWATER CAMP-OUT - March 28-29

The Lake Broadwater Natural History Association is organising the Camp-out at the Lake, and has invited members of our Club, along with other clubs with similar interests, to take part.

Some campsites have been reserved for our members, and we can either camp for the weekend, or go for the day on the Sunday, which coincides with National Parks Day. The Ranger's house is the place to meet. Further details in the March Newsletter.