



# toowoomba bird club

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

NEWSLETTER No. 135 MARCH 1987

FIELD OUTING for MARCH

Date: Saturday-Sunday, March 28-29  
Place: Lake Broadwater, south of Dalby  
Assembly Point: Ranger's House at the Lake  
Time: Organised programme by Natural  
History Association begins at 10 am Saturday  
Our Leader: Lesley Beaton  
See further details on Page 4

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.

251 RED-CAPPED PLOVER

(*Charadrius ruficapillus*)

20.9.86, Hood's Lagoon, Helidon.  
Lesley Beaton, John Ball

A pair seen roosting at the water's edge from a distance, they were very pale and much smaller than the more common Black-fronted Plover. On closer examination, the pale brown back and rufous-red crown on the male were clearly visible. A black line went through the eye and continued down onto the shoulder, separating the pale brown from the pure white breast, abdomen and flanks. The female was paler, with no rufous. They stayed around long enough to be seen by about four members.

252 GULL-BILLED TERN (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)

29.12.86, Hood's Lagoon, Helidon.  
Michael Atzeni, Pat McConnell.

Single bird. Large, generally white tern with pale grey wings; full black cap extending to bill; stout black bill.

253 SPOTTED NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus guttatus*)

1.2.87, "Ringmere", Jones Road, Withcott.  
Bill Jolly, Eileen Jolly

Description: Between a Dollarbird and Galah in overall size, but typical long-winged nightjar outline. No identifying colours or patterns other than a white patch on each wing.

Behaviour: Appeared at tree-top height at dusk (7.15 pm), apparently hawking. Twisting in flight and making sudden changes in direction. Remained in view for only 15-20 seconds. Made no sound.

Habitat: The bird came from lightly timbered country, mostly grey gums, spotted gums and ironbark, into an area of mature native trees surrounding a dam.

Conditions of observation: Dusk; dark below tree-top height, but a light background above. The bird appeared at a distance of approximately 30 metres, above the trees, and closed to about 15 metres. No binoculars were used.

Related experience: We have recorded White-throated Nightjars (*C. mystacalis*) on this property in the past. Both observers are familiar with several other nightjar species, in Australia and overseas.

Key to identification: The bird was clearly a nightjar in size, shape and habit. The only Australian nightjars with light wing patches are:

- (a) the White-tailed Nightjar (*C. macrurus*), which occupies a quite different habitat, does not occur south of Gin Gin, and shows white in the tail; and
- (b) the Spotted Nightjar, which is at the eastern end of its range in this area.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

Red-necked Avocet (4), 8.2.87, Helidon Spa and (30+) 22.2.87, Hood's Lagoon, LB, JB  
Common Sandpiper, 15.2.87, Helidon Spa, LB  
Latham's Snipe (5), 22.2.87, Helidon Spa, LB, JB  
Brown Falcon, 22.2.87, Hood's Lagoon, LB

Brush Turkey, 1.2.87, Redwood Park EJ, OJ  
Collared Sparrowhawk, 18.2.87, Ringmere Jones Road, Withcott, EJ, WJ (Initial in hot pursuit of a Common Mynah)  
Red-necked Avocet (4), Helidon Spa, EJ, OJ, WJ and (40) 26.2.87, Helidon Spa, EJ, WJ

JB John Ball EJ Eileen Jolly  
LB Lesley Beaton OJ Owen Jolly  
WJ Bill Jolly

QUIZZICAL'S QUIZ No. 7

What is the principal method of attack of each of the following insectivorous birds?

- P = Pouncing, downwards onto insects
- PR = Probing/prising
- GL = Gleaning - moving ground litter and soil away with beak and feet to expose insects
- S = Snatching from distance up to 2 feet away, usually at insects above the bird
- H = Hawking - catching flying insects

	P	PR	GL	S	H
Fan-tailed Cuckoo					
White's Thrush					
White-winged Cough					
White-browed Scrubwren					
Superb Fairy-wren					.k
Rufous Fantail					
Satin Flycatcher					
Grey Fantail					
Rose Robin					
Australian Magpie					
Golden Whistler					
Eastern Yellow Robin					
Eastern Whipbird					
Spotted Pardalote					
Varied Sittella					
Superb Lyrebird					

In April's Newsletter percentages of each method observed in one research project will be given. But try yourself out before then. And spare a thought for your Editor who had to keep answering until she got them all right!

MY BEST BIRD TREE

My best bird tree last month was not, as you would suppose, a beautiful flowering tree with spectacular blooms, buzzing bees and myriad honeyeaters. It was a rather dull, solemn-looking kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus*).

It was a blisteringly hot day. The sun blazed down and not a wisp of wind stirred the leaves of the kurrajong which were a tatty green-brown as the drought had held the country in its claws for several months.

I went over to the kurrajong - the lone tree in a paddock of bare brown earth. It exploded with cacophonous squawks and screeches.

Out flew squadrons of various bird species - first the grey and pink Galahs, then the Currawongs. The Magpies followed and then the Magpie-larks. Two Black-shouldered Kites accompanied the last of the exodus - a wing of Zebra Finches.

Diana Beal

## WHAT IS THIS BIRD ?

Of course (!) we all instantly recognise it as the Great Frigatebird, having no doubt seen it out at sea from the coasts of northern Australia many times!

But - where does it nest? Not on Australian shores..... Read on.....



116. Imperial Pigeon

## MY FAVOURITE TREE

There are **Kookaburras** laughing in the Norfolk Island Pine  
Where yesterday four **Maggies** perched to sing.  
Another day, the **Parrots** come to squawk and fly up there,  
As in the branches upside down they swing.

In autumn, it's the **Bluejays** who find a branch so high  
On which to sit just making their sad call.  
I talk to them to cheer them up, so dismal they all sound,  
While all about me autumn leaves do fall.

And sometimes on the very top a **Butcherbird** will sit,  
And fill the air with notes so pure and clear.  
The **Crows** will come, with raucous calls;  
they aren't allowed to stay,  
Or **Currawongs**, who fill small birds with fear.

And in the spring so many birds will come to rest awhile,  
Some that we know and others are quite new.  
They sit and chirp, then they're away;  
They call to say, "We're only passing through".

The **Sparrows** and the **Honeyeaters** perch much lower down,  
The tree has grown too high for me to measure,  
But every day some birds will come and sit to view the town,  
This tree has given all of us much pleasure.

Elaine Box

(Editor's note: Elaine says that this tree was given to her by her son when he was little, and she wrote these verses for his children, Steven, 7 years, and Annette, 5 years.)

## CHANGES at "SHORELANDS", WITHCOTT

In a small area that not so long ago was mostly open farming country but is now becoming closely settled with garden plants, shrubs and young trees, many changes are taking place bringing an increase in nectar-bearing flowers and insects of all sorts, and also a change in the bird population.

Almost gone are the **Pipits** and **Bushlarks**, the **Zebra Finches** and the **Masked Lapwings**. **Straw-necked Ibis** and **Herons** are seen but seldom or only after we have had good rains. Also I notice sadly the absence of the once common **Black-shouldered Kites** and **Australian Kestrels**.

Instead we see more bush birds - the **Brown and Striped Honeyeaters** and, just once, the **Eastern Spinebill**. The **Little and**, in spring, the **Noisy Friarbirds**, the **Superb Fairy-wren**, the **White-throated Gerygone** and the **Scaly-breasted Lorikeets** are common visitors now.

At present, when Withcott, at the foot of the Range, looks more like a desert, even more of the bush birds are coming into the garden, searching for insects, etc, among the shrubs and watered plants which provide little oases of greenery. Very early in the mornings I regularly hear the **Lewin's Honeyeater**; at other times see little parties of **Double-barr'd Finches** and twice recently a pair of **White-throated Scrubwrens** were busy in a thicket as I gardened nearby.

However, most of all it is the **Fairy-wrens** which I love to see close around the house at all hours of the day. A little family group comes foraging along, in and out of the hibiscus and callistemon by my kitchen window. They hop jauntily over the grass among the roses or ground cover plants in their hunt for tasty morsels, or pause awhile to preen or sing a merry trilling song. These sorts of quiet observations make bird-watching a never-ending pleasure.

Ann Shore

## HOBBY &amp; CRAFT SPECTACULAR 1987

The theme of the stand our Club shared with Green Watch and the Toowoomba Field Naturalists Club was the fund-raising appeal for the **Bi-centennial Waterbird Habitat**.

The display consisted of a very large mural of the Habitat, hand-drawn and painted by volunteers from the groups, together with ten aquaria containing appropriate pondlife, plus photos, posters and general information relating to the Habitat.

Members of the three clubs were on hand to explain and promote the Habitat and to appeal to the public for funds to complete the development including construction of the pathways, the feeding platform, picnic tables and hide, etc. Those giving donations of \$1 or more were given a sticker depicting the Ibis

logo, and those giving \$25 will receive a certificate<sup>4</sup> signed by the Mayor. Approximately \$650 was raised over the weekend. Much interest was shown in our scrapbook of newspaper cuttings on the Habitat collected over the years.

Ann Shore

As you know our Bird Club is soliciting donations towards our Club's specific gift to the Habitat. The suggestion is that our contribution be used to provide identification diagrams of many of the birds of the Habitat. Our Treasurer Lyn Rowan says we have received \$140 so far for this.

Editor

## ANSWERS to QUIZZICAL'S QUIZ No.6

Remember the Quiz in January's Newsletter on foraging behaviour? You may not have sent in your answers, but perhaps you had a shot at the questions. Here are the answers. Did you get them nearly all right?

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	BT	Crimson Rosella	C
Gang-gang Cockatoo	C	Red Wattlebird	F
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	L	Grey Fantail	A
Eastern Spinebill	F	Satin Flycatcher	A
Dusky Woodswallow	A	Rose Robin	L
White-eared Honeyeater	BL	Varied Sitella	BB
Crested Shrike-tit	BL	Golden Whistler	L
White-naped Honeyeater	L	Silvereye	L
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	L	Rufous Whistler	L

## CHRISTMAS ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

### Letter from Prime Minister

Remember about two years ago, our Club and many of our members wrote to the Prime Minister and to the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, not only supporting the proposal to extend the National Park on Christmas Island, but also asking that other significant areas be included in the Park.

These other areas included the breeding habitat of a rare bird, the **Christmas Island Frigatebird** (of which there are about 1600 pairs), and also an area of raised freshwater mangroves where the endemic **Christmas Island Fruit Bat** has its major breeding sites.

Our Club's Conservation Committee has continued writing to the Commonwealth government on this matter, and now Angela has received the Prime Minister's assurance that the phosphate mining will not be going ahead with further development when their present sites are exhausted. Further, that the Minister for Territories is at present considering the possible establishment of a scientific research centre on Christmas Island.

The extended Park areas include nesting grounds used by **Great Frigatebirds**, **Red-footed** and **Brown Boobies**,

**White-tailed** and **Red-tailed Tropicbirds** and **Common Noddies**, as well as by **marine turtles**.

This tiny (25 x 20 km) Australian territory in the Indian Ocean south of Java has **eleven endemic breeding birds**. There is great potential for development of a tourist industry not only for 'greenies' but for other tourists interested in beautiful scenery.

The territory itself recognises its unique avian fauna with some of its stamps, copies of which Kev Kilmartin has kindly lent us.



128. Abbott's Booby



123. Christmas Island Frigatebird

**DIARY OF BIRD EVENTS** This RAOU publication held by our Secretary Ann, details bird-watching events elsewhere in Australia. If you are going on a holiday, check with Ann to see which outings you can join.

### CAMPOUT - MARCH 28-29

The Lake Broadwater Natural History Association has sent us a copy of their programme for the National Parks Day 1987 at the Lake.

Our Toowoomba Bird Club members may go for the weekend - we have campsites reserved - or for any part. The official programme is listed below, but of course we are free to go off on birding jaunts as we wish.

#### Saturday, March 28

10 am to 12 Welcome arrivals, register, etc.

12 to 1 pm Lunch

1.30 pm Park inspection, including walks

5.30 - 6.30 Barbecue at camp area

7 pm - 8.30 At Hall at recreation area

Slides of National Parks of S. Inland

Talk on Aboriginals of Lake Broadwater

Slides of Lake Broadwater Park development

Slides and talk on reptiles of the area

8.30 pm Spot lighting with Park Ranger Vic Wood

#### Sunday 29 March

6 am Birdwatching activity

9.30 am Meeting of Natural History Assoc., National Parks Assoc and Nat. Parks & Wildlife Serv. to discuss activities of 1986 and proposals for 1987. All welcome, at the Hall.

12 noon Official opening of Camping Ground.

What to take: Food (or shop in Dalby), drinking water, insect repellent, chairs, camping gear, etc.

Ring Lesley (326262) if you have further queries.

### FUTURE OUTING DATES

April 26	Toowoomba region
May 24	Cooby Creek and Dam
June 28	Ma Ma Creek