

## toowoomba bird club

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

### NEWSLETTER No.137 MAY 1987

#### FIELD OUTING for MAY

Date	Sunday, May 24
Place:	Cooby Creek and Dam
Assembly Point:	McDonnell & East car park
Time:	7.15 am for departure 7.30 am SHARP
Leader:	Gloria Glass

#### 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.

## ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

The University of Queensland has published its "Continuing Education" booklet for 1987, and it gives details of a number of short courses which may be of interest to some of our members:

### Natural Environment

#### ► Field study of Brisbane's wildlife ecology

Mr G. Smith, Dr C. Catterall

Weekend 17-18 October

Saturday 2.00 - 8.00 pm

Sunday 6.00 - 9.00 am

This course investigates the field ecology of animals. It provides an opportunity for you to see and handle some of Brisbane's fauna and to compare the wildlife of rainforest and sclerophyll forest. You will become familiar with the equipment used to catch insects, birds and mammals (e.g. insect sweep nets, pitfall and light traps, mist nets, Elliott traps and spotlighting) and techniques of identification, aging and sexing individuals. You will see how data collected can be used in the scientific comparison of two areas. The field trip will be conducted at a forest location close to Brisbane. \$70.00, concession \$53.00

Limit 35

#### ► Moreton Bay — enriching the riches

Dr I.R. Tibbetts

Wednesdays 22 April - 6 May

6.30 - 9.30 pm

Optional field excursion - Weekend 9-10 May

Moreton Bay — used by yachtsmen, birdwatchers and boaters is an attraction in the tourist industry. We will examine the natural history of the bay: from its geological creation to the earliest human influence, the impact of European settlement and the progressive urbanization and industrialization that threatens its production base, and the future preservation of the bay through prudent management. This program is designed to cater for people with a financial interest in the bay's future or those who are concerned with the conservation of this aesthetic and economic resource. An optional field trip to some of the attractions of Moreton Bay will take place at a separate cost.

\$70.00 (no concession)

### Residential Schools

#### Reef and Rainforest

Cairns — the tropical north

Sunday 21 June to Friday 26 June 1987

Sunday 28 June to Friday 3 July 1987

Sunday 15 November to Friday 20 November 1987

This course is based on Queensland's most northerly city

The course leaders will use these trips to introduce the history, geology, flora and fauna and human geography of Australia's tropical north to course participants.

\$605.00

#### Reef ecology

##### ► The Great Barrier Reef

Sunday 5 July to Friday 10 July 1987

Sunday 19 July to Friday 24 July 1987

Sunday 22 November to Friday 27 November 1987

Sunday 5 December to Friday 11 December 1987

The Great Barrier Reef is experienced firsthand throughout this course. The course location is Lady Elliot Island. The course is intended to develop among the participants knowledge of the reef, its formation, biology, botany and management. Other aspects involve the study of the birds of the reef and the teeming, colourful fishes.

\$670.00 (ex Bundaberg)

Limited enrolment

For further information, write to or phone  
University of Queensland

For further information, write to -  
University of Queensland  
School of External Studies and  
Continuing Education  
St Lucia 4067 (Phone 07 377 4377)

The Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education has a "Continuing Education" course, which Diana Beal and I found

2 stimulating and informative last year:

The Identification of Queensland Flowering Plants

12 weeks, but you can take your own time, plus a weekend field study

Cost about \$70

For further information, apply to DDIAE, Toowoomba, 4350.

Gloria Glass

### ANSWERS to QUIZZICAL'S QUIZ No.7

We had to give the principal method of attack of each of the following insectivorous birds where:

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	86				
White's Thrush		76	23		
White-winged Cough		70	30		
White-browed Scrubwren			97		
Superb Fairy-wren			92		
Rufous Fantail				30	54
Satin Flycatcher				36	60
Grey Fantail					78
Rose Robin				59	26
Australian Magpie		43	56		
Golden Whistler				71	
Eastern Yellow Robin	75				
Eastern Whipbird		34	64		
Spotted Pardalote			85		
Varied Sittella			99		
Superb Lyrebird		100			

### ANSWERS to Quizzical's Quiz No.8

The question was -

What is the most often eaten food of these insectivorous birds?

and the answers are -

	Beetles	Flies	Larvae	Ants	Lizards
Shining Bronze-cuckoo			XX		
Sacred Kingfisher	X				X
Scarlet Robin	X			X	
Eastern Yellow Robin	X		X	XX	
Rufous Whistler	XX		XX	X	
Superb Fairywren	X	X		XX	
Speckled Warbler	XX			X	
Buff-rumped Thornbill	XX	X		XX	
Striated Thornbill	XX	X	X		
Sitella	XX	X	XX	X	
Fuscous Honeyeater	X				XX
Eastern Spinebill			XX		
Dusky Woodswallow	XX				X

XX major food; X often eaten

Are you surprised, as I was, at the number of birds that prefer to eat ANTS! Dare we direct a question to Quizzical as to just how the birds deal with the rather nasty taste?

The Superb Fairy-wrens which so delighted us with their daily presence close to the house recently, finally let us into their secret. They had nested in the Callistemon only a few yards from the window - a tiny frail-looking nest in the topmost thicket of the bush. No wonder they never left the area!

We observed their comings and goings in great detail and then watched the first attempts at flight by the still almost tail-less downy feathered babies when they duly emerged and fluttered about begging for food or sat quietly to be preened by a parent or sibling.

The family stayed around for ten days or so, the babies growing at a prodigious rate. Not surprising really, as all the five adults scoured the nearby garden for suitable baby food, gradually going further afield as the young ones' mobility increased. Now they just return at intervals.

I noted before that we had seldom seen the Zebra Finches lately. Suddenly they are back. Little flocks, often with Double-bars, foraging for seed wherever the whiskery grass has grown - more Zebras than we have seen here for some years. More Double-bars too. Presumably another direct result of the droughty conditions.

Ann Shore

APRIL FIELD OUTING - 26 April 1987  
SECTORS 1 and 2

It was a cold, miserable morning and only one car was awaiting me as I turned into the car park - Ann and John Shore. Three cars set off for the new Toowoomba Showground just after 7.30 am where three more people enlarged the small party.

Glenvale was very blustery, and although there was a little activity on the water - Little Pied Cormorant, Wood Duck, Grey Teal and Black-fronted Dotterel - there were no bush birds seen at all.

We moved on to Kath Blackburn's property on Euston Road where we followed a gully through which Spring Creek winds. Here it was far more sheltered and the birds were making the most of it. We got a great view of a Striped Honeyeater and a White-throated Gerygone (Warbler).

Morning tea was held in the cosy verandah of Kath's place, in the sunshine and out of the wind. A couple of the group departed, while the others went to find the Tawny Grassbird in Drews Road.

Though the Grassbird remained elusive a Pacific Heron was sighted.

Only two cars continued on to Wellcamp, Westbrook and Wyrema, eventually arriving at Lions Park on the New England Highway for lunch.

Members present: Lesley Beaton, Kath Blackburn, Elaine and Lois Cobb, Nancy and Ron Gooding, Ann and John Shore.

Species List: Held by our Records Officer.  
Lesley Beaton

**Help Wanted**

REQUEST FOR ROBIN RECORDS

I am currently studying the behavioural ecology of red-breasted robins in south-eastern Australia. So far, I have not managed to collect much information about their behaviour during the winter months and would welcome information on the following: 1. Sites where Scarlet and Red-capped Robins are present only during the winter months; 2. Records of Flame Robins in the high country during winter - if so, when, what sex, and how many; 3. The flocking behaviour of Scarlet and Red-capped Robins during winter - Do they always occur singly or in pairs, or groups?

Please write to Doug Robinson, Department of Zoology, Monash University, Clayton, Vic. 3168.

LIBRARY

A copy of "The Forests of East Gippsland" was sent to our Club by the East Gippsland Coalition with thanks for the \$60 donated by Club members.

It has photographs of the animals and vegetation in these forests, and illustrates just how great a loss it would be if logging were extended into these areas.

Nancy Belcher, Librarian

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

Australian Hobby, 14.5.87, Gowrie Jct, DB, EB, GG  
Wedge-tailed Eagle (5), 15.4.87, Iredale, AS, JS  
Rose Robin (1st for season), 22.4.87, Blanchview, AS  
Tawny Grassbird, 11.4.87, Waterbird Habitat, LB  
Crested Shrike-tit (2), 12 & 14.4.87, Helidon Dip, LB, JB  
Fuscous Honeyeaters, 14.4.87, Helidon Dip, LB, JB

JB John Ball	GG Gloria Glass
LB Lesley Beaton	AS Ann Shore
DB Diana Beal	JS John Shore
EB Enid Beal	

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY - SUNDAY 31 MAY

This is a gathering of all clubs and groups interested in the environment, and this year is entitled "URBAN SPACES - PEOPLE PLACES".

It is on at Lake Annand, 10 am to 3 pm, and our Club will have a presence there.

BIRD-WATCHING near CHARTERS TOWERS

On a recent two week visit to Mirtna Station, in semi-desert country just east of the Darkie Range, south-south-west of Charters Towers, Ron enjoyed good bird watching, seeing several new varieties for him.

A pair of Crested Bellbirds, seen in a dead bauhinia, most impressed him. Both were striking birds, but the male, which postured and raised his crest, was spectacular.

Singing Honeyeaters were fairly common through the whole area, but with them, on two occasions, in a dry watercourse area, a flock of Grey-headed Honeyeaters was definitely identified. Though the books don't show them as being in this area, it must be remembered this is very remote country, with homesteads forty to sixty kilometres apart. A large flock of White-rumped Miners, possibly forty, was seen to pass the camp one morning, but was not seen again.

None of the Finches was plentiful, but Plum-headed and Zebra were seen, and a Diamond Firetail, which isn't supposed to extend into that area. We saw a big flock of Black-throated Finches in the same general area several years ago.

Pied and Grey Butcherbirds, Willy Wagtails and Peaceful Doves were found anywhere, though watering points would have been eight to ten kilometres away. Small flocks of Squatter Pigeons were seen closer to water, as was the occasional Maggie and Torresian Crow. Little and Black-faced Woodswallows were fairly common.

A resident flock of Galahas lived around the homestead, but they are unusual in this area. One pair of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, a couple of pairs of Sulphur-crested, and some Red-winged Parrots were seen. Pale-headed Rosellas were fairly plentiful close to water in the slightly better country, not in the desert country.

This area would not have been frequented by bird watchers as it is so inaccessible. In a good season Lake Buchanan would afford good watching, but when Ron visited it this time, it was completely dry and covered with a salt crust, as it is much of the time.

Nancy Gooding

COOBY CREEK Picnic Area and Dam

The dam is one of the nearby areas to Toowoomba where Great Crested and Hoary-headed Grebes and Musk Duck have been seen on past outings. No promises, but! We will go to the picnic area first, to get the best "bush birding" there before too many picnickers arrive, and later do some scouting around the dam, especially the flooded creek beside the entrance road.

COOBY CREEK - THE ROCKS

Apart from the Great Crested Grebes and Musk Ducks, the most exciting thing to be seen at Cooby is the obviously dense rock of the spillway. This is none other than the famous black basalt, the Gomaren Basalt, a volcanic rock of the Miocene Period. (The Miocene extended from 25 million to 7 million years ago.) Gomaren Creek flows from the north-east into Cooby Creek about eight kilometres downstream from the Dam.

Toowoomba and surrounding areas are rich in interesting volcanic rocks. There are broadly three groups of volcanic rocks based on the depth at which the molten magma ("lava") cooled.

So what! you say. Well, the depth at which cooling occurred determined the time taken for cooling, and this in turn determined whether the crystals in the rocks were large or small.

Plutonic rocks cooled at great depths, and thus large crystals were able to form. Granite is a notable example. I'm sure all of you would have noticed the large crystals of granite boulders in creek beds or the beautiful coarse grain of polished granite headstones. Erosion typically produces large rounded boulders of granite, such as we have all seen at Crows Nest Falls and on the Granite Belt. But there is no granite at Cooby!

Hypabyssal igneous (igneo = fire) rocks cooled at medium depth and have medium-sized crystals. Dolerite or "blue metal" is an example. The crystals can be seen with a hand lens. Again, there aren't any hypabyssal igneous rocks at Cooby!

Extrusive rocks cooled at the surface. When the molten magma was exposed to the air, it cooled much more rapidly than would underground flows, and the mineral crystals are very small. Some are so small that they are hard to see even with a microscope, and the rock has a glassy appearance. Basalt and trachyte are examples. BOTH occur at Cooby.

The Gomaren Basalt of the dam spillway at Cooby has a hard, glassy, black appearance, and while it has a similar structure to the basalt at the Harlaxton Quarry, it is much darker. It is believed to have erupted from a vent a few hundred metres downstream from the Dam.

The hills above the Dam are topped with Cooby Trachyte which flowed over the older rocks. Trachyte is a fine-grained brownish rock; probably the most famous examples of this rock in Queensland are the Glass-house Mountains.

The older rocks at Cooby are sedimentary rocks, sandstones laid down in the Jurassic Period (180 million to 135 million years ago). The deposition and subsequent erosion of the lava flows occurred unevenly so that underlying sandstones are often exposed. This is the case at Cooby.

We can see the sandstone exposed at the edge of the road down the final descent to the picnic grounds. Of course, cutting a gash in a hill during road-making operations imitates natural erosion and speeds up exposure of underlying rocks by several million years - a boon to the amateur geologist!

Diana Beal

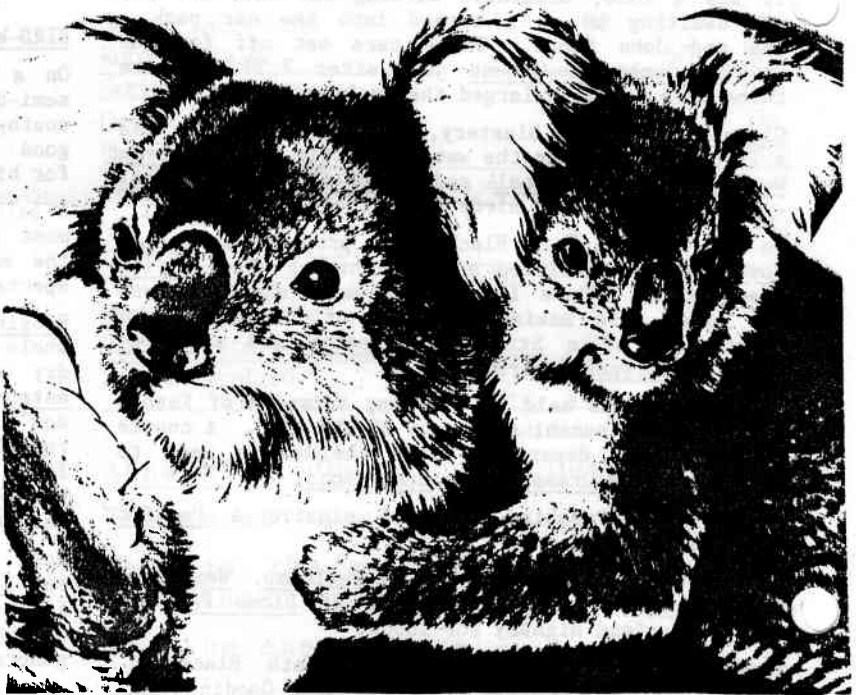
Our August camp is to be on the banks of the Balonne River on a station called "Pialaway", just downstream from the confluence of Dogwood Creek with the Balonne.

"Pialaway" was cut off "Warkon", one of the well-known stations of the districts, long associated with the Schwennessen family. "Pialaway" is owned and run by Ennis and Dorinda Schwennessen.

The first recorded incursion of European man in the area was Major Mitchell's party. In 1846 he came from the south up the Culgoa and the Balonne. Leichhardt came the next year from the east, and Gregory came along eleven years later looking for Leichhardt's tracks. Settlement in the area started with the selection of huge runs from 1848 onwards.

The early runs were stocked with cattle and later sheep. Grain growing started in a small way in 1859. These three industries have remained the chief enterprises of the Shire and have waxed and waned in relative importance over the years as the economics of the industries dictated.

Probably the most interesting bird we could see is the Blue-bonnet Parrot, the only light grey-brown backed parrot of rosella size. There are three races of Blue-bonnets, one almost confined to the Nullabor, one of the central arid zone of Australia, and this, the red-bellied form, race haematorrhous, which extends north and east to Mitchell, Condamine and Goondiwindi.



K O A L A S also occur at Cooby !

FUTURE OUTING DATES

- |              |                                 |
|--------------|---------------------------------|
| June 28      | Ma Ma & Heifer Creeks           |
| July 26      | Toowoomba area, SSS month       |
| August 22-23 | Camp, Balonne River             |
| September 27 | Ravensbourne National Park      |
| October 25   | Sector 6, SSS month             |
| November 22  | Goodings' property, Mt Colliery |
| December     | No outing                       |

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

I have resigned the editorship, mainly due to the drought, and the increase in farm work leaving little time for other activities.

Thank you to all those willing contributors during my short time as editor.

Gloria Glass