

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

POSTAL ADDRESS

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

No. 140 AUGUST 1987

QUO VADIS?

It is not because of any particular milestone in Club life that I ask that question. We are not celebrating an anniversary or marking an occasion of special significance, which might lead to contemplation of our directions, or study of our past and present ideals. It simply seemed to me that for members who have joined recently it might be appropriate to look at the Club's aims. Appropriate also for members of longer standing, to suggest ways of obtaining maximum benefit from membership - to examine where the Club is going.

Our Club was born in 1975 of a desire to document the bird life of the Toowoomba region. This was something which, it was felt, existing organisations had not done in depth. Casting about for words which would sum up the Club's aims, the quotation which now forms the base of our masthead was accepted.

So in order "to encourage the observation and study of the birds of the Toowoomba area", this Club instigated a system of monthly checklists. In this system participating members residing in or near Toowoomba are provided with a checklist each month on which to record their sightings in the area. These lists are returned to the Records Officer, who maintains master records for the Local Study Area. This information is published, through the Newsletter, as an Annual Summary.

Information is also gathered from Field Days conducted in the area. Thus we have an information base of individual members' sightings plus the Club trips. It follows, of course, that the more members participate in the scheme the broader will be the spectrum of observations. Thirty members must see more than ten.

If you are seeking an extra direction for your personal birding, I strongly commend to you participation in this scheme. It does not matter one jot if all you see is Starlings or Sparrows - we need to know about them. The monthly Field Days are simply an extra enjoyment for you. By all means attend if you can. The interchange of ideas and observations on such days is of inestimable value to members. However if you cannot be there, but can complete a checklist each month, you are contributing more than would the reverse case.

A longer term goal than the Annual Summary is the project to produce a book dealing with the bird life of this area. Your sightings would be a significant contribution to this.

My membership list currently shows what I would class as thirty-four "possibles". That is thirty-four members who reside in or close to, Toowoomba, who might be able to submit a monthly list. Of that number we despatch twelve lists each month. If your domestic situation precludes your venturing beyond the front gate, it matters not. Just record what you see in your garden. But please, let us know about it.

c/td.

QUO VADIS? C/td

Obviously none of this applies to those members who live distant from Toowoomba. Naturally we value your membership and we hope that the second of the Club's aims, the Newsletter, maintains for you a contact with like-minded people in the Garden City. However, if you are travelling through the area, keep an eye open. You might like to record what you see and pass it on.

Quo Vadis? Come with me along the road of Club records.

Good Birding
Ron Hopkinson

FLIGHT -- THE MECHANICS

Three types of flight are generally recognised; gliding, powered (or flapping), and hovering. However there are variations on the theme, so that it is possible to define different forms of gliding, for example.

We have seen the necessity for air to flow over the wing to create lift. This airflow is gained either by the bird propelling itself forward by flapping the wings, or can be obtained if the air is moving.

The simplest example of gliding would occur if the air was quite still and a bird at rest launched itself from a high rest. By spreading (but not flapping) its wings the bird could utilise the momentum gained from gravity. Instead of falling vertically to ground the bird would descend at a more acute angle. The rate at which the bird loses height is called the rate of sink. The bird would gain some forward distance, depending on the height at which it began, but not many birds would use this method. It is cited here only to remove the complexities - to reduce gliding to its simplest equation.

What is more likely is that the air is moving, relative to the ground. Now the bird has a more efficient airflow which gives better lift. This will enable the bird to travel a greater distance, however if the air is moving parallel to the ground then our bird will still descend to earth. If the air is moving upwards at a rate equal to the rate of sink then the bird will glide level. If the air current is rising at a faster rate the bird will gain height without employing its own energy. Currents of rising air are of two types - obstruction currents and thermals.

Obstruction currents occur when a wind meets a large solid object and is deflected upwards. A line of cliffs, mountains, or large buildings all create obstruction currents, to birds' advantage.

Seabirds utilise obstruction currents when they frequent a line of cliffs. An onshore wind is deflected upwards and the birds are enabled to stay aloft by "riding" in the updraft.

Thermal currents are caused when air is warmed by the earth's surface. The air moves upward and is replaced by cooler air descending. These currents can also be created over large industrial areas, by heat from factories, or other human activities.

Birds of prey exploit thermals to good advantage. A wedge-tailed Eagle can be sighted at low level, and as you watch, will circle and gain so much altitude it becomes barely visible. This is done without flapping a wing, while steering a circle keeps it within the column of warm air. To descend the bird need only steer out of the thermal and the descending cooler air will bring the eagle down, again without a wing flap.

This form of gliding is known as static soaring. Another type is dynamic soaring, employed by pelagic birds. We'll treat this case next time.

Ron Hopkinson

CLUB BRIEFS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The A.G.M. is scheduled for Tuesday, October 13. By courtesy of John and Lesley the venue will be their residence at 15 Dunmore Street. The meeting will commence at 7.30pm.

Hope you can be there.

NEW MEMBER

The Club is pleased to extend a welcome to new student member, Grayson Edwards. We are always keen to gain younger members, because they can continue the Club concept into the future. Details are:

Grayson Edwards
Jones Road
Withcott
M.S. 224, Toowoomba, 4352.

A NIGHT AT THE THEATRE

The Toowoomba Field Naturalist Club is organising a theatre night, as a fund raising venture to boost contributions to the Bicentenary Waterbird Habitat.

On Tuesday, September 8 final year students from D.D.I.A.E. will perform "The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll". Members of Toowoomba Bird Club, and their friends, are invited.

Tickets are priced at \$10 (including supper) and are available from Field Naturalists' Secretary, Elizabeth Russell, P.O. Box 133, Toowoomba. If preferred you may phone 30 1429 or contact Neil McKilligan, D.D.I.A.E.

BIRD - A - THON IN OCTOBER

As a contribution to the Bicentenary Waterbird Habitat our Club has undertaken to provide an information board. This will be sited at a suitable spot in the Park and will furnish visitors with illustrations and information about the species to be seen there. We have raised some money towards the cost but still need to muster some more dollars.

To this end we are planning to conduct a BIRD - A - THON in OCTOBER. This will take place on the fourth Sunday (25th) as a Field Day activity. We need the help of members in one or two ways: to find people who will sponsor them, and to count species on the day. The sponsorship amount per bird will be multiplied by the total number of species recorded. This will arrive at the total amount per sponsor.

The amount per bird need not be large. It is suggested that one, two or five cents per bird would be quite acceptable. If we record one hundred species the total would only be one, two or five dollars. Of course, with a concerted effort the total could be more than one hundred species.

This is also an excellent opportunity to survey all eight sectors of the Local Study Area in the one day: along the lines of the old Annual Census days. However we will only be counting species, not individual birds. The plan is to make up four teams, each responsible for two sectors. The teams will visit their sectors over the day and record species present. Participation can be for part of the day if an all day effort does not suit you. If you have a preference for a particular sector it is possible to include you in the team for that area, if you wish. The sectors are listed below.

A suitable sponsorship form will be included with your Newsletter next month.

Members unable to count species on the day could still help by sponsoring themselves as well as finding a few other sponsors. Of course, members who wish to count AND sponsor themselves are more than welcome.

This idea has great appeal. No-one is asked to dig too deeply and yet between us we could raise a decent number of dollars for the project-- and you get to do some good birding, too!

BE IN IT !!!

SECTORS AND TEAMS FOR B-A-T.

The "A" team will cover sectors one and three. Team leader is Angela Kilmartin. Sector one is the North-western area from the airport to Gowrie Mountain, and Gowrie Junction to Spring Creek. Sector three is the city area from Mt. Kynoch to Alderley Street and Greenwattle Street to Redwood Park.

"B" team will be led by Lesley Beaton and will count in sectors two and four. Sector two takes in Spring Creek to Wyreema and Bunkers Hill to Frayton, while sector four covers the portion from Alderley Street to Hodgsonvale.

Sectors five and seven will be counted by "C" team, with Ann Shore as leader. Sector five takes in Withcott, Blanchview, Postman's Ridge and part of Murphy's Creek Road. Helidon Spa, Hood's lagoon and the northern end of Flagstone Creek road are contained in sector seven.

"D" team leader will be Ron Hopkinson. Sectors six and eight will be counted by the "E's". These portions of the area are formed around Flagstone Creek road from the bottom of the range to Kapernick's bridge. Also included is Silver Ridge plus some side roads.

Most members should have a copy of the area map; if not, contact the Secretary. Ann has spares and will send you one. For more detailed descriptions of the sectors, the sector atlas is available to members participating in the monthly checklist scheme. The Records Officer can help here.

Ron Hopkinson

AUGUST CAMP CANCELLED

The camp-out planned for August 22/23 has been cancelled, due to factors beyond our control. See page four for details of a Sunday Field Day.

SEA-BIRDING EXPEDITION

Interested in exploring some of the uninhabited islands of the Barrier Reef

An expedition to do this and look at the seabird population of such islands is being planned by Bill Lane and Paul Nagle in conjunction with the Australia Bird Study Association. Further detail and application forms are available from the Editor.

FIELD DAY FOR AUGUST

Date: Sunday, August 23. Place: Withcott area. Assembly point: Withcott Hotel car park.
Time: 7.45am Leader: Ann Shore.
This will be a normal full day outing in lieu of the camp. Bring lunch if you wish.

CATS OR BIRDS - OR BOTH ?

The other day I happened to be writing about honeyeaters feeding from low-flowering garden bushes and I finished with: "Beware - the lurking cat !"

It's true: cats and birds don't mix. But, what a problem if you happen to be both a cat and a bird-lover, or if your neighbour has a cat that wanders on to your property! I know it is said that the cat walks alone and owes allegiance to no man. That may be true of feral cats but to many of us the domestic cat provides wonderful companionship both indoors and often outside too - even if it differs in its ways from the dog.

The cat's natural instinct is to hunt, however well-fed, but there are ways in which one can minimize the damage cats do to birds; if both are to inhabit the same small area. First I don't add to temptation by planting low-flowering shrubs that are full of nectar; don't provide too many thickets beloved of small birds seeking nesting sites. Keep your cat in at night and particularly in the early mornings when birds are most vulnerable and, very importantly, make sure your cat is de-sexed. This stops it wandering in search of a mate and so has no chance to spread off-spring about the countryside. Also keep it well-fed. Some people like to "bell" their cat by putting a small bell on a collar. There are plenty of well documented stories about cats decimating whole bird populations, especially where the cats have gone wild. Finally, if you treasure your birds - be ever vigilant.

Ann Shore

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AUSTRALIAN BIRD ENVIRONMENT FUND

In June some Club members met two visitors from interstate, John and Pam Kirtón. John is a past-president of the Bird Observers Club in Victoria and an instigator of the Australian Bird Environment Fund.

John and Pam made a stop in Toowoomba, as part of a trip up the East coast. Ann, Ron and I were anxious to proudly show off the work on the Waterbird Habitat so far. They were very impressed with it all and congratulated Toowoomba on its Bicentennial project.

Both came along to our Ma Ma Creek outing the next day and thoroughly enjoyed themselves, especially with excellent sightings of a pair of Rose Robins.

Meanwhile, the Australian Bird Environment Fund had been in touch with the Executive suggesting we submit an application for a grant to help towards supplying an information board in the Habitat. This we duly did, requesting \$400.

We have now received a reply advising us that a unanimous decision was made to grant the Club the \$400. This means that we already have about \$570 towards the cost of the board, which we hope to instal before Christmas.

What a great benefit it will be for the public and for the Toowoomba Bird Club.

Lesley Beaton

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MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

- Brown Falcon. 3.7.87. St. Ruth - Jondaryan Road. AHS.
- Little Eagle. 3.7.87. Cecil Plains Road. AHS.
- Australian Brush-turkey (3). 1.8.87. Silver Pinch Road. LB. JB.
- Painted Button-quail. 3.7.87. Ashlands Drive (off Old Toowoomba Road, near Spa). LB.

LB: Lesley Beaton. JB: John Ball. AHS: Ann Shore.

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TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB

<u>ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION</u>	<u>ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>NEWSLETTER</u>
Members \$10.00	Field day and meeting -	Published monthly prior to Field day.
Families \$12.00	Fourth Sunday each month.	Contributions are invited and should
Students \$ 5.00	Camping trips.	be mailed to P.O. Box. Deadline is
	Film and slide evenings.	the last day of the month.

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB

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YEAR 1983



KEY:

- = New Toowoomba Bird
- * = Bird List (Club)
- + = Bird List (personal)

HEADINGS:

- A. Bird Species
- B. Localities
- C. Other Topics
- D. Toowoomba Bird Club

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TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB

INDEX TO NEWS-SHEETS Nos. 97 - 108

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