



TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

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"TO ENCOURAGE THE OBSERVATION AND STUDY OF THE BIRDS OF THE TOOWOOMBA AREA"

No. 149 - May 1988

April Outing - North-west Toowoomba 24-4-88

A perfect morning of bird-watching was enjoyed by the nine members who took part in the April outing. The day started well with a Restless Flycatcher in the trees of the SWQEB grounds opposite the cemetery. A marvellous time was spent at the Spring Creek reserve at the end of Euston Road. A pair of Tawny Grassbirds and a flock of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were highlights, while three members spent some time watching the unusual antics of Red-backed Wrens.

The male wren perched on a branch drooping his wings so that his glowing tomato red back was clearly visible. Two female wrens perched close by, preening both themselves and the male. The females would also sit on the male's back.

Morning tea was enjoyed at the picnic tables near the Toowoomba Showgrounds dam. Even though there was a great deal of human and equine activity we still had avian delights with a pair of Pink-eared Ducks and a Black-fronted Dotterel.

There were forty three species seen in all.

Members present: Lesley, Peggie and Roy Beaton, Frank and Nancy Belcher, Ann and John Shore, Keith Treschmann and Barbara Weller.

One of Those Days

It was an overcast Monday when I staggered out of bed at 5.30, had breakfast and was at Hood's Lagoon by about 6.30. As the fog in Toowoomba was not thick I expected Helidon to be fine as is often the case. Not so, the fog settled over Hood's and stayed, and stayed and stayed. Through the fog I could hear swans honking but hardly a bird could be seen.

'It must clear soon' I told myself. Two and a quarter hours later I left disappointed only to find that by now, Hood's was the only area to be covered in fog.

I was still hopeful though as I headed off to an 'excellent' quail paddock. I had finally tracked down the owners and got permission to check out the grassy patch of land that I had had my sights set on for ages. The grass was thick, up to my armpits, but I took every step with anticipation. I had

thoughts of Red-backed, Little and Red-chested Button-quail and King, Brown and Stubble Quail flying up in front of me.

One and a half hours later, I emerged without having seen a single bird and covered in Cobbler's Pegs. I think I'll try a different spot next time.

Pat McConnell

Simple Observations

Three Australian magpies in adult plumage have been roosting for the night, every night, for the past several months in a coral gum (Eucalyptus torquata) about three metres outside a window of our house.

They perch in exactly the same places every night. With birds' rapid metabolism in mind, one would expect an ever-growing stalagmite formed beneath their perch. Once this thought occurred to me, I checked carefully and was surprised to find not one iota of evidence of their nightly occupation of the premises above. A security mechanism, par excellence!

Frequent observations have yielded another interesting facet of their behaviour. They come into the tree just after sunset, but before the light has faded very much, with much 'afternoon' calling - mournful downward-sliding calls.

They approach their normal perches in an aimless, desultory, casual manner, as if they didn't really have a fixed destination in mind. I presume this behaviour is adopted to short-circuit any aggression the first bird in place may feel as the others (both adults, remember) approach very close to occupy the night perch. The three birds perch at odd angles to each other, but within a square foot area.

Diana Beal

Lord Howe Island - A Piece of Paradise

Lord Howe Island is situated 637 km south-east of Brisbane. It is a small island approximately 2 km by 9 km, but packed into this small area are some of the best walks and birding one could hope to do.

The trip started off as any birder would want with the first bird seen being a new bird for my list. As the plane was landing I could see Red-tailed Tropicbirds out of the window.

On making our way to the lodge we passed many Lesser Golden Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones and my second new bird, the beautiful White Tern. These delicate birds could always be seen flying in and out of the introduced Norfolk Pines. During our stay we were lucky enough to see some of their chicks. We didn't waste any time and after dumping our gear headed off up the nearest hill. Here we were treated to some of the aerial antics of displaying Black-winged Petrels. Another treat that day was seeing Green-winged Pigeons at close quarters. They are so tame it is hard not to stand on them.

The next day saw us into the birding on a more serious scale, heading towards the cliffs to see what sea-birds were around. On approaching the

cliff of Malabar Hill a Red-tailed Tropicbird flew up in front of us, but this was only one of several thousand soon visible over the edge of the cliff. Interspersed among the Tropicbirds were other gems like the Kermadec Petrel, Black-winged Petrel, Masked Booby, White-capped Noddy and Grey Noddy, most of these affording good opportunities for photography.

Having got most of the more common sea-birds on the island we were now keen to get the Lord Howe Island Woodhen. The Woodhen has only been recently saved from possible extinction. Its numbers were down to about thirty when several pairs were caught and a breeding programme set up in 1980. When the last survey was done in February 1987 they numbered one hundred and sixty. The first day of looking afforded good views of ten birds on the lowlands. We were pleased to see these but were keen to see the ones on Mt. Gower. These birds represent the original population and are not released birds or their descendants. The Mt. Gower walk is steep and takes about eight hours return. On reaching the summit we were rewarded by views of four Woodhen.

The summer months are good for observing breeding birds. These included Sooty Tern, Masked Booby, Fleshy-footed Shearwater, White Tern, Common Noddy, White-capped Noddy and Red-tailed Tropicbird.

In a week's visit you could only hope to get about forty species on the island, as a lot of the other birds on the list are rare visitors. But the species seen and their tameness makes the birding pure magic. Can't wait to get back.

Pat McConnell

Members' Bird Notes

Brown Goshawk	3-3-88 & 7-4-88	Tara Park, Gowrie Junction	EB, DB, GG
Wedge-tailed Eagle	3 & 29-3-88	Tara Park, Gowrie Junction	EB, DB, GG
White-throated Nightjar	10-3-88	Tara Park, Gowrie Junction	GG
King Parrot	1-4-88	15 Dunmore Street first in garden in eleven years of residence	LB, JB
Little Grassbird	2-4-88	Hood's Lagoon	LB
Painted Quail	2-4-88	Helidon/Lockyer Siding Road	LB, JB
Pink-eared Duck	24-4-88	Timba S'grounds	LB
White-breasted Sea-eagle	7-2-88	Hood's Lagoon	PM
Rufous Night-heron	24-2-88	Hood's Lagoon	PM
Scarlet Honeyeater	14-4-88	'Shorelands' Withcott	AHS

Yellow-tailed
Black-cockatoo

20-4-88

Withcott/Postmans AHS, WJ, EJ
Ridge

EB & DB - Enid and Diana Beal; GG - Gloria Glass; LB - Lesley Beaton; JB - John Ball; PM - Pat McConnell; AHS - Ann Shore; WJ - Bill Jolly.

New Member

The club is very pleased to welcome David Hill, 2 Starkey Court, Toowoomba, Q, 4350.

May Outing

Pittsworth Area. Leader - Marilyn Jacobs.

The meeting place is at the Pittsworth State High School (eastern side as entering town) on 22nd May at 7.45 am to leave at 8.00 am sharp. Marilyn hopes to have a look at several properties in the area. Visitors are most welcome.

June Outing

This outing is to the Lockyer area. Leader Ann Shore.

World Environment Day

This year World Environment Day is on 5th June. As usual the Bird Club will be running a stall. Any donations (cakes, books, anything) will be gratefully accepted.

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* EXECUTIVE MEMBERS NEEDED
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* This year a lot of the Clubs' executive will be retiring. The
* positions which will definitely be vacated are President, Treasurer,
* Editor and Librarian. Nominations for the other positions are also
* welcome.
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The Club was saddened to hear of the passing of Dr Leslie Boyce. Dr Boyce was a very supportive member of the Club from August 1977 till December 1984 when he retired due to ill health. He always made us feel welcome when we visited his garden at the University Centre and when we had our Christmas Breakup parties there. We extend our sincere sympathy to his family.