


TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

CLUB OFFICERS

President	Angela Kilmartin	Ph 382404
Vice-President/Records	Pat M'Connell	Ph 352980
Secretary	Ann Shore	Ph 303207
Treasurer/Librarian	Keith Treschman	Ph 352894
Editor	Barbara Weller	Ph 329821



toowoomba bird
club
inc.

p.o. box 67 · darling heights · qld 4350

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

No. 165 - October 1989.

From the Editor: The beautiful spring weather has continued throughout September making conditions ideal for bird watching. I have had reports of Scarlet Honeyeaters in a garden in the Gatton area. I have also sighted one in the grounds of Downlands College. Are they more plentiful this year for some reason? I would be interested to hear of any other sightings of them.

The last two newsletters have been printed on recycled paper. This is the Toowoomba Bird Club's small contribution to conserving the environment and not contributing to the Greenhouse effect.

Remember the Annual General Meeting to be held at the Toowoomba Education Centre, Baker Street, Darling Heights (adjacent to the D.D.I.A.E.) on 17th October. Drinks and nibbles will be served at 7.00 p.m. followed by the meeting to start at 7.30 p.m. Slides or a film will follow the meeting. Some nominations for positions have been received but more are required.

The Bird-a-thon is to be held on Sunday, 22nd October. For those new to the club, the Bird-a-thon is the annual species count when we endeavour to spot as many species of birds on that day as possible. Members work in teams of two or three and cover designated areas. We will all meet for lunch to confer and to view the now completed Notice-board. If you are able to help please contact Ann Shore. Members are also asked to obtain sponsors for themselves or give a donation to the club.

Report on September Outing to Mt. Colliery east of Warwick. 24/9/89.

September's outing was a slice of magic. The Toowoomba members met at the Mobil Service Station where they were delighted with a brilliant view of Red-winged Parrots. At least everyone except Michael whose need of potato chips was more pressing at the time. Red-winged Parrots aren't often seen as far east as Warwick and the sun shining on their brilliant almost lime-green heads and backs was a sight to remember.

The Goodings turned on a wonderful day. Firstly we meandered along the creek bank where the calls had us searching the tree canopy. The birds tended to elude the binoculars, although we had close-up views of Striated Thornbills enabling some field marks to be noted.

After looking at the Satin Bowerbird's Bower decorated with his distinctive blue treasures we piled into the four wheel drive and drove up to the head of the gorge where two magnificent fig trees grow. These beautiful giants are estimated to be 60 metres tall. Ron was really excited as a male Regent Bowerbird was seen in a Silky Oak. This was the first sighting of Regents for the property. Later a Wampoo Pigeon was found skulking in the canopy of the fig trees. It remained very quiet but moved occasionally so that views of the purple breast and wings were seen.

A total of 54 species were seen, 45 of which were on the Gooding's property.

Lunch was eaten on the verandah of the Gooding's house with sweeping views up to the mountains. Thanks to Ron and Nancy for yet another lovely day at their place.

Impressions - Northern Summer 1989.

To hear one's first Cuckoo in the European spring is always a pleasure but to hear it in the midst of a great city - Copenhagen - was something of a surprise. It heralded the start of a two month trip to the northern hemisphere for John and I, when, although birdwatching was not a top priority, binoculars were always on hand to snatch any opportunity that offered.

In Denmark there were shorebirds, bird song in the woodlands, birds in the parks, all creating a background to other enjoyments. Later, on the west coast of Jutland where huge areas of nearby land are being re-claimed from the North Sea, a few minutes watching parties of Oystercatchers and Shelduck was enjoyed as they flew in while the tide flooded over their feeding grounds - overhead was heard the clear song of Skylarks.

Peaceful country scenes in England: haymaking below the house; small birds active and vocal in trees and shrubs; Wrens, Chaffinches, Greenfinches, Goldfinches and Robins. Blackbirds hunting worms on the fast browning lawn and the ever present European Magpies, so different from their Australian namesakes but marauders also: destroyers of eggs and nestlings. Swallows, House Martins and the screaming calls of Swifts were heard above.

New and exciting bird observations in Canada, tantalising in being so brief but holding promise of much more for future visits. On the prairie and near water, various species of North American Blackbirds abounded. These are Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds with their squeaky voices; the strangely named Killdeer (to us a dotteral or small Plover) and American Robins - different again to ours - a string of Mallard ducklings and the large Canadian Geese, many with young. Elk Island National Park introduced us to little of the hoped for larger wildlife but plenty of birds: Ruddy Duck, Common Goldeneye, Red-necked Grebe, a Black Crowned Night Heron standing silent in the reeds; Lesser Yellowlegs searching the shoreline; an Eastern Phoebe fluttering nearby in true flycatcher style and Blackbirds everywhere busy nesting in reeds on the lake's edge. Tell-tale drumming sounds from the trees led to a momentary sighting of a black and white Woodpecker. Among the houses of the city I spotted a jaunty Blue Jay and a little Black-capped Chickadee busy in the conifers while up on the showline on the top of the Rockies, Grey Jays came strutting 'round hoping for handouts as we stood marvelling at the views.

Ann Shore

New Member: We are happy to welcome Terry Pacey, 48 Jensen St; Gatton to the club. We hope your stay with us is a long and happy one with lots of interesting birding.

Subscriptions: These are due now and remain unchanged at \$13.00 family or single and \$10.00 for students. Please support your club and send them in promptly. Thank you.

Calendars: The R.A.O.U. bird calendar for 1990 will be available at the A.G.M. for \$10.00. I think the photos this year are the best for some time with a magnificent photo of a Regent Bowerbird on the cover.

Annual General Meeting: Tuesday, 17th October at the Toowoomba Education Centre at 7.00 p.m.

Bird-a-thon: Sunday, 22nd October. Contact Ann Shore if you are able to assist.

November's Outing: Sunday, 26th November. Meet at Helidon Picnic Grounds at 7.00 a.m. for birding at the Lockyer Wetlands. Leader Michael Atzeni. Ph. 355587

Bird Week: National Bird Week is 22nd - 29th October. The T.B.C. Inc will have a display in the Toowoomba City Library, Victoria St; Toowoomba.

The Behaviour of Birds - Flight (Part 3 of a series)

Flight is a very significant characteristic of birds and has confirmed great advantages on the birds in terms of fast and sustained locomotion to enable them to cover a large area in a day's feeding and to migrate thousands of kilometres to exploit two different habitats in the course of a year. However the changes to the body needed for flight have caused constraints on other activities as the evolution of the forelimbs into wings is so complete that they can have few other functions except flight.

The mechanics of flight are extremely complicated - more so than for an aeroplane with fixed wings - and some aspects are not fully understood. When gliding, a bird's wing is behaving like an aeroplane wing and lift is generated by its forward movement through the air; but in flapping flight the wing is acting both as lifting surface and propeller. In fact, level flight the wing performs a simple up and down motion, starting at an angle of 60° above the horizontal and ending just below the horizontal. Forward movement comes from the outer part of the wing beating up and down rather than rotating like an aeroplane propeller.

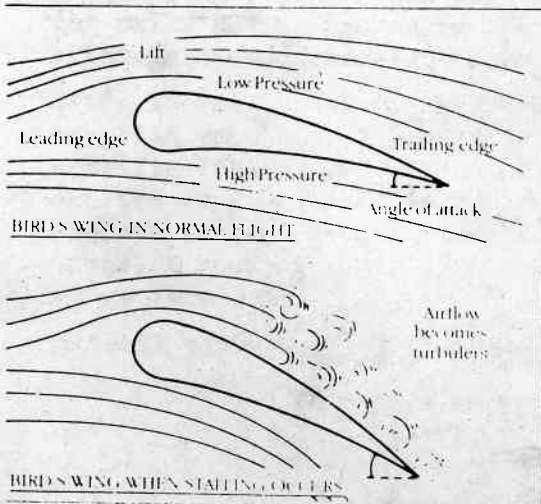
In section, a bird's wings are similar to an aeroplane's wings: convex above, concave below, with the leading edge blunt and rounded and the trailing edge narrowing to a point. The curve of the wings creates unequal air velocity. Air flowing over the upper surface travels further and hence faster so that pressure is reduced over the wing; while the air travelling under the wings increases in pressure. (See diagram below). The result is an upward force or lift which increases with the angle presented to the airstream (angle of attack). The maximum lift is achieved at an angle of attack of about 15° to the horizontal. Above this angle the airstream over the top of the wing breaks up and becomes turbulent while pressure increases under the wing to push it backwards.

The key to bird flight is the flight feathers' ability to change shape automatically through the wing beat cycle. The trailing edge of the vane of each primary feather is broader and more flexible than the leading edge, so when forced down the vane twists, the leading edge goes up and air is forced backwards to produce forward thrust. To fly faster the bird either flaps its wings faster or more powerfully to make the primaries twist more and increase the thrust. On the upstroke the wrist is flexed so that the outer part of the wing partly folds and the primaries separate to let the air through. A small backward sweep of the wing as it comes up forces the primaries against the air and this gives the bird an extra push forward.

When taking off or hovering the bird loses the lift created by forward movement through the air and extra lift has to be created by sweeping movements of the wings, like the rotating blades of a helicopter and wingbeats become very exaggerated almost meeting over the back on the upstroke. When flying slowly, a bird faces the same problem of stalling as a slow flying aeroplane. If the angle of attack becomes large so that the flow of air is turbulent, lift disappears and stall results. Both birds and planes have the same solution to this problem. The Alula or bastard wing, a bunch of 3-4 feathers attached to the thumb, perform the same function as the slot on the leading edge of an aeroplane wing. When there is a danger of stalling, the alula or slot is raised and a stream of rapidly moving air is directed over the wing to cut out turbulence. Herons and Storks have a very large alula to give maximum lift on landing, when they almost hover and gently touch down on their long spindly legs. The alula can increase lift by 10-20% at low speeds and some birds cannot take off if the alula feathers are clipped.

by Barbara Weller

Adapted from "Bird Behaviour" by Robert Burton, Granada Publishing 1985.



A bird's wing is shaped to generate lift when it moves forward through the air. Its convex upper surface causes the airstream to travel farther and faster over the wing, which creates low pressure above it. Below the wing, pressure increases to push the bird up. If the angle of attack is too large, the wing stalls as it becomes

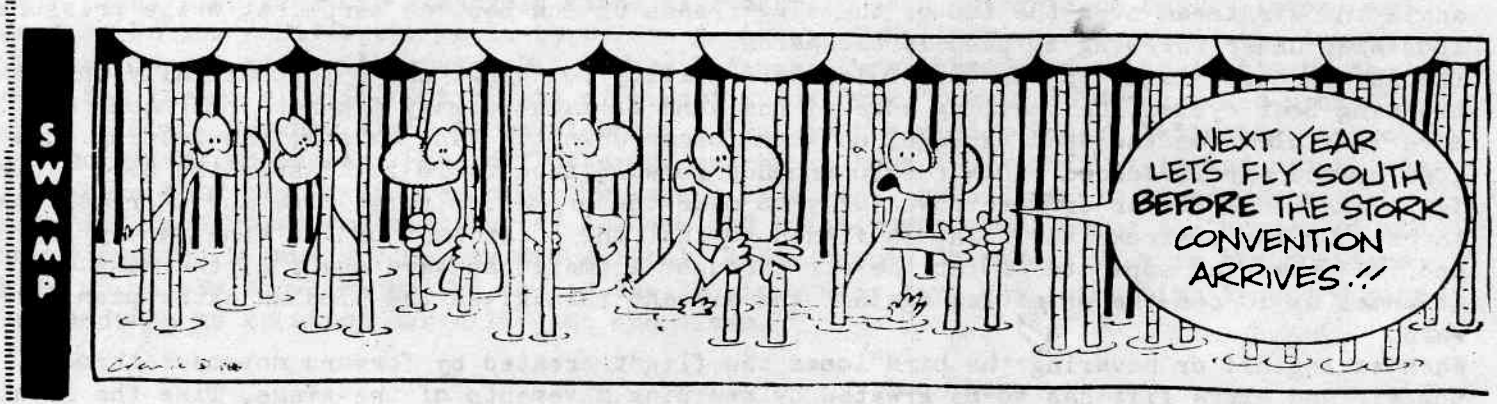


As it lands, a painted stork is almost hovering. It sweeps its wings forwards to get maximum lift with low forward speed.

Members Bird Notes

Red-winged Parrot	24/9/89	Warwick	A.H.S.
Bell Miner	"	Mt. Colliery	A.H.S.
Mallard (male)	12/8/89	Toowoomba Showgrounds	B.W.
Yellow-billed Spoonbill(2)	"	" "	B.W.
Cockatiel (2 nesting)	"	" "	B.W.
White-headed Pigeon (2)	14/8/89	Hume & M ^C Intyre Sts; T'mba	L.R.
Eastern Spinebill	18/6/89	M ^C Intyre St.	L.R.
Grey Goshawk	2/7/89	Waterbird Habitat	K.T.
Eastern Spinebill	2/7/89	Muir St.	B.W.
Red-rumped Parrot (20+)	2/7/89	Baker St, Darling Heights.	B.W.
Red-rumped Parrot	9/7/89	Toowoomba Showgrounds	B.W.
Straw-necked Ibis(15)	15/7/89	Old Goombungee Rd.	B.W.
Sacred Ibis (15)	15/7/89	" "	B.W.
Striated Pardalote	30/7/89	North St; Toowoomba	B.W.
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo (12+)	23/8/89	Shorelands, Withcott	A.H.S.
Eastern Rosella	26/8/89	Toowoomba Cemetery	A.H.S. L.B.
Sacred Ibis (40+)	27/8/89	West Toowoomba	Club Outing

A.H.S.- Ann Shore; B.W. - Barbara Weller; L.R. - Lynn Rowan; K.T. - Keith Treschman;
L.B. - Lesley Beaton.



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Toowoomba Bird Club Inc.
P.O. Box 67
Darling Heights. Qld. 4350

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Pat M^CConnell,
8 Richard's Court,
TOOWOOMBA. 4350