

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

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

No. 168 - January 1990

From the Editor: 1989 has passed and for the T.B.C. it will hold the distinction of being the first year since the club's inception that no new bird species has been added to the club's list for our coverage area. Admittedly to sight a new species is more difficult as years go by but I feel it is still possible to add new species to our list. So let's go for it in 1990!!!

A walk around Picnic Point on New Year's Day was made more enjoyable for me by the sighting of a Variegated Wren family - mother, father and three young fledglings who were huddled together on a branch not far from the track. They were smaller than the adults, fluffy with short upright Wren-like tails and about the colour of a female or immature male. After a few minutes mother wren must have sensed our presence as she anxiously called them into thicker cover and one by one they followed her direction.

In the absence of a December outing I would like to give a report on an outing undertaken by four members of the executive to photograph noteworthy features of each sector in preparation for our display at the Hobby'n'Craft Spectacular in February. What started out to be a photographic day ended up being one of the best days birding for me with over 100 species sighted and nine new species added to my list. The day was slightly overcast which seemed to encourage the birds to be active right throughout the day. After visiting the showgrounds, Drayton and Glen Lomond Park a stop at the Waterbird Habitat gave us good view of a Banded Plover who has taken up residence there. We also enjoyed seeing the Pacific Black Duck family and young Dusky Moorhen.

Next stop was Redwood Park where the usual species were seen but we did have fun stalking the Emerald Dove through the scrub. It managed to elude us except for a fleeting glimpse as it flew away once again.

A stop at Withcott for morning tea and to put our lotto in, allowed us to see two Glossy Black Cockatoos flying overhead. Now the birding began in earnest with frequent stops through sectors 5, 7 & 8. First stop at a dam revealed a flock of Plummed Whistling Duck who took to the air amidst their typical whistle-like call. However one pair did stay behind to guard their young who could not yet fly. A shining Bronze Cuckoo took our eye at the next stop and we marvelled at Michael's imitation of its call. Beryl, our new member from Adelaide by now was quite dazzled by all the new species she had seen.

A trip up a hill into sector 8 produced views of the resident Brown Falcon while further along a Singing Bushlark sat on a fence post and entertained us with his song.

The next stop at the Flagstone Creek Weir was well worthwhile as Michael hunted up a Black Bittern and a Rufous Night-Heron. This was followed by much excitement as a small solitary bird sitting in the top of a dead tree was identified as a Plum-headed Finch by Michael, just as it flew away. So off we went to find it and find it we did, preening itself on a Callistemon its plum coloured head quite apparent.

It is noteworthy that all five finch species on our checklist were seen on the day as were all five wren species. By now we were sidetracked by the call of Cuckoos which turned out to be the Brush Cuckoo and Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo.

Our species list was nearing a 100 at this stage. Beryl and Michael had to leave but Lesley and I decided to push on with our goal of 100 sightings well within our reach. Black-fronted Plovers were our next target at one of the Lockyer Creek crossings. These we found camouflaged among the rocks but what was more astonishing was a large flock of Masked Lapwings sitting on a sandbank. A couple of guards signalled our approach. I remarked to Lesley that I was pleased the nesting season was over as she had now tallied the flock to 56 birds. Some appeared to be a little smaller than others and we presumed these were the immature adults.

A chance stop produced the bird of the day for me. Lesley was chasing after some finches which were soon forgotten as she spotted a Pacific Baza (Crested Hawk) about three metres away perched in a tree. I remarked how much like the pictures in a field guide it was as we noted its yellow eye, rufous thighs and vent, grey wings as well as the short crest and distinct bold bars on the otherwise white belly.

After a couple of more stops around Helidon we made our way home feeling satisfied with our feast of birding. Lesley's tally was 110 species, mine was 106.

Report on a birding holiday by Margaret Krimmer:

An enforced rest for my husband allowed me the opportunity to do some birding away from Toowoomba. One afternoon in September we explored the Cooloola National Park by boat. Flocks of Black Swans were interspersed with numbers of the Little Pied Cormorant and Little Black Cormorant whilst overhead wheeled Brahminy Kites. Perched on dead trees overhanging the river were several Whistling Kites easily distinguished by their markings. Two nests of the Moisy Friarbird, beautifully woven by the female hung low over the water while several adult males kept us company for most of the trip. At the Thomas Hiley Environmental Research Station attainable only by boat, a short walk through the paper-bark Melaleucas brought one superb hide beside a lily covered lagoon on which swam Pacific Black Ducks accompanied by the odd Wood (Maned) Duck.

North Stradbroke Island is remarkable for the number of species of native birds. Well over two hundred have been observed and recorded. Around the house, near the water at Amity Point we observed Red Wattle Birds, Dollarbirds, Welcome Swallows, Monarch Flycatchers, Willie Wagtails, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes and more Brahminy Kites while an Eastern Curlew was seen on the edge of a small lagoon. The kite patrolled the same territory each afternoon. All three forms of the kingfisher were seen ... Azure, Sacred and Forest. Not seen, but often heard was the White-throated Warbler with its "descending Scale" of song. Atop a high T.V. aerial sat a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles carefully guarding their nest of clumsily arranged sticks. Together with Pelicans, Pied Oyster-catchers, Terns, Gulls and Dotterels the island proved a feast of natural wonder. During our stay a huge Koala occupied the Eucalypt next door, his daily slumber undisturbed by a pair of Noisy Magpie-larks determined to build their nest on the branch above.

All in all, some happy and enjoyable birding.

Report on Mt. Wooroolin near Kingaroy by Terry Pacey.

Mt. Wooroolin is situated north-west of Kingaroy and as well as being a superb lookout contains an area of natural scrub in what is otherwise extensively farmed land. It seems to be a haven for numerous bird species. The most outstanding sighting would be at least ten pairs of Regent Bowerbirds and numerous Cicadabirds. As well there were Yellow-throated Scrubwrens, Needletail Swifts, Eastern Whipbirds, Superb Blue-wrens, Rufous Fantails, Golden Whistlers, and five species of pigeons. Well worth a visit.

Notes from Bowenville (Adapted from Q.O.S. Newsletter December 1989.)

White-winged Wrens were reported in this Q.O.S. newsletter as having been sighted by Malcolm Wilson at Bowenville, well east of their normal range. The wrens were in a paddock, heavily infested with roly-poly. Subsequent investigations revealed 2 families, each of a coloured male with 3 or 4 followers, separated by several hundred yards. Over the last few years White-winged Wrens have been reported on the Darling Downs east of their normal range, first at Ourigilla, Tara; then at Rockwood, Chinchilla; at Kindon, Millmeran and finally at Bowenville. Could there be little parties even closer to the coast?

Bird Behaviour of Birds - Power for Flight Part 6 of a Series.

Mastery of the air has required more than the provision of wings to provide lift, thrust and control. During their evolution birds had to face two further problems. They needed to shed excess weight and to generate a high and continuous output of power. To lose weight the bones became hollow, tailbones are reduced to a single plate, and jaws and teeth which are heavy structures in other animals bodies have been abandoned for the horny bill.

The power of flight is generated in the breast muscles, which in pigeons, make up one third of the body weight. To supply the flight muscles with the necessary fuel, and the oxygen for burning it, birds are equipped with highly efficient circulatory and respiratory systems. The heart is much larger than in comparably sized mammals, and the breathing system is unique. The lungs are connected to a series of thin walled air-sacs which spread through the body penetrating the muscles and even entering the hollow bones. The air passages of the lungs do not end blindly in tiny air sacs, or alveoli, as in mammalian lungs but consist of about one thousand tubes, called parabronchi, branching air capillaries where gases are exchanged with the blood. The function of the air sac system has been debated for years but it now seems certain that it creates a one-way flow through the lungs by the air shuttling between the air sacs as distinct from the tidal to-and-fro system in mammals.

Flapping flight requires a huge expenditure of energy which is ten to fifteen times greater than for a bird at rest. So economy is a virtue and can only be neglected when there is an overwhelming advantage e.g. Kestrels can exploit a rich food supply.

The simplest way of saving energy is to stop flapping and glide - the gliding action only uses twice its resting energy expenditure. Many species have a typical flap and glide style of flight, especially when travelling a long distance either in search of food or on migration. A bout flapping is used to regain the height lost during the glide. Small birds often have a bouncing flight in which they close their wings completely between bouts of flapping to reduce drag or friction.

by Barbara Weller

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

New Members:

We welcome the following new members to the club and trust their stay with us is a long one with lots of sightings.

Alan & Majorie Davidson, Utschink Rd; M.S. 582 Toowoomba. 4350

The family of Maggie Drabsch, "Mangovale", Withcott. M.S. 224 Toowoomba. 4352 Ph 303143

Word Tours:

The secretary has many brochures which come from various tour companies for Australia and overseas. If you are interested in finding out more please contact Ann.

B.O.C.A. Tour 1990.

This is an opportunity to find the rare and endangered Golden-shouldered Parrot toward the end of its nesting season.

The tour will leave Cairns on Saturday 26 May and proceed to "Dixie" Station via Daintree, Ayton, Cooktown, Normanby River, Laura River, Lakefield National Park and "Marina Plains" Station on Princess Charlotte Bay. The tour will finish on Saturday 16 June via Laura, Palmer River and Mt. Molloy.

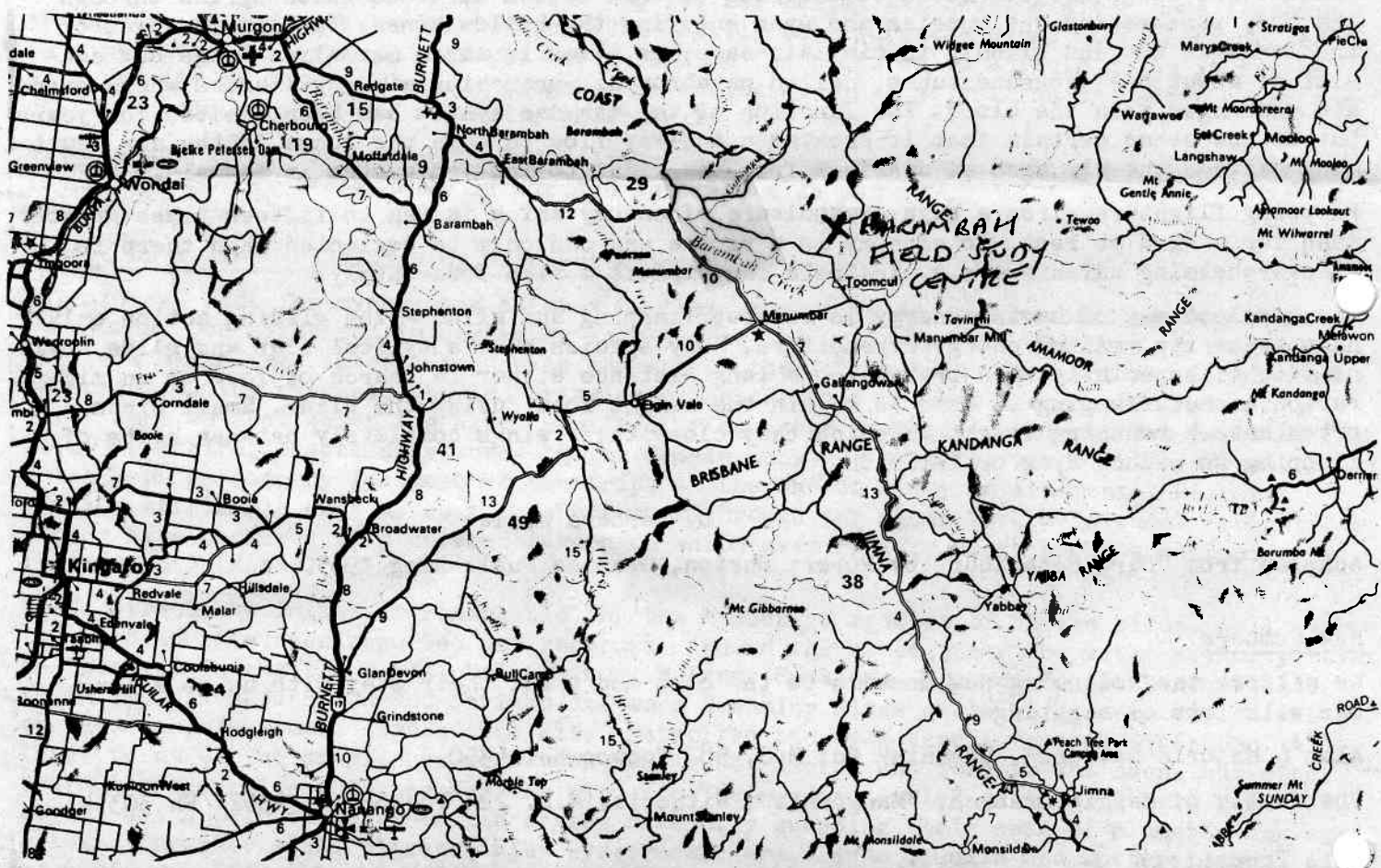
This is a camping tour conducted by Wild Country Safaris for the all-inclusive cost of \$1800 from Cairns. For further information ring Extended Tour Organiser, Leslie Feather, phone (03) 241 3118.

Bookings: Send deposit of \$200 plus three stamped, addressed envelopes (9" X 4") to B.O.C.A. P.O. Box 185 Nunawading, Vic. 3131

January Camp-out at Barambah Field Study Centre: The dates of this will be Friday 26 (Australia Day holiday), Saturday 27 and Sunday 28. Cost \$1.00 per person per night. Bring sleeping bag, pillow, food, cutlery, crockery and cooking utensils. Hot showers and toilets, kitchen with fridge and wood stove and gas bar-b-que provided. Contact Michael Atzeni Ph 355587 for more information. Leader Angela Kilmartin Ph 382404

Directions: Go through Nanago, turn right into Elgin Vale Road, go through Elgin Vale to Manumbar. Continue on straight ahead for about 10 km. on the bitumen, turn left into a road with sign "A-Flat Camp" and continue on for about 10 km. Turn sharp right across a cattle grid into a gravel road and continue on this road for about 10 minutes.

Phone number of the centre is 071 688190.



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