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toowoomba bird club inc.

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

No. 172 - May 1990

EASTER CAMPOUT REPORT - "BOORINGA DOWNS", MITCHELL.

12-15th April 1990.

The country between Roma and Mitchell was extremely green, and as David Hill and I drove towards Dawn Allen's property "Booringa Downs" we realized that it was truly a time of plenty for the district. After a lengthy period of drought, eight inches of rain had fallen in the previous week resulting in boggy roads, swollen rivers, and smiling farmers. The response of the Mitchell grass was remarkable and field upon field of green testified to the capacity of this and other grass species to capitalize on the long awaited rain. The natural brigalow country also looked very healthy, and wildflowers were abundant.

A total of fifteen birdwatchers (13 Q.O.S. and 2 T.B.C.) ventured to Dawn Allen's property for the combined Easter campout, eager to sample the post-rain birdlife. Unfortunately the access road to the scheduled camping area had become restricted to 4WD vehicles, forcing the majority of campers to stay at the Mitchell showgrounds. David and I were the only ones able to reach Dawn's dwelling, and hence pitched our lonely tent on "Booringa Downs" overlooking thousands of acres of wooded and open country.

For those who don't know Dawn Allen, she is the country Vice-president of Q.O.S. for the Western Queensland area and one of the two local birdos. She is the wife of a retired local grazier and her enthusiasm is only matched by her knowledge of the local birdlife, accumulated over a lifetime in the area. She and her husband have left a large section of "Booringa Downs" untouched and Dawn's sons (who now run the property) refer to this area as "Mum's Bird Sanctuary". This area was accessible via conventional vehicle using the access road of neighbouring property, hence Saturday morning saw all 15 birdos travelling, under Dawn's guidance to "Mum's Bird Sanctuary".

The first bird seen after leaving the cars was a Crested Bellbird calling atop a dead tree, and this was quickly followed by Spotted Bowerbirds, a Black-eared Cuckoo, and Chestnut-rumped Thornbills among others. Male Splendid Wrens moulting from breeding plumage to eclipse plumage, were also glassed as were Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters and White-plumed Honeyeaters. The morning consisted of Dawn's Narrative on the best birding areas, and for the rest of the camp, groups of two or three explored various regions of the "Bird Sanctuary" and other scrubby areas (total 5000 acres).

Because David and I were camping in Dawn's property, we had the added luxury of being able to take early morning and late afternoon walks on more lightly timbered country around the homestead. These walks uncovered many of the beautiful inland parrots including Red-winged, Blue Bonnets, and Mallee Ringnecks as well as other open country birds such as Australian Bustards and White-winged Wrens.

Whereas the birding was always great, the weather, on occasions, was not so great. Saturday night saw two inches fall in two hours and with the ground already saturated, run-off was fast and furious. Our tent became part of a flood flow across Dawn's front yard and we retreated like startled rabbits into the house. We enjoyed it immensely, however, and the hospitable Allens provided us with a bed for the night. I believe campers conducted heats of 50 metres freestyle at the Mitchell showgrounds also. Overall, the campout was a great success, and any discomforture was outweighed by rewarding bird-watching.

Don Gaydon

REPORT ON LOCAL EASTER OUTING.

On a gloomy, humid Easter morning which was threatening rain, five T.B.C. members joined forces with the Chinchilla Field Naturalists for one day of their campout in the Toowoomba area. Although not notable for its birdlife, this day was rich and rewarding in other ways for the pleasant company and the meeting with old acquaintances. Gathering at the home of their outing leaders, Ellis and Ida Smith, we looked around their hillside garden full of wonderful native shrubs and plants before setting off for the property of Ben Gilbert at Cawdor.

There our host called everyone around in a circle, about 30 odd, young and old, to listen with fascination to an interesting talk on the Aboriginal Bora ground on his property and on the probable explanation of its many specially laid-out groups and circles of stones. A very old boomerang illustrated how a variety of stone tools picked up around the farm had been used for cutting, shaping, trimming and polishing purposes. Ben demonstrated how cores of dense basalt could be hammered to produce flakes and chips to make keen cutting edges for knives, saws, and chisels etc., while various sandstones acted as rasps, files and polishing implements. Others again became hammers, axe-heads, scrapers and so on, covering every need.

He drew a map as he talked to show the placing of the sacred stones and what they represented so that we could understand more fully as we walked over the site where the various initiation ceremonies had been held. He also showed pieces of red and yellow ochre, found locally, which when ground off and mixed with water gave two of the prime colours used in all Aboriginal paintings. Little but a sparse covering of grass with tiny wild flowers and pink grass lilies grew on the open Bora ground situated on a thick exposed sheet of basalt, hardened from an ancient lava flow. In the groups and near-complete circles of lichen covered stones, patterns and curving lines were plain to see: one ending in the shape of a turtle, the emblem of one of the tribes. Once in a clearing surrounded by forest, what stories could those stones have told?

After this a change of scene as we walked to a gully where Ben had been tending a precious pocket of rainforest and had recently built a bar-b-que area for picnics and gatherings to quietly enjoy the bush. Here, after a meal, we explored a little and heard our first bird-song of the day almost; clear but unidentified notes from the canopy above while out in the paddock Archie Bowtell demonstrated the art of boomerang throwing.

An enjoyable outing much appreciated by the local Bird Club members present. Maybe we can return another time to show others what they missed and discover more of the birdlife. Our very grateful thanks to the Chinchilla Field Nats. and to Ben Gilbert and his family.

Ann Shore

MEMBER'S CHECKLISTS.

At the moment there seems to be some confusion regarding the submission of checklists. The sector system is now the club's basic format for submission of lists, however, it was never intended to preclude members from submitting lists in the old format of uprange/downrange if they prefer to do so. All information is valuable for the Club's records and as Record's Officer I am quite happy to receive lists in either format.

Any unusual sightings recorded using either system may be added in the Members' Bird Notes with more specific details of the location etc., or if necessary information is not supplied it would be followed up at the Record's Officers discretion.

Once again I would encourage all local members to participate in submitting their monthly sightings. If you require checklists, please contact the Editor, Barbara on 329821.

Pat McConnell

PELAGIC TRIP - 14th JULY.

This filled up quickly and will go ahead as planned for those members who booked. Could you forward your \$62.00 to the Treasurer, Lesley if you are going as soon as possible please.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES:- CHANGE OF FORMAT?

Members often ask me "should I put such and such a bird in the Members' Bird Notes?" This is a very difficult question to answer as different birds mean different things to different people e.g. a Crested Pigeon would not under usual circumstances be worthy of a mention however, if seen in an unusual place for the first time in ten years of observations it may be worth a note. However the sighting of a Noisy Miner at Helidon should not be mentioned. For the credibility of the club, some sightings should be edited. This then gives new members a better idea of what should go in the Bird Notes and as such makes members more aware of what is an unusual sighting. Members' Bird Notes don't just cover local sightings but may include species seen while outside the coverage area.

With this in mind I propose the following sub-headings for the Members' Bird Notes.

(i) Rare and Unusual Species.

This would include species regarded as rare or uncommon in the literature or species rarely seen in the study area. However, in most cases would not include rare or uncommon resident species such as Spotless Crake or Squatter Pigeon as these would then appear on the list every month. This category, would over the years be modified as more knowledge of local birds is gained e.g. a bird thought to be rare in the coverage may be found to be locally common. The format for recording sightings would remain the same i.e.

| Species | Date | Location | Observer |
|---------|------|----------|----------|
|---------|------|----------|----------|

(ii) Sightings of Interest.

This heading covers species which are regarded as locally common but for some reason have special significance. The format for recording would remain the same but would have an added note of explanation e.g. new bird for Waterbird Habitat. Possible escapees may go into this section. The explanation should be kept brief.

The Members' Bird Notes are separate from short articles written on individual species and these are placed in a different section of the Newsletter.

If members have other suggestions for a change in format or want the old format to remain please let me know. This is your club too.

Pat M^CConnell

P.S. You don't have to be a regular lister to send in records of unusual sightings.

MEMBERS' HOT LINE.

It is proposed to set up a "Hot-line" of members who are interested in being contacted at short notice to see new species in the coverage area or unusual species. If you wish to be involved contact Pat M^CConnell by the end of June on 352980.

NEW MEMBERS.

We welcome the following new members to the club and wish them many years of good birding.

Pat Cleary, Amos Road, M.S. 224 Withcott, 4352. Ph. 303352

Genevieve Reeves, 325A Margaret Street, Toowoomba, 4350. Ph. 381845

Ida Joyce-Smith, 208 Greenwattle Street, Toowoomba, 4350. Ph. 342407

GREY FANTAILS.

Has any one else noticed the abundance of these around Toowoomba recently? On a recent walk in Jubilee Park they seemed to be in every tree. Any suggestions as to why!

Editor

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES.

| | | | |
|---------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Little Egret | 5/1/90 | Flagstone Creek Weir. | L.Atzeni & L.Hogan |
| Nankeen Night Heron | 5/1/90 | " " | " " |
| Black Bittern | 5/1/90 | " " | " " |
| Plum-headed Finch | 6/1/90 | " " | " " |

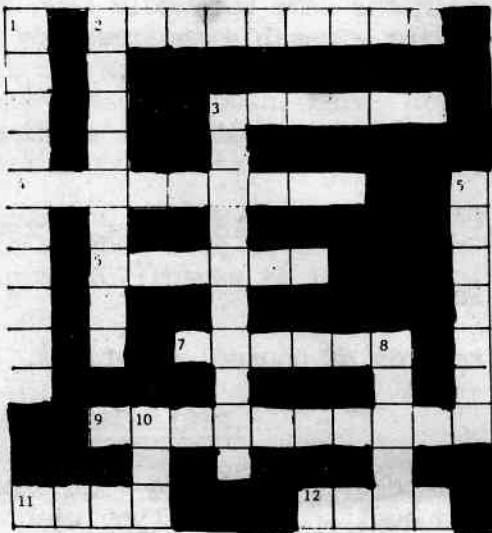
FUTURE OUTINGS:

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB.

- Sunday, 27th May - Bird-a-thon. Meet at the Helidon Picnic Grounds at 7.00 a.m. This is a non-sponsored fun day when we will try to spot as many species as possible.
- Sunday, 24th June - Atkinson's Dam. Leader Michael Atzeni. Ph 355587
- Sunday, 22nd July - Murphy's Creek and Helidon area. Leader Ann Shore. Ph 303207
- Sunday, 26th August - Blanchview and Silverpinch areas. Leader Lesley Beaton. Ph 308481

CROSSWORD PUZZLE.

(Taken from Q.O.S.I. Newsletter Vol. 21 No. 3)



Clues Across

- 2. Large Flightless bird.
- 3. Lays its eggs in other birds nests.
- 4. Also called a Mopoke.
- 6. A wading bird with an upturned beak.
- 7. Small bird resembling a lark.
- 9. It has a large white patch in its wings.
- 11. A kind of long toed waterbird.
- 12. A tiny bird with a long upright tail.

Clues Down

- 1. Small relative of the Kookaburra.
- 2. Also voracious seabird.
- 3. Also known as the 'auctioneer bird'.
- 5. Small brightly coloured bird.
- 8. Wading bird with a long straight bill.
- 10. A night bird.

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