

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

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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. 173 - June 1990.

FROM THE EDITOR:

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BIRD-A-THON !!! BIRD-A-THON!!! BIRD-A-THON !!! BIRD-A-THON !!! BIRD-A-THON !!!  
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The Bird-a-thon that was to be held last month will now be held on Sunday, 24th June instead of the previously advertised outing. This is because of the very inclement weather that made bird-watching impossible on the May outing which had to be abandoned. Some keen bird-watchers did turn up with the hope that the weather would improve but this was not to be. This month's Bird-a-thon will be as advertised previously; a non-sponsored fun day when we will try to spot as many species as possible on the day. So come along and join in the fun and see how many species you can tick. Meeting time will be 7.30 a.m., a little later than last month's time as it will be the middle of winter.

I have received numerous reports of Grey Fantails being sighted in many places for the first time and in large numbers since the last newsletter. Can anyone suggest why this would be so? There have also been reports of Satin Bowerbirds in the Mount Lofty area for the first time. While most reports are of females and/or immature males, one report of a mature male in the Martini Street area was received. I personally have seen up to six females at a time in the Downlands/Horn Park area and even spotted them one morning adjacent to the Harlaxton State School.

The Pelagic trip will go ahead as planned on 14th July. Could those people who have booked a seat please forward their \$62.00 to the treasurer, Lesley, as soon as possible.

UNUSUAL BIRD BEHAVIOUR:

On one of those perfect autumn mornings as the sun comes up out of the thick mist to sparkle on the dew drops, I tried to locate the author of persistent small pip-pip-pipping calls coming from trees near the house. Above my head at the top of a tall Bauhinia, a very bedraggled little bird was moving from twig to twig, rubbing itself against the wet leaves and then shaking and fluffing itself out in the sunshine, to repeat the performance over and over again. A male Mistletoebird bathing in the dew! I've never seen this before. Is it common practice?

Ann Shore

My book on Bird Behaviour does mention some birds bathe by flapping among rain or dew-soaked foliage e.g. Hornbills, Warblers and other birds. Some birds also bathe in the rain. Larks, for instance, squat on the ground with wings outstretched when it rains, and parrots stand with feathers ruffled and wings and tail spread.

Thank-you, Ann for this interesting observation.

Editor

REPORT ON GARDENFEST DISPLAY:

After a second invitation the club decided to participate this year. We had a small stand display of posters, photographs etc., and a table of club information to carry through the festival theme and relate birds to town and country gardens. A lot of interest was shown by the public attending who kept stall helpers busy talking for most of the three days of the show. Our very grateful thanks to all those who helped to make it a successful weekend.

Ann Shore

REPORT ON PROPOSED ENVIRONMENT CENTRE:

Two meetings have recently been held in Toowoomba to discuss the possibility of setting up an Environment Centre for the Darling Downs area. In this report I would like to give a brief summary of the recommendations and proposed actions which came from those meetings.

At the first meeting it was unanimously agreed to proceed with the idea of setting up an Environment Centre for Toowoomba and surrounding areas. Various people or groups of people were allotted different tasks e.g. formulate aims, investigate suitable venues and sources of funding, Community and Media Liaison. These persons or groups then reported back to the second meeting with their findings.

Reports from the various groups were heard at the second meeting as was an informative talk by Jan Oliver, Project Officer with the Queensland Conservation Council based in Brisbane. Jan spoke on Q.C.C.'s role as an umbrella organization for many different groups and clubs, operational information, and funding.

The meeting agreed to establish a Regional Council which will establish, maintain and promote an Environment Centre at a location easily accessible to the public; and that this Centre be called the ..... Environment Centre (name yet to be decided on).

The Aims of this Council will be to:

- (i) actively solicit the membership, financial support and advice of local/regional conservation, natural history and heritage groups, land care groups, local councils, and other appropriate bodies and individuals; to receive their publications and provide the opportunity for them to publicize their views;
- (ii) gather, display and disseminate information relating to nature conservation, heritage preservation, environmental protection, land management and energy and materials conservation;
- (iii) enhance communication and assist in the co-ordination of activities among regional groups with an interest in environmental issues and provide a link between these regional groups and those operating at state, national and international levels;
- (iv) promote and actively extend the concepts of the environment and conservation through community education and activities;
- (v) monitor the course of regional planning and development and to provide effective public comment and action as and where deemed necessary.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 21st June at the Dr. Price Rooms, Little Street, Toowoomba at 7.30 p.m. All interested persons are invited to attend.

Barbara Weller

MOULTING

Despite the daily servicing of the plumage, the feathers eventually wear out. As well as abrasions against the ground or foliage and continuous rubbing in the nest, the feathers eventually become worn through flying. The primary flight feathers of the swift which spends almost the entire year in the air are reduced to little more than quills.

The old set of feathers must be replaced before it becomes unserviceable and almost all birds moult their entire plumage once each year. Some moult twice and a very few three times a year. Second and third moults typically only involve the body feathers, and are usually concerned with colour changes either into breeding dress or for camouflage to match the changing seasons.

The moult is a time of increased energy expenditure for birds as they have to manufacture new feathers, which are equivalent to over a quarter of the total body protein for a small bird. So the idea is to moult when not undergoing the hardships and strains of breeding or migrating and to avoid the winter or other periods when food is short. They will need to eat more food to replace the energy lost as heat through the patchy feather covering, and flying is more strenuous due to gaps in the wings. If a moulting bird is held in the hand, the new flight feathers are distinguished by their fresh appearance compared to the worn faded feathers which they are replacing. The gap between the two is partly filled by the growing feathers, the newest being a 'pin' still in its waxy sheath. When about one third grown the feather breaks out of the sheath and attains its full shape. A little while later, the blood supply to the new feather ceases and it becomes a dead structure. The sequence continues down the line of feathers. As each new feather is half grown, its old neighbour drops out.

Penguins have a unique moulting system which is extremely rapid but which leaves the plumage covering intact. A penguin cannot afford the loss of heat through incomplete plumage, so the old feathers do not drop before their replacements appear, as in other birds. The new feathers grow into the old feathers so the plumage has an unkempt appearance. The old feathers are torn away by the penguins' preening so patches of new, sleek plumage appear.

Species living in the tropics or sub-tropics or at sea occupy a more equable environment and there is not the same constraint to fit moulting into a limited timespan. Consequently their moults are a slow process. Parrots, for instance, may take eight or nine months to remove their plumage and large birds of prey are in a state of continuous moult. Birds which spend most of their time airborne, drop only one feather in a sequence at a time. Thus flying efficiency is not lost. An alternative solution is to drop all the flight feathers at once but this is feasible only for birds which can continue to feed and avoid danger while flightless. e.g., many water and marsh birds such as waterfowl, grebes, divers, cranes and rails.

by Barbara Weller

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

NEW MEMBER:

We welcome Mr. M. D. Salomon of 26 Beryl Street, Toowoomba to the club and wish lots of good birding to him.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES.

Oriental Cuckoo	27/4/90	Kapernick's Bridge, Lockyer Creek.	L.Atzeni & L.Hogan
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo(5)	21/1/90	Magazine Paddock, Gatton.	L.Atzeni
Ground Cuckoo-shrike	2/12/89	Iredale Road.	L.Atzeni & M.Atzeni
Little Grassbird	26/11/89	Laidley/Blenheim	Club Outing
Satin Flycatcher	10/10/89	2 Memory Street	L.Atzeni
Black Bittern	14/10/89	Flagstone Creek	L.Atzeni, M.Atzeni & P.M <sup>C</sup> Connell
Red-backed Kingfisher	14/10/89	Flagstone Creek	L.Atzeni, M.Atzeni & P.M <sup>C</sup> Connell
Silver Gull	24/2/90	Hood's Lagoon	M.Atzeni
Blue-billed Duck	1/4/90	Hood's Lagoon	A.Shore & L.Beaton
Barred Cuckoo-shrike	8/4/90	Redwood Park	" "
Oriental Cuckoo	24/4/90	"Abbeton", Helidon	A.Shore
Straw-necked Ibis (100)	6/4/90	Middle Ridge Park	K.Treschman
Barn Owl	2/4/90	cnr. Mort & Hogg Sts.	L.Beaton & J.Ball

FUTURE OUTINGS:

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB.

- Sunday, 24th June - Bird-a-thon. Meet at Helidon Picnic Grounds At 7.30 a.m.  
Phone Michael Atzeni (355587) or [REDACTED] for more information.
- Sunday, 22nd July - Murphy's Creek and Helidon areas. Leader Ann Shore. (303207)
- Sunday, 26th August - Blanchview and Silverpinch areas. Leader Lesley Beaton. (308481)

SOLUTION TO LAST'S MONTHS CROSSWORD PUZZLE.

ACROSS.

- 2. Cassowary, 3. Cuckoo, 4. Frogmouth,
- 6. Avocet, 7. Pipits, 9. Dollarbird,
- 11. Rail, 12. Wren.

DOWN.

- 1. Kingfisher, 2. Cormorant, 3. Chowchilla,
- 5. Sunbird, 8. Snipe, 10. Owl.

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