



toowoomba bird
club
inc.

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

No. 176 - September 1990.

FROM THE EDITOR: Spring is almost with us which will make bird-watching conditions more pleasant with the return of warmer weather and the lessening of the westerly winds. Those who braved the windy conditions on the last outing were well rewarded with the sighting of a new bird for the Toowoomba Bird Club coverage area. A small flock of about six Little Woodswallows was seen along the Silver Pinch Road firstly by Michael Atzeni and then by the other club members present. This is the fourth new bird to be added to our list this year making the total 265 species in the area. Will we reach 300??

Has anyone been seeing flocks of Figbirds? I have been seeing many small flocks of up to 50 birds in the Mt. Lofty/Range area and in Redwood Park. There are also many small flocks of about 10 Satin Bowerbirds which are mainly females or immature males. Last weekend at Redwood Park I was thrilled to see a number of Rose Robins (male) who would sit quite close-by to allow me good views of them.

I would like to thank those members who have written articles or sent newspaper/magazine clippings to me for inclusion in the newsletter. At present there are a number of articles waiting to go to print, so your article may take a few months to appear. However this is preferable to not having enough and it also makes the newsletter more a members' newsletter.

REPORT ON PELAGIC TRIP OFF BRISBANE - 14 JULY 1990.

The 4.00 a.m. rendezvous at Manly Harbour ran smoothly and so the Magnificent Eleven, one minus his carefully chosen food supplies, boarded their charter boat with some high hopes for some successful birding and some "lifers" for their respective birdlists. However, the weather was too good, providing a perfect playground for the sailing/fishing enthusiasts but not for the birds. The south-easterly wind required to coax the pelagic species to feed closer to shore was noticeably absent as was the diversity of birds.

Gannets and Crested Terns were first on the list and were seen throughout the day as were the Solander's Petrels. The latter species would have been seen on at least 50 occasions during the trip, normally, one or two birds at a time. A Brown Booby checked out the motley crew at one stage and bow-riding dolphins provided a welcome change of interest on several occasions, their synchronization of movement and mastery of the waves being absolutely awe-inspiring.

A tremendous splash in the distance advertised the presence of a Hump-backed whale and several of us were able to glimpse one as it surfaced momentarily on a couple of occasions. On the return trip, Chris Corben, our "ring-in" seabird authority for the day, was busy hurling whitebait out the back of the boat while most of us were up the front, when frantic cries of ".....-tailed Tropicbird!" brought everyone to their feet only in time to see what would have been their best bird for the day disappearing into the pale blue yonder. This White-tailed Tropicbird had belted right across the back of the boat, perhaps attracted by the feeding activity of a Crested Tern Chris had lured in with the whitebait. How it was not the slightest bit interested in staying around for us to see.

Upon re-entering Moreton Bay one couldn't help but feel moved by the idyllic view. The bay was mirrorlike and as we passed over the extensive eel-grass beds mother-nature told of where a dugong had just surfaced by the tell-tale ripples on the dead-flat surface. Indo-Pacific Humpbacked Dolphins occasionally broke the water surface adding to a healthy marine mammal list. An Osprey watched us as we entered port and I don't think I've appreciated seeing a Caspian Tern and a Mangrove Heron as much as the ones we saw when disembarking on dusk. I understand they were "lifers" for at least two on the trip! So that long day on the boat was worth it!?!

Our sincerest thanks to Chris Corben for helping us out with identification. Hopefully, he can accompany us again on our next seabird outing.

Michael Atzeni.

A BIRD WATCHING HIGHLIGHT

"Years ago at Taylor, the other side of Meringandan, walking with a friend on his property to look at his free-range fowls, we were approaching a small hill on our right when suddenly, from left to right about a metre above the ground perfectly motionless in itself but travelling at about 60 kilometres per hour, appeared this Wedge-tailed Eagle. He swept over the fowls; they scattered and squawked but we didn't see the "strike" as it took place behind the hill, or we think it did. Maybe the eagle abandoned the strike as we were only about 20 metres away. We ran around the hill but he kept low and we couldn't spot him; he probably turned left down a shallow valley; but no sign of him."

The above reminiscence by Joe Deuble was vividly brought back to him after reading an article on the Wedge-tailed Eagle by Peter Meredith in the Jan/Mar magazine of the Australian Geographic Society. This explained in detail just how the eagle makes its surprise attacks, spotting prey from afar with keen eyesight, then diving steeply and using the momentum to glide as far as possible close to the ground and hidden from its victim 'till the last moment. Joe said "Seeing that eagle glide by like a small plane was easily the highlight of my birdwatching career."

as told to Ann Shore by Joe Deuble

OUTING REPORT - 26 AUGUST 1990.

A small group of enthusiastic birdos met in the biting wind at the Waterbird Habitat. Eleven of us set out for one of my favourite birding spots at the Blanchview Road end of Silver Pinch Road. The first bird to be seen was a Little Woodswallow, a first for the Toowoomba study area. We watched them for a while, hawking over the edge of the ridge. There was a group of about six of them, all huddled together at the fork of a dead tree. They looked like little bats clinging to a cave roof.

We followed Blanchview Road down to Withcott. Because of the wind, birding was difficult but some good sightings of Scarlet Honeyeaters, White-throated Gerygones and Yellow Thornbills were made.

The outing finished with morning tea at Ann Shore's place - thanks Ann.

Fifty species was the total count.

Lesley Beaton

A MALE RED GOSHAWK NEAR HELIDON

The July outing was held on a day of unseasonably mild and pleasant weather. As the outing finished before lunch I decided on a solo midday meal on Lockyer Creek. A fine spot, especially for bird watching, is by the creek crossing on the Spa-Iredale Road. Most readers will be familiar with this scenic area, the creek environs being the haunts of such birds as Azure Kingfisher, Black-Fronted Plover and White-Backed Swallow. The Red-Backed Kingfisher has curtailed his coastal visits at this spot in days past.

On this day, as I sat eating, I noticed a high flying bird of prey approaching from the south-east. As it closed, the conspicuous dihedral and the lazy "flap, flap, glide" announced a Red Goshawk. The bird was flying at a leisurely pace at a height of approximately thirty metres. It passed directly overhead, slowly, allowing a close scrutiny through 10 x 40 binoculars. Observable ventral markings were the very rufous chest, belly and vent. This colour extended along the underwing coverts, the remainder of the underwing being pale. The wings were rounded and broad - typical goshawk shape except for the dark, extended primaries. These last feathers are slightly upturned in flight. The tail was long, dark and square, not rounded as illustrated in some guides. The tail and underwing barring was not clearly apparent on this bird at its flying height. What was apparent, however, even at this height, was the bird's massive, yellow legs. This feature is diagnostic of this species. The bird disappeared to the north-west - a slow "flap, flap, glide".

I settled down to finish eating and was preparing to leave when the bird reappeared flying in the opposite direction. As it passed nearby it was "dive bombed" by a pair of Black-Shouldered Kites - considerably smaller birds, a good size comparison. During this small interlude the Goshawk twisted in flight, displaying a rich chocolate dorsal surface and very chesnut upper tail coverts. This latter feature is diagnostic. The Goshawk flew back over its original track and disappeared.

Over the last three months I have had the good fortune to observe this species on several occasions. All sightings have been between Helidon and Gatton. I have seen both sexes and, on two occasions, observed both birds close perched, from short distances. The size disparity is clearly evident - the male being smaller, darker and sleeker than his more powerfully built, lighter coloured mate. The Sunday bird was the male.

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFYING FEATURES OF ABOVE BIRD

FLIGHT PATTERN: Conspicuous dihedral, soars on flat wings with slightly upturned primaries. Typical Goshawk "flap, flap, glide" more leisurely than other Goshawks.

VENTRAL SURFACE: Rufous chest, belly, vent and underwing coverts. Wings broad, rounded with dark, conspicuous primaries. Remainder of wing pale. Tail long, square, dark. Legs massive, yellow, long in proportion to tail.

DORSAL SURFACE: Rich chocolate colour with warm chesnut coloured upper tail coverts.

Bird too high to observe face, chin colour. Barring on tail and underwing indistinct.

R G Hobson

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRD - No. 263.

KING QUAIL - Excelfactoria chinensis.

20 July 1990. Lawler's Road, Helidon. Found by R.G.Hobson. Female found as road-kill; body badly mutilated. Distinguishing marks: foot structure of true Quails (four toes); smaller than Brown or Stubble Quails; orange-yellow legs; bill a dark horn colour; white throat onto barred chest; dark stripe from corner of beak along under eye; grey underwing.

This identification was verified by several other club members.

Record's Officer

NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the club and hope their stay with us is a long and happy one with lots of good birding.

Mrs. Pat Frazer, 2/27 Lenway Avenue, Toowoomba. Ph. 358714

James, Olive & Kaelene Booth, 48 Dwyer Street, Toowoomba. Ph. 327848

Marie Boyd, 4 Mayes Street, Toowoomba. Ph. 325452

MEMBER'S BIRD NOTES

White-headed Pigeon	4.7.90	Raff & Bridge Streets.	Joe Deuble
Paradise Riflebird	29.7.90	Mt. Colliery, Warwick.	Ron & Nancy Gooding

HOBBY-N-CRAFT

Would any members be willing to form a sub-committee to organize for the above which is held in February each year? The group would be required to plan the display for T.B.C. regarding what resources, posters are available; decide on a theme; set up the display; and perhaps provide a supplement for the newsletter. If you are interested in helping please contact Ann Shore on 303207.

FUTURE OUTINGS

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB

Sunday, 23 September - Goomburra Forest Park. Meet at the main forestry camping ground at 9.00 a.m. Leader Pat M^CConnell. Ph. 352980. If it rains during the week before this outing, an alternative outing may have to be arranged. Please phone Michael on 355587 if in any doubt.

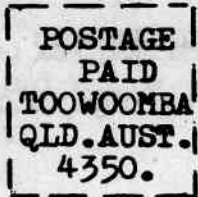
Friday 21 to Sunday 30 September - Camp-out at Dawn Allen's place west of Mitchell with Q.O.S. Come for the entire time or for a few days. Dawn's phone number is; 076 231161

Sunday, 28 October - Summer Bird-a-thon. More details later.

Sunday, 25 November - Gatton Forestry area.

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