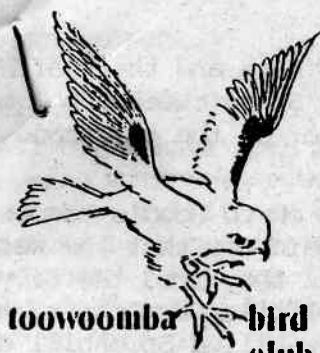


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Vice-Pres./Records	Rod Hobson	075	661379
Secretary	Ann Shore		303207
Treasurer	Lesley Beaton		308481
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Committee Member	Don Gaydon		356161



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"

FROM THE EDITOR:

183 April 1991

Five of our club members took part in the state wide bird-a-thon, the Queensland Twitch, held in March to raise funds for research into Cape York's endangered Golden Shouldered Parrot. Altogether 44 teams took part in the inaugural competition which was won by a team of National Parks and Wildlife rangers from Townsville who sighted an incredible 220 species in the 24 hours as they scoured a vast area from near Mt Isa in the west to Townsville in the east and then used a boat to check the local harbour. They missed the Queensland record for sightings by only one species. A team led by Queensland Environment Minister Mr Pat Comben - The "Gosshawks" - could only manage sighting 131 species.

Our team came sixth overall with the grand total of 172 species and were first for non-professional (ie not working in the field of the Environment) teams. Congratulations to Lesley, Rod, Pat, Laurie and Michael on a tremendous effort. If you would like to make a donation to this worthwhile endeavour, please use the form in last month's newsletter and return it and the money to the treasurer, P.O. 67, Darling Heights.

Beryl Walker has resigned as committee member as her family have moved to Western Australia. The executive have appointed Don Gaydon to replace her. Don will be a committee member and will be acting treasurer in Lesley's absence overseas.

The Annual Summary of Species for 1990 will have to be collated and typed out very soon. Rod would like someone to assist him with this big task. They would need to be able to type or use a word-processor. Please contact him on 075 661379 if you can help.

Two very successful outings were held last month; one at Brisbane to see the waders and one below the range. Reports follow this article. There have been reports of Powerful Owl sightings in redwood Park - the latest from Ann and Lesley who sighted a pair of birds along the Fern-tree Gully circuit recently.

On a recent trip out to Roma I was surprised to see numerous Black-shouldered Kites particularly in the farming areas between Toowoomba and Chinchilla. It was late day and they seemed to be hovering above the fields looking for food. I would have counted twenty between here and chinchilla. The Black-shouldered kite is the club's emblem and was very numerous in the area when the club was founded some fifteen years ago. Their numbers declined but seem to have increased in recent years.

WITHCOTT/HELIDON ALTERNATIVE OUTING FOR 24 MARCH.

A bright, clear autumn morning after a cool night tempted 12 members down to Withcott for some bush birding near at hand instead of the joining the wader-watchers at the coast.

They were amply rewarded, seeing some 65 species before midday. No wind or traffic disturbed the peaceful but dry scene as we left habitations behind and went north into the bush. Numbers of small birds appeared close-by for quite easy viewing: White-browed Scrub-wrens, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Striated Pardalotes, a Peaceful Dove and a Mistletoebird, among others to provide interest for young and old.

Further on, walking through scrub and taller trees edging the embryo Rocky Creek, we watched and listened to the clear notes of Rufous Whistlers and Grey Shrike-thrushes while from up the hillside came the unmistakable calls of a cuckoo. But, which cuckoo? We settled

for a Horsfield's Bronze. Jacky Winters fluttered nearby and darted here and there at flying insects. However the "Bird of the morning" was certainly the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, seen alas by only the backmarkers, alerted by a strange voice, as the cavalcade of cars moved on ahead ignorant of what they had missed.

A short stop for morning tea at Shorelands was enjoyed before going on to Hood's Lagoon. The beautiful blue waterlilies cover quite an area of the lagoon again now that the water-level has dropped providing an arena for some half dozen Jacanas as they trod the Lily-pads on their delicate long toes. A number of stately Black swans, Little Cormorants, a Darter, Hardheads and other duck species on the far side, one Yellow-billed Spoonbill and Egrets around with the cattle completed the tally for a hot morning. Time for members to knock off for shade and refreshments!

Ann Shore

WADER OUTING REPORT:

A group of seven did the rounds of the tidal flats from Thornside to Wynum under glorious sunshine and whilst nothing rare or spectacular was seen - that damned elusive Asiatic Dowitcher!! John and Joan Sheath and Julie O'Connor had a bayside bonanza of "lifers", this outing being their first taste of wader watching.

Our initial scan of the esplanade at Manly and Wynum produced excellent looks at Mangrove Herons and Dark-phase Reef Egrets, Caspian Terns and several common wader species including Ruddy Turnstones, Great Knots, Curlew Sandpipers, Wimbrel, Lesser Golden Plovers and Grey-tailed Tattlers. We then headed for the mangroves at Lota. There, Rod was in fine form, locating Mangrove Warbler, Mangrove Honeyeater and Mangrove Kingfisher in quick succession. The warbler's sweet cadence emanating from the drabness of the mangroves captivated those new to the species. On the mudflats, several species paraded by including Red-necked Stint, Red-capped Dotterel and Pied Stilts. Some good examples of breeding plumage were seen in Curlew Sandpipers, Bar-tailed Godwits and Great Knots.

A lunchtime break in the park opposite our Manly west home yielded a Powers Sixpackius from the fridge, a Brahminy Kite overhead and an Osprey complete with fish in talons, over the house (a new "yard" tick!).

At Thornside, Greenshank, Little Tern and Little Egret were added to the list; then Don, Rod and I went back to Wynum to catch the rising tide for a practice session sorting out Mongolian Plovers and Large Sand Plovers. I must confess, I'm far more confident in identifying these two species when I see them alongside each other!

Thanks to those who travelled down and made a fine day even better.

Michael Atzeni

P.S. A unexpected visitor woke me up in the wee hours of 28 March - my first Bush Stone-curlew in S.E. Queensland. Just happened to be in my backyard!

AUSTRALIAN WATERBIRDS - A FIELD GUIDE:

This very informative book will soon be released and can be purchased through the Toowoomba Bird Club at the special price of \$14.95. There are full colour photographs for 90 species of waterfowl found throughout Australia. The high quality of the photos will enable anyone to identify most waterbirds. Besides photographs there is information on the natural history of each species. Each photo has two borders of line drawings. At the top of each photo there is a profile of a swamp to show where the bird is most likely to be seen. The book begins with those waterbirds most likely to be seen on land and progresses to the waterbirds usually seen in deeper water. Also included is food types, distribution maps, relative sizes, and a clock of all months of the year showing when the bird is most likely to breed.

If you wish to order this book through the club please notify Ann Shore - 303207.

NEXT OUTING - TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB:

On Sunday, 28 April we will combine with Q.O.S. on an outing to Gatton Forestry. I believe Red-breasted Button-quail have been seen in this area. Please meet at the Gatton Apex Lake near the shelter shed for a 8.00 a.m. departure. Leader Rod Hobson - 075 661379

All birds have both monocular - seeing with each eye independently - and binocular vision - seeing with both eyes together. It is difficult for us to appreciate what monocular vision entails, but it can be seen when a robin or thrush turns its head to peer closely at the ground with one eye searching for food, or a sparrow cocks its head to look out for a hawk overhead. They are directing their view onto the central fovea of that eye to get the sharpest image. Most birds have their eyes on the side of their head which gives them good all-round vision to spot danger. Pigeons, for instance have a 340° field of view (the human one is 200°), and can see all around them except immediately behind them, but the fields of left and right eyes overlap by only 24° to give a small binocular field of vision to the front. Some birds raise their head and peer under their bill to get a better view ahead. When bitterns "freeze" with their bills pointing skyward and the streaked neck plumage blending with the surrounding reeds, they can fix an approaching predator with both eyes.

Birds which hunt have eyes placed to the front of the head to give increased binocular vision. Hawks have overlapping fields of 30 - 50 degrees, and the owls with their very forward looking eyes have binocular vision covering 60 - 70 degrees. So far as is known, owls are the only birds with true stereoscopic or three-dimensional vision. The sensation of depth through stereoscopic vision to a hunting animal is a very useful attribute, because a solid image will stand out from a matching background and its position will be easier to compute for an accurate strike. Humans and other animals experience stereoscopic vision because the slight differences between the position of the image on each retina can be compared. To do this, nerve fibres from both eyes must link up on each side of the brain, instead of all fibres from one eye going to only one side of the brain. Among birds, only owls have this arrangement of the nerve fibres.

Birds other than owls have to judge distances by a number of tricks, such as using perspective and the relative size of images. Bobbing the head gives views from different angles and makes objects move in relation to the horizon so their position can be judged. Even owls bob or nod their heads from side to side to assist range-finding. When pigeons and Peacocks walk, they nod their heads to and fro, but this has a different function from head bobbing. They are stabilizing the head, throwing it forward and then keeping it steady while the body moves. With the head steady, the eyes are better able to pick out tiny objects and slight movements. Anyone who has tried to spot birds through binoculars on a heaving ship will appreciate the need for a steady platform! Head stabilizing can be demonstrated by holding a bird by its body and gently tilting or rolling it: the head remains fixed in space. Hovering birds, such as kestrels, also need to keep their heads steady while aloft. A surveyor once lined up the cross-wires of his theodolite on a kestrel's head while it hovered in a strong wind. The head was held rock-steady while the body pitched and yawed around it.

by Barbara Weller

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

JANDOWAE BIRD NOTES - FEBRUARY 1991.

February brought much needed rain to the Jandowae district but it also meant fewer bird-watching excursions. However the species total is mounting and has now reached 96 for the district though the monthly total was down to 79. My yard list has also increased to 47. The monthly awards for February are:

The Bird(s) of the month: Two new species for me this month. A lone Singing Honeyeater was found in a clump of trees which seems to be the favourite haunt of Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters. Stopping to watch a flock of Zebra Finches, I was surprised by an Oriental Cuckoo. It didn't stay around for long but certainly long enough for positive identification.

The Noise of the Month: the Corellas have arrived. this time it is a flock of 70-80 birds. One of the dead trees close to us was their home for three days. I have been told that last time the Corellas arrived, there were over 250 in the flock. Apparently some people took a few days to avoid the noise.

Puzzle of the Month: Can anyone tell me how 20+ Whiskered Terns can appear within 10 minutes of a storm finishing and disappear again within two hours? No sightings before or since. There are no other large areas of water within 30 km at least. They spent the 2 hours skimming over the flooded paddocks of a farm near the town dam.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES:

Streaked Shearwater	27 ⁰ 16'S;158 ⁰ 32'E	2.2.91	R.H.	P.M.
Buller's Shearwater	" "	"	"	"
Little Egret	Apex Lake, Gatton	17.11.90	B.W.	
White-bellied Sea-eagle *	Hood's Lagoon	4.2.91	M.J.	
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Toowoomba	1.2.91	F.B.	N.B.
Black-breasted Button-quail(3birds)	Ravensbourne	29.3.91	D.G.	R.H. P.M.
Baillon's Crake	Jandowae	Jan '91	T.P.	
" "	Apex Lake, Gatton	27.1.91	R.H.	P.M.
Bush Hen	Uki, N.S.W.	19.2.91	R.H.	
Painted Snipe (male)	Karrasch's Lagoon	29.12.90	R.H.	E.H. P.M.
White-winged Tern (non-breeding)	Apex Lake, Gatton	3.1.91	R.H.	K.T.
Rose-crowned Fruit-dove	Ravensbourne	30.3.91	D.G.	R.H. P.M.
Little Corella (7 birds)	Boondall	18.11.89	T.P.	
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Toowoomba	25.1.91	F.B.	N.B.
Red-winged Parrot	Jandowae	Feb'91	T.P.	
Ground Parrot	Cooloola	9.1.91	R.H.	P.M.
Little Bronze Cuckoo (pair)	Flagstone Creek	2.12.90	R.H.	E.H.
" "	Cooby Dam	Jan'91	L.B.	A.S.
" "	Table Top	6.2.91	R.H.	E.H.
Powerful Owl	Ravensbourne	18.3.91	R.H.	P.M.
" "	Glen Lomond	21.3.91	R.H.	P.M.
" "	Redwood Park	5.3.91	K.T.	
" " (pair)	" "	29.3.91	L.B.	A.S.
Tawny Frogmouth	Flinders St; T'mba	14.1.91	J.D.	
Blue-winged Kookaburra	Glenore Grove	18.11.89	T.P.	
Albert's Lyrebird	O'Reilley's, Lamington	23.1.91	R.H.	P.M.
Rufous Scrub-bird	" "	23.1.91	"	"
Ground Cuckoo-shrike	West Toowoomba	11.2.91	L.A.	
Chestnut-rumped Hylacola	Girraween	11.2.91	R.H.	
White-throated Gerygone	Harristown	27.2.91	L.A.	
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Withcott	24.3.91	K.T.	
Regent Honeyeater (2 birds)	Broken Head, N.S.W.	9.2.91	R.H.	
Diamond Firetail	Helidon Dip	3.2.91	L.B.	M.J.
Plum-headed Finch	Jandowae	Feb'91	L.A.	
Black-faced Woodswallow	Hodgsonvale	8.2.91	L.A.	
" "	" "	22.2.91	L.A.	

L.A. - Laurie Atzeni; F.B. - Frank Belcher; L.B. - Lesley Beaton; N.B. - Nancy Belcher; J.D. - Joe Deuble; D.G. - Don Gaydon; E.H. - Betty Hobson; R.H. - Rod Hobson; M.J. - Marilyn Jacobs; P.M. - Pat M^CConnell; T.P. - Terry Pacey; K.T. - Keith Treschman; A.S. - Ann Shore; B.W. - Barbara Weller

* with college of Idaho Biology Group

THE TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER
Registered by Australia Post
Publication Number QBG3973

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