


TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

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

No. 184 - May 1991

FROM THE EDITOR: Another new bird was added to our Toowoomba coverage area checklist last month with the sighting of the Black-chinned Honeyeater (*Melithreptus gularis*) firstly at the Helidon dip and later at Seventeen Mile road. This is bird number 268 and congratulations go to Rod hobson, Don Gaydon and Pat M^CConnell who first sighted it.

The weather has certainly been dry with the result that there has been a build-up of wading birds at most of the waterholes and lagoons around the Lockyer valley. The bush birds have been on the move too in their search for food and water. I was surprised recently upon looking out one morning at the old dead wattle tree in my back yard to see a Rufous Whistler perched on one of the top branches. Also in the tree were two Lewin's Honeyeaters, a Striated Pardalote, three Common Mynahs, two baby Magpies and a Currawong. The secret is to have a bird-bath under the tree and to put out food for them each night. There are also at least six Pale-headed Rosellas that regularly visit plus Brown Honeyeaters, Superb Fairy-wrens, Double-barred Finches, Yellow-rumped Thornbills and other occasional visitors such as Olive-backed Orioles and Crimson Rosellas.

ENVIRONMENTAL WALK, SUNDAY 7 APRIL: Some 150 people descended the tracks below Picnic Point on the walk organized by the Special Environment Advisory Committee of Toowoomba City Council and the National trust as part of the celebrations of Heritage Week 1991.

On a warm and almost windless morning groups set off from the Lion's Park between 9.30 am and 10.30 am accompanied by guides to explain and comment on aspects of the geology, environment and various habitats that they passed through. With the theme "Save the Bush", much emphasis was put on explaining efforts by the City Council and the Toowoomba Field Naturalists to clear and control some of the intrusive weeds, shrubs and creepers that are taking over in some areas to the detriment of native flora and subsequently the native fauna.

Four Toowoomba Bird Club members, Rod Hobson, Pat M^CConnell, Don Gaydon and the secretary, assisted by talking about local bird-life but unfortunately due to the warmth, lateness of the hour and the large numbers of walkers, the birds by then were rather scarce. However, there was plenty of interest shown and more information available at the end of the walk where a small display in the care of John and Joan Sheath had been set up. There also the S.E.S. had set up a camp with hamburgers, water and toilet facilities. They also provided welcome lifts back to the top and most availed themselves of this. My grateful thanks to those members who helped.

Ann Shore

A WALK IN THE PARK IN THE DARK: (29.3.91)

It was an eerie autumn night! A Boobook Owl called in the distance. A warewolf crossed my spotlight beam. I turned to Don Gaydon who reeked of garlic and carried a silver bullet for just such occasions. At the same instant we both breathed a sigh of relief as we realised our mistakes - Rod Hobson came into clearer view.

We continued our night-time stroll in search of owls, possums, gliders and anything else. However, we were not expecting what we saw next! Rod's torch beam crossed a mottled dark form on the ground while mine followed another as it quickly walked into the forest. All three of us were surprised at what we saw - a female Black-breasted Button-quail was sitting in the open, two feet off the dirt road that divides upper and lower Ravensbourne National Park. We crouched and watched her for a short time; now she was no more than an arm's length away. Just as we started to leave she flew off (which is unusual as this bird seldom flies) and was quickly joined by another bird which had been only a few feet away but had gone unnoticed. In all there were three birds roosting there. One I spotted walking into the forest was a male. This Button-quail frequents Ravensbourne National park and I have seen them on many occasions since 1977 but I never expected to see them while spotlighting.

Pat M^CConnell

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRD No. 267

Diamond Firetail: *Emblema guttatum*

Location: Helidon cattle dip, Air Force Road, Helidon.

Date: 3.2.91

Recorded by: Lesley Beaton, Marilyn Jacobs

Comments: A single bird of this conspicuous species observed on the morning of February. Nearest regular populations of this species are on the Granite Belt and they are generally rare east of the Great divide in S.E. Queensland. Formally common, as late as 1960's, in Cabarlah, Crows Nest, Anduramba areas and once plentiful in Brisbane and Lockyer valleys. Now recorded in these areas as an occasional vagrant (Helidon 3.2.91; Grantham 9.4.90). Unconfirmed sightings of these species from Redwood Park. Decrease of this bird in these areas attributed to trapping for aviary trade where it was known as Diamond Sparrow.

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRD No. 268

Black-chinned Honeyeater: *Melithreptus gularis*

Location: Helidon cattle dip, Air Force Road, Helidon.

Date: 11.4.91

Recorded by: Don Gaydon, Rod Hobson, Pat M^CConnell

Comments: A single adult observed feeding high in a Spotted Gum, *Eucalyptus maculata*. This bird, an obvious *Melithreptus* is larger and more robust than resident species of the same genus ie. *M. albogularis* (White-throated Honeyeater); *M. lunatus* (White-napped Honeyeater); and *M. brevirostris* (Brown-headed Honeyeater). Easily distinguishable features of the above honeyeater included a broad white nape band across a black head and terminating on a conspicuous sky blue eye wattle. Also discernible was the black chin marking washing out onto a white chest and yellow saddle across the mantle running onto the upper back. A rich throaty gurgling call was given vent at regular intervals. A honeyeater of open forest and lightly wooded country this species can at best be considered as an occasional vagrant in S.E. Queensland. Local records of this bird are absent except for the present influx, recorded hereunder.

2.4.91	Gatton Forestry	1 adult, 1 juvenile,	R.H.
3.4.91	Helidon Dip	1 juvenile	R.H.
10.4.91	Helidon Dip	6 birds	R.H.
11.4.91	Helidon Dip	6 birds	R.H.
20.4.91	Seventeen Mile Road	several birds calling	R.H. P.M.
		1 adult seen	

(R.H. - Rod Hobson; P.M. - Pat M^CConnell)

R.G.Hobson

LONG ISLANDS 'HOTEL' FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS:

The long Islands, composed of thirty-two islands between China's Shandong and Liaoning Peninsulas, are no longer just a wonderland for seafood lovers. Its fish, scallops, abalones, shrimp and sea cucumbers are increasingly yielding to the growing significance of the islands as a natural "hotel" for migratory birds.

Every spring when the flowers begin to bloom, massive egrets, swallows and cuckoos rest and breed on the islands on their way north. And in autumn, they pass by during their flight back south. The awe-inspiring sight of bird "clouds" usually lasts two to three months.

The long Islands are now one of the country's 45 bird protection reservations. However, only a few years ago, there were far fewer birds on the islands. The little creatures were no doubt frightened by the local residents who hunted the birds day and night.

It was not until 1984, when the country's ornithologists called for greater bird protection that the migratory birds have enjoyed a safer environment. The State invested more than 40 000 yuan (A \$16 000) to set up a "ring station", which put small aluminium rings on passing birds to aid research. According to the "ring station", more than 230 bird species pass by the Long Islands each year.

The local government is putting greater effort into afforestation, creating an agreeable natural habitat for birds. The birds are now beginning to repay the kindness of the local people. The thick bushes and trees on the Long Islands no longer need pesticides. The birds help keep down the insect population.

Article supplied by Bill Jolly and taken from a Chinese newspaper.

OUTING REPORT - GATTON FORESTRY: (28.4.91)

The April outing was well attended, our ranks being swelled by a good number of visitors from the Queensland Ornithological Society. The rallying point for the day was at Apex Lake, Gatton between 0700 - 0800 hours, this allowing participants from such disparate areas time to travel. This also allowed most people a leisurely walk around the lake as a prelude to the day. Apex Lake, as is the case with all local wetlands, is somewhat debilitated by the present dry weather conditions but the small gaggle of Cotton Pygmy-geese and a Black-necked Stork proved benevolent oracles to the day.

From the mustering point, we proceeded by a circuitous route via local wetlands to the forestry. En route, along Old Ropely Road, a large flock of Plumed Whistling Ducks was seen on an extensive farm dam. The raucous alarms of a group of Noisy Miners presaged a brief visit by a juvenile White-bellied Sea-eagle overhead.

Gatton forestry is arid at present, firmly embraced by a pre-winter dry and large areas of undergrowth have been recently fired. It didn't bode well for interests avian but we proceeded nevertheless. As it panned out we eventually managed to resurrect a respectable tally of 89 species for the day, not all seen in the forestry precincts however. The more noble of the local indigenes to grace our binoculars consisted of a large, drowsing Lace-monitor, Red-necked Wallabies as well as Common Bronzewing, Rainbow Bee-eaters, a lone Little Eagle, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes, Crested Shrike-tits and a rabble of local Honeyeaters. The recently sighted Black-chinned Honeyeaters did not deign to honour us with a visit. This was the case also with that other local misanthrope, the Red-chested Button-quail: such is birding. The highlight of the day was the brief appearance, around midday, of an errant Osprey over the parked cars. This denizen from the coast is a very occasional visitor to the Lockyer, this day's sighting being one of a few scattered recordings of the species meanderings.

After lunch back at Apex Lake garnished with the inevitable autopsys of the morning, a percentage of people chose home whilst the more intrepid (fanatic) proceeded to Lake Clarendon to round off the day. This area was fairly subdued - no brown bitterns - but a large number of magpie geese, a Whistling Kite and a magnificent adult White-bellied Sea-eagle were seen on this sojourn. From Clarendon people dispersed to their various homes and a flurry of exchanges of addresses and 'phone numbers seasoned with promises of exotic bird sightings if the recipient only has the good sense to follow up on these kind invitations. All in all, a good social day, some good birds and boding well for future joint outings between both clubs.

FUTURE OUTINGS: TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB

- Sunday May 26 Jandowae area. Meet in the Lion's Park in the middle of town at 8.00 am. Leader Terry Pacey 076 685582. (Note: Jandowae is about an hour and a half drive from Toowoomba. Travel to Dalby through the town and watch out for the sign on the right.) Terry has found out where all the local birds live and has some interesting species on the agenda.
- Sunday June 23 Flagstone Creek/Stockyard areas.
- Sunday July 28 Girraween National Park, Stanthorpe. Some members will be camping overnight on the Saturday.
- Sunday August 25 Murphy's Creek area.

NEW MEMBER: We welcome Claire Anderson, 7 Bussian Street, Toowoomba (359228) to the club and wish her lots of happy hours with us bird-watching.

AUSTRALIAN WATERBIRDS - A FIELD GUIDE:

As outlined in our last newsletter, this is available through the club at the reduced price of \$14.95. Please contact Ann Shore if you want to order a copy. Out soon!

CHECKLISTS: If anyone would like to receive the checklists for our coverage area posted with their newsletter each month, please contact the editor. The more people that fill in these the better our records will be.

MEMBER'S HOTLINE: If anyone would like to be included on the hotline to go and see new or interesting birds at short notice, please contact Ann Shore.

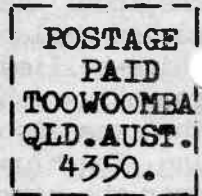
BIRD WATCHING TOURS: There are several brochures on these available from the secretary if you are planning on going on one. Please contact Ann shore.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY: In Toowoomba this will be held on Saturday 1 June at Laurel Bank Park Hall, Hill Street. The theme of the day is "No Excuse - Let's Reduce", and refers to global warming. There will be displays by various groups, the Environment Centre will be open, a Green House Display Kit prepared by Toowoomba and Region Environment Council will be on display, and a Bush Dance will be held at night. Hours will be from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm for displays. Toowoomba Bird Club will have a display at this function. Contact Ann Shore if you can help.

QUEENSLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY CONFERENCE: Thursday 11, Friday 12 July.

This will be held in Brisbane and the topic will be "The Status and Conservation of Birds and their Habitats in Queensland". Cost \$80.00. If you are interested in attending please contact Rod Hobson for more information.

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



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