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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. 187 - AUGUST 1991

FROM THE EDITOR: The Annual General Meeting of the Toowoomba Bird Club will be held on Tuesday, 15 October at the Toowoomba Education Centre, Baker Street. Our special guest speaker will be the Honourable Pat Comben M.L.A., Minister for Environment and Heritage, who is coming to speak to us as a fellow, keen bird-watcher. This address will be open to members and invited guests only as it is in no way a political talk but of an avian bent. Drinks and nibbles will be served at 7.00 p.m. followed by the guest speaker at 7.30 p.m. After Pat's talk we will hold our A.G.M. A nomination form for positions will appear in the next newsletter. Please mark the date on your calendar as we would like a good roll-up of members.

This month's outing will be in the Murphy's Creek/Helidon area. Lesley, who is leading the outing is optimistic that we may see Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters on the harder country around Murphy's Creek. This bird is not at present on our check-list.

More articles are needed for the newsletter. If you have anything of interest from a book or magazine or a personal account, it would be appreciated.

MASKED OWL FOUND LOCALLY: On May 7, 1991 a dead Masked Owl *Tyto novaehollandiae* was brought to me. It had been found dead on the Warrego Highway near the entrance to Redwood Park. The bird was a large female of intermediate colour phase i.e. off-white disc darker near the eyes; upperparts blackish-brown with a yellow wash and spotting on back of head, nape, back and wing coverts; underparts off-white with dark spotting and small amounts of rufous wash. The legs were feathered and the talons were large. This was a large, powerful bird reaching forty-five centimetres in length which is as large as these birds grow on the mainland. Some other measurements were: weight - 656.7 grams; wing-span approximately 84 centimetres; longest talon - 3.7 centimetres in length.

Reference: Simpson, K. & Day, N. (1984). The Birds of Australia, Lloyd O'Neil Pty. Ltd.

Pat McConnell

OUTING REPORT:

Girraween National Park 28 July 1991

The July outing was brilliant in more ways than one. It was one of those clear, sharp mornings that sparkled and crackled in the winter sun. Ice made patterns on the few puddles that were lying about after mid-week rain. 13 members and 2 visitors met at the information centre to be greeted by the call of the Red Wattlebird.

It is always a delight to me that within a two hour drive to the Granite Belt there is a wide diversity of birds to those in Toowoomba. The first of the species not seen at home was the Eastern Rosella, always a gem with its scarlet face.

We left the park and travelled on the old Wallangarra Road hoping to find Whitefaces. Though these were absent, great views of Brown Treecreepers, White-plumed Honeyeaters and a Crested Shrike-tit more than made up for them. Returning to the park we stopped off at a creek known as the habitat for White-browed Babblers. They turned up on cue and though not everyone had good sightings they did hear the calls and noted the more elusive behaviour than that of the Grey-crowned we're used to.

Lunch was enjoyed at the park where we were entertained by a pair of Scarlet Robins. Then it was off for a walk to The Junction. The birds were fairly scarce but the wildflowers and striking scenery were superb. There was plenty of water in the creeks and the characteristic granite rock of the area made the walk thoroughly enjoyable.

53 species were finally listed plus a Sugar Glider, Common Ringtail and Brushtail Possums and plenty of Rabbits were spotlighted by the intrepid campers.

Lesley Beaton

MEMBER'S BIRD NOTES - ENDING JULY 1991.

Emu	Jimbour	6.6.91	T.P.
Great Crested Grebe	Hood's Dam	3/5.7.91	R.H.
Brown Goshawk	Jandowae Town Dam	18.7.91	T.P.
Little Eagle	Grantham	17.7.91	R.H.
Spotted Harrier	Jimbour Plains	through July	T.P.
Black Falcon	Redwood Park	19.6.91	A.S.
Peregrine Falcon	Jimbour Plains	26.7.91	T.P.
Painted Button-quail	Grantham	21.7.91	R.H.
Pied Oystercatcher	Redcliffe	13.6.91	C.A.
Red-necked Avocet	Helidon Spa	June/July 91	P.Mc.et al
Broad-billed Sandpiper	Cairns Esplanade	14.3.91	D.G.
Emerald Dove	Sylvan Court, T'mba	3.5.91	M.J.
Red-winged Parrot	Westmar	30.6.91	C.A.
Budgerigar	Kleinton	15.6.91	A.D.
Masked Owl (road kill)	Redwood Park (bottom entrance)	8.5.91	P.Mc.
Australian Owlet-nightjar	Seventeen Mile road	30.7.91	R.H. P.Mc.
Red-backed Kingfisher (female)	Cranley	May-July '91	D.G. B.W. et al
White-tailed Kingfisher	Julatten	15.3.91	D.G.
Noisy Pitta	Redwood Park	30.6.91	D.G. R.H.
Noisy Pitta	Redwood Park	27.7.91	B.W.
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike (dark phase)	Redwood Park	27.7.91	B.W.
Ground Cuckoo-shrike	Richard's Court	1.4.91	P.Mc.
Australian Fernwren	Mt. Bartle Frere	9.3.91	D.G.
Western Gerygone	Flagstone Creek	28.4.91	P.Mc.
Golden bowerbird	Paluma	17.3.91	D.G.
Satin Bowerbird (5)	Muir St; Toowoomba	9.6.91	B.W.
Spotted Bowerbird	Westmar	30.6.91	C.A.
Great Bowerbird	Mt. Carbine	12.3.91	D.G.
Crimson Finch	Eubanee Swamp	17.3.91	D.G.
Blue-faced Finch	Mt. Lewis	16.3.91	D.G.
Black-backed Butcherbird	Laura	13.3.91	D.G.

C.A. - Clare Anderson; A.D. - Allan Davidson; D.G. - Don Gaydon; R.H. - Rod Hobson;
M.J. - Marilyn Jacobs; P.Mc. - Pat McConnell; T.P. Terry Pacey; A.S. - Ann Shore;
B.W. - Barbara Weller.

THE WANDERING ALBATROSS (*Diomedea exculans*)

"God save thee, ancient mariner!
From the friends that plague thee thus!-
Why lookst thou so?"
"With my cross-bow I shot the
ALBATROSS!"

Thus did the ancient mariner bring bad luck to his ship. Everyone else soon perished from thirst after the albatross had led them north out of the icy perils of the far southern ocean. There is no doubt that albatrosses can find their way across thousands of miles of featureless ocean. A recent radio-tracking study by French scientists has shown this.

The Wandering Albatross, *Diomedea exculans*, is the world's largest flying bird with a wingspan that can be over three metres and a weight of more than ten kilograms. It is found only in the southern oceans, right down to the Antarctic continent. It eats cuttle-fish and shell-fish from the surface of the ocean.

The Wandering Albatross nests on land, mostly on the oceanic islands. The French scientists caught six male albatrosses as the birds sat on their nests on tiny Crozet Island, half way between Southern Africa and Antarctica. They strapped radio transmitters weighing 180 grams on to the birds and then put them back on their nests. Soon the males were replaced on their nests by their mates, and they took off on foraging trips of from three to thirty-three days. In such a broad expanse of ocean, the only practicable way of following the birds' path was by satellite tracking. This is what the French workers did.

Just how far did the birds travel? Male D travelled the furthest - over 15 000 kilometres. He took a great looping path down to Antarctica and back to Heard Island and past Kerguelen Island on his way home thirty-three days later. The birds often averaged speeds of 50 - 60 kilometres per hour and flew day and night.

The most important factor for the flight plans of these huge birds was the speed and direction of the wind. By noting accurate records from the bureau of Meteorology in Melbourne, it was clear to the scientists that the albatrosses flew out using tailwinds. When they returned, they tracked into the wind just like a yacht. If it was calm, they rested on the sea surface. Such a large, heavy bird cannot expect to obtain sufficient lift from flapping its enormous wings - it relies greatly on the wind's energy to keep it aloft.

These careful scientific measurements have confirmed that albatrosses can cover huge distances of ocean and can find their way with unerring accuracy. The Ancient Mariner's albatross was indeed unlucky to meet such a gruesome fate. The world would be a poorer place without these glorious birds gliding over our southern oceans.

Adapted from Biology in Action, No.31, July 1990. Published by the Australian Academy of Science.

BIRD MIGRATION

Is bird migration genetically controlled or a learned behaviour?

The cuckoo leaves us in no doubt: his parents flee the responsibility that comes with parenthood and head south, long before the youngster has taken his first jump from the foster nets. But the story isn't always so clear and sometimes it is hard to determine the relative importance of learned and genetic behaviour.

Take the case of the warblers. Some species undertake long distance migration, others only local, some try partial migration while others have given up the whole idea as altogether too much. What is it that determines if and how far the birds will migrate?

Some clues have come from captive birds artificially raised from the egg. By keeping the birds under constant conditions of light, temperature and so on, the birds do show clear seasonal deposition of fat, a prelude to migration, and the extent of migratory behaviour of the captives is related to the duration and migratory distance of the wild population from which they came.

When a sedentary population of warblers was cross bred with a German migratory one, a bit less than half the offspring exhibited signs of migratory restlessness, and clearly were trying to head off in the same direction as their German parents had gone! Clearly both their urge to migrate and their direction of migration were inherited.

Adapted from Biology in Action, No.31, July 1990. Published by the Australian Academy of Science.

NEW MEMBERS: We welcome the following members to the club and trust their stay with us will be a long and fruitful one.

Mrs Jean Skinner, Grace's Road, via Bowraville, N.S.W. 2449 065 647795

Susan Audet, 2/58 Ipswich Street, Toowoomba. 4350. 391492

FUTURE OUTINGS

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB

Sunday, 25 August Murphy's Creek and Helidon. Meet at the Murphy's Creek store over the railway line at 7.30 a.m. Leader Lesley Beaton - 308481

Sunday, 22 Sept. Field Outing to Coolmunda Dam near Inglewood. Meet at the main picnic ground at the dam at 9.00 a.m. Leader Rod Hobson - 075 661379 (Coolmunda Dam is about two hours drive from Toowoomba).

QUEENSLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY (07 261 2391)

Saturday, 24 August Tambourine Mountain

Sat 14 - Sun 15 Springbrook

September

Wednesday 18 Sept. Morning Birdwalk at Thornlands

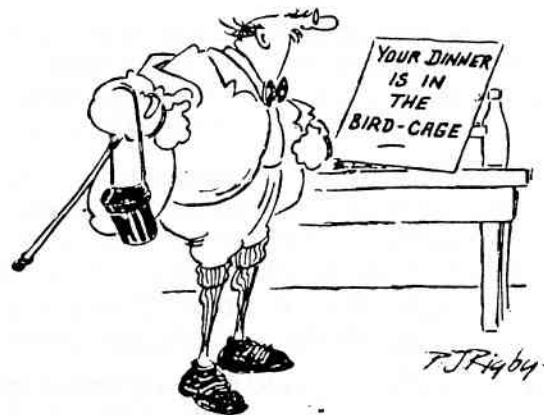
Sunday, 22 Sept. Bellthorpe

Saturday, 28 Sept. Noosa Heads

Saturday, 12 Oct. Mt. Cordeaux, Cunningham's Gap

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

the Annual General Meeting of the Toowoomba Bird Club will be held on Tuesday 15 October 1991 at the Toowoomba Education Centre in Baker Street. The meeting is open to members and invited guests only. Nibbles and drinks commencing at 7.00 p.m. Guest speaker at 7.30 p.m.



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