

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER



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No. 191 - DECEMBER 1991

EDITORIAL:

Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas! Is it really that time of year already? The festive season always seems to sneak up on me like a twitcher on a Wood Sandpiper. Statements like "Hurry, only five shopping days left until Christmas!" always seem to erupt out of the blue, catching the unprepared and turning even the most cool, collected people into blubbering panic-merchants. Still, once all the pandemonium is over and the big day has passed, its great to head out with your new binoculars/telescope/field-guide and indulge in some summer-time birdwatching.

The unusual climatic conditions are set to initiate more unusual movements among bird populations this summer, with water-birds likely to be of particular interest. Who knows what may roll on into Hoods? Since the last newsletter another new bird has paid Hoods a visit (details below). Summer is the time for watching wading birds in Australia, and what a fascinating time it always is! There is a certain mystique and charisma associated with sandpipers and their kind, appreciated only after one learns of their remarkable lifestyle. Wader-watching is in a bracket all of its own, and is certainly an interest which can become a passion. Rod Hobson's November outing (see report, this issue) gave members a chance to view several inland wader species, and a great educational time was had by all. Don't miss our February coastal wader outing in Brisbane for a chance to see many more species. Remember, most of the waders that are now occupying our mud-flats and beaches will be off to Siberia and elsewhere to breed come late summer, so now is the time to catch up with these little globe-trotters.

On a more administrative note, a reminder is hereby issued that subscriptions are now due and payable to Treasurer Nicki, and, for all you "culture-beasts" there's a coming treat detailed in this issue.

Finally, from everyone on the executive, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRD : No.271
 : GREENSHANK, *Tringa nebularia*.

Time / Date : 8.15 a.m. (E.S.T.) / 30.11.91.
 Place : Hood's Dam via Helidon. Q.
 A.T.S.: 9342 124539.

Observers : E. & R.Hobson.
 Optics : " Zeiss " 10 x 40B Binoculars.
 " Nikon " 10 x 25 Binoculars.
 " Carton " 20 x 60 Telescope.

Weather Conditions : Extremely humid - post thunderstorm, no breeze, 75% cloud cover. Visibility very good.

Distance to Subject : Variable - see comments.

Comments : Flushed initially from eastern shoreline. Bird took flight, uttering loud " tew, tew, tew " alarm calls the while till landing on the opposite bank. Flight with clipped wingbeat comparable to that of the Marsh Sandpiper, *Tringa stagnatalis*, but not as fast. Bird nervous and hard to approach, easily flushed. Good views only obtained through telescope. A solitary but Marsh Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Black-winged Stilt all closeby for size comparisons. Watched bird for approx. 20 minutes after which time it took to wing landing on small dam to the north on explosives factory land. No evidence of bird following morning - 9.30 a.m. (E.S.T.) R.G.H.

Field Marks : A large wader. Long, dark, slightly upturned bill. Grey-green legs trailing beyond tail in flight. White rump onto lower back distinctive during flight. No wingbars.

Similar Species considered : Marsh Sandpiper, *Tringa stagnatalis*, a smaller species with a long needle-like bill (also present this day for comparison).

R.G.Hobson
GRANTHAM.
30.11.91.

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NOVEMBER OUTING - LOCKYER WETLANDS.

One of the more esoteric " advantages " of the recent drought was capitalised upon by Toowoomba Bird Club members on the November outing. As a direct consequence of the drear conditions the executive had previously decided on a change of venue from Redwood Park, our usual " end of year " birding destination. There had been a general shift in bird populations because of the harsh climatic conditions. Redwood Park was desolate of its usual frugivores and, conversely, the local wetlands had a concentration of waterfowl because of the general dissipation of surface water occasioned by the drought. It was of this situation that we were able to take full advantage, recording 77 species for the day, with approximately 50% of the species sighted being waterbirds. As Toowoomba is land-locked with an absence of suitable habitat, especially for wading birds many members had a unique opportunity to observe such birds with quite a few " firsts " being added to many personal lists.

The outing commenced at 6.30 a.m. E.ST., 24.11.91 by Gatton Apex Lake where a rewarding hour was passed with the observing of such as Glossy Ibis, Wandering Whistling-Duck, Latham's Snipe and Marsh and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. From here we travelled directly to the backwaters of Atkinson's Lagoon recording Pallid Cuckoo and Australian Brush-turkey en route. The receding waters of the lagoon had exposed extensive mudflats, those areas greatly beloved by " waderphiles ". Here we weren't to be disappointed, recording eleven species of this type; Red-capped Plover, Red-necked Avocet, Marsh, Sharp-tailed and Curlew Sandpipers, Red-necked Stint and Latham's Snipe being the more noteworthy. Sandpipers were particularly abundant probing the flats, allowing close scrutiny by binocular and telescope. Large flocks of Whiskered Terns in every aspect of breeding plumage wheeled the waters and a single non-breeding White-winged Tern was noted 'midst their complement.

The highlight of the day was our sighting of a lone Bar-tailed Godwit, an unusual species inland but prevalent on coastal mudflats. The closely related Black-tailed Godwit is more likely to be encountered here, several sightings of this species having been

reported locally of late. Searching available literature, Storr and Roberts, I can find no reference to the Bar-tailed Godwit having been recorded in the Lockyer Valley previous. "The Atlas of Australian Birds" does record this species in the self same area of which I write but the records are scant, the reporting rate being less than 11% i.e. "the percentage of record sheets in the Field Atlas on which a given species was recorded." This was a good record for members who summoned the energy in the, by then, oppressive mid-day heat. Lunch was taken in the picnic area and events curtailed thereafter. On the homeward bound journey an unusual sight presented itself in a small farm dam adjacent the picnic area entrance. Telescopes revealed a wisp of 20+ Latham's Snipe festooning a rocky islet in the middle of the dam, a fitting end to the day. Now that the rains are upon us it may be several years before such an opportunity again presents itself to us in the Lockyer Valley.

R.G.Hobson
GRANTHAM.
15.12.91

UPDATED CHECKLIST AND "NEW OR UNUSUAL BIRD REPORT FORM"

Due to the influx of new species recorded in the Toowoomba district this year, the decision was made to update our area check-list. A copy of the new check-list is enclosed. As you will see, the new check-list retains the format of the old check-list with one notable addition: The introduction of a "New or Unusual Bird Report Form", to be submitted in conjunction with certain sightings, indicated upon the check-list by an asterisk. These forms, obtainable from the Record's Officer when required, are to be submitted along with check-lists in the usual fashion. The new or unusual sightings will then be assessed by the Rarities Committee and either accepted or rejected from inclusion in club records.

This may sound very draconian, but it will bring our club into line with the nation's most respectable ornithological clubs, and serves two important purposes with regard to our own club records:

1. It will ensure that false identifications of unusual birds do not enter club records, and just as importantly:
2. Will facilitate the collection of interesting data relating to the sightings of unusual birds by our club over the years. For example, instead of our records simply indicating that a Black-tailed Godwit (eg) was sighted in February 1983, they will in future indicate that the bird was alone, that it arrived in dry weather conditions, that it appeared nervous and edgy, had worn feathers, and was gone after three days residency (13-15th Feb) at Hoods Dam. The forms may even note how the bird was feeding, interacting with other waders etc.

Assessment by the Rarities Committee will apply to new bird sightings as well as the unusual sightings indicated upon the check-list. This should in no way discourage members from indicating an unusual bird upon their monthly check-list if they believe they have seen it. Conversely, this form provides us all with a chance to describe our great sighting in detail, and contribute to the club's data-base on birds of the Toowoomba area. Any members wishing to, but currently not receiving check-lists for monthly submission are invited to contact the Editor.

The Rarities Committee

MEMBER'S BIRD NOTES

All sightings as submitted by members of Toowoomba Bird Club. Accuracy not vouched for by T.B.C. Please check with observer before citing.

Black-necked Stork	Hood's Dam, Helidon.	08.09.91	K.T.
	Jandowae Town Dam.	02.10.91	T.P.
Freckled Duck (2)	Lake Bindegolly.	18.09.91	R.H., P.McC.
Blue-billed Duck (3)	Lake Bindegolly.	18.09.91	R.H., P.McC.
Osprey (nesting)	Burleigh Heads.	22.08.91	J.D.
Black Falcon	Redwood Park.	19.06.91	A.S.
Malleefowl (3)	Little Desert N.P., V.	19.10.91	R.H.
Spotless Crake	Tocumwal, N.S.W.	22.10.91	R.H.
Black-tailed Native-hen (2)	Jandowae Town Dam.	12.11.90	T.P.
Red-necked Stint (2)	Jandowae Town Dam.	12.11.90	T.P.
White-headed Pigeon	Bridge, Raff Sts. T'mba.	21.09.91	J.D.
Red-tail. B. Cockatoo (5)	near Helidon.	17.08.91	K.T.
	Grantham.	18.08.91	B.fm.
	Iredale.	30.08.91	L.A.
Yellow-tail. B. Cockatoo (3)	Helidon Dip.	08.09.91	K.T.
Musk Lorikeet	Toowoomba.	1/5.07.91	K.T.
	Muir St., T'mba.	3-15.10.91	B.W.
Superb Parrot	Tocumwal, N.S.W.	22.10.91	R.H.
Swift Parrot	Bruny Island, Tas.	21.09.91	D.G., D.H.
Mulga Parrot (2)	Kooranga Nth.S. School.	24.10.91	T.P.
Blue Bonnet (2)	10km. N.W. Jandowae.	24.10.91	T.P.
Barn Owl	Uni. Centre, T'mba.	20.09.91	B.W.
Eastern Grass Owl	Bedourie.	09.09.91	R.H., P.McC.
Red-backed Kingfisher	Jandowae Hospt. Grounds.	31.10.91	T.P.
Noisy Pitta	Jubilee Park.	25.08.91	B.fm., J.O'C.
* Wh.-bell. Cuckoo-shrike	Redwood Park.	27.07.91	B.W.
*		30.08.91	L.A.
Red-capped Robin	Goondiwindi.	30.06.91	C.A.
Eyrean Grasswren	Koonchera Sandhill, S.A.	15.09.91	R.H., P.McC.
Grey Grasswren	"Glengyle", S.W. Qld.	13.09.91	R.H., P.McC.
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Uni. College, T'mba.	20.06.91	P.McC.
Yellow-throated Honeyeater	Cradle Mtn., Tas.	13.09.91	D.G., D.H.
Black-headed Honeyeater	Spreyton, Tas.	09.09.91	D.G., D.H.
Crescent Honeyeater	Devonport, Tas.	09.09.91	D.G., D.H.
Forty-spotted Pardalote	Bruny Island, Tas.	20.09.91	D.G., D.H.
European Greenfinch	Molongghip, V.	18.10.91	R.H.
Tree Sparrow	Tocumwal, N.S.W.	21.10.91	R.H.
Plum-headed Finch	Jandowae Hospt. Grounds.	17.10.91	T.P.
Spotted Bowerbird	St. George.	30.06.91	C.A.
Masked Woodswallow	Lilydale	22.09.91	P.McC.
White-browed Woodswallow	Lilydale	22.09.91	P.McC.
Dusky Woodswallow (30+)	"Sylvan Court", T'mba.	21.09.91	M.J.

* both sightings of dark form bird.

C.A., C Anderson; L.A., L. Atzeni; B.fm., Booth family; J.D., J. Deuble; D.G., D. Gaydon; D.H., D. Hill; R.H., R. Hobson; M.J., M. Jacobs; P.McC., P. McConnell; J.O'C., J. O'Connor; T.P., T. Pacey; A.S., A. Shore; K.T., K. Treschman; B.W., B. Weller.

Records Officer.

"BIRDS AND BUGS"

Working in the more isolated regions of Australia does have its advantages. Very early one morning (3 a.m.) the lights around the drilling rig were engulfed by insects. Thousands of insects. When the sun came up, the insects hit the ground and about ten minutes later, the Fork-tailed Kites (and a few Brown Falcons and Ravens) hit the bugs. In an area the size of about 2.5 football-fields would have been close to five hundred Fork-tailed Kites madly picking away at this feast upon the ground. An hour later the kites had dispersed and the usual number of up to fifty were beginning to ride the thermals above the oil field. Other interesting sightings recorded in the Jackson area were Chestnut-crowned Babblers, Brown-headed Honeyeaters, and Singing Honeyeaters.

David Hill

**** CULTURAL FEAST ****

Our own Toowoomba Bird Club, together with the Withcott P&C and the Withcott Progress Association, is presenting a night at the Repertory Theatre for a performance of George Bernard Shaw's classic, "Pygmalion". The show will be performed by the Young Actors Guild and in addition to raising money for our club, the night represents exceptional value at (probably) \$8 per ticket. If you (or someone you know) are interested, please contact the treasurer, Nicki Thompson.

*** COMING EVENTS ***

January 1992 Outing : Dwyer's Scrub 26th January 1992
Assembly Point : Junction Flagstone Creek/Stockyard Roads
7.00 a.m. (6.00 a.m. E.S.T.)
Leader : Lesley Beaton

Hobby'n'Craft Spectacular 21-23 Feb 1992 Volunteers required, contact Ann

February 1992 Outing: Wader Outing (Brisbane) 23rd February 1992
Leader: Don Gaydon

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