

"To encourage the observation and study of the birds of the Toowoomba area."

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NEWS-SHEET No. 20 - AUGUST, 1977.

Over the week-end of 6/7th August the State High School Field Naturalists conducted a camp-out at Bunya Mountains National Park. They were accompanied by several members of our Club who assisted with identifications and in a general way established the beginning of a spirit of co-operation between the two Clubs. Several of the students have asked to join us. This raises the possibility of contact with other High Schools which may have like-minded students.

With the sighting of a Noisy Pitta and Scaly Thrush it was, all in all, a most successful week-end. Your Editor would like to thank John Coman for his invitation to participate.

Several of the student members will be taking part in our Second Annual Bird Count, set down for Sunday, October 23rd. They will be of much value with several of the common species.

In response to our letter to RAOU regarding the Atlas of Australian Birds, the following reply was received.

119, Dryburgh St.,
North Melbourne,
Victoria, 3051.

✓ Dear Mr. Shaw,

Thank you for your letter of 5 July and offer of help with the Atlas. Nine Atlas kits are enclosed as requested. If members are participating as individuals, could you please let me have their names so that they can be sent the Newsletters. In any case you will be on the mailing list as secretary. Record Sheets put in by the Club as a unit, should have someone's name on them as a contact in case any records have to be queried.

We would be most interested in any old records you have for the Historical Atlas including those from around Toowoomba itself. Field trips to unatlassed areas would be very useful indeed for the Field Atlas. Bill Horton will have the most up-to-date information on which these areas are.

Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely,
Margaret Blakers
Atlas Field Officer.

Elsewhere in this issue is an article which sets out the arrangements made for Club participation in this most worthwhile scheme. Contribution to the Atlas will give added interest to your birding, both on Club level and personal. Join in.

Finally, this month, here are two more dates and events for your diary. The Q.O.S. is conducting a camp-out at Dalrymple Creek in the Coomburra area on 10-11/8/77 and their Annual Bird Count is to take place on October 16th, 1977.

Ron Hopkinson,
Editor.

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRDS.

✓ 180. Black-fronted Dottorel (*Charadrius melanops*). 24.7.77. Treatment plant at Wetalla.

Three of this species seen on the edge of settling tank by members on Club Field Day. Orange bill, red eye ring and black front all confirmed.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES.

- Australian Gannet. 10.7.77. Hervey Bay. REH. 18.7.77. Broadwater, Southport. Ron W. VW.
- Booby. 10.7.77. Hervey Bay. REH.
- Little Pied Cormorant. 29.7.77. Ringmere, Withcott. EJ. WJ. RS. AW. CD.
- Little Black Cormorant. 29.7.77. " " EJ. WJ. RS. AW. CD.
- Large Heron. 23.7.77. Dalby. AG. SMG.
- Reef Heron. 22.6.77. Brampton Island. CD. 18.7.77. Southport. Ron W. VW.
- Mangrove Heron. 11.7.77. Hervey Bay. REH.
- Mankeon Night-heron. 23.6.77. Townsville. RGH.
- Jabiru. 3.7.77. Mt. Stuart, Townsville. RGH.
- Glossy Ibis. 25.6.77. Clevedon. RW.
- Royal Spoonbill. 30.7.77. Ringmere, Withcott. EJ. WJ. RS. AW. CD.
- Yellow-billed Spoonbill. 23.7.77. Dalby. AG. SMG.
- Osprey. 22.6.77. Brampton Island. CD. 11.7.77. Hervey Bay. REH.
- Crested Mink. 23.7.77. Nr. Lion's Pk., Warwick Rd. CB. REH.
- Brahminy Kite. 21.6.77. Cape Hillsborough. CB. 18.7.77. Southport. Ron W. VW.
- Grey Goshawk. 22.7.77. Near Ravensbourne. SK.
- White-breasted Sea-eagle. 22.6.77. Brampton Island. CB. 11.7.77. Hervey Bay. REH. 18.7.77. Southport. Ron W. VW.
- Spotted Harrier. 23.7.77. Oakey. AG. SMG.
- Stubble Quail. 19.7.77. Harlaxton. JC.
- Mustard. 24.6.77. Near Moranbah. CB.
- Red-capped Dotterel. 25.6.77. Clevedon. RW. 18.7.77. Southport. Ron W. VW.
- Pied Stilt. 8.7.77. Iredale Road. REH. WJ. 24.7.77. Somerset Dam. SK.
- Bar-tailed Godwit. 18.7.77. Southport. Ron W. VW.
- White-headed Pigeon. 9.7.77. Webb Park. CB. 26.7.77. Queens Park. MJ. 1.8.77. Downslands. SK.
- Cockatiel. 17.7.77. Ocean Street. JC.
- Bar-tailed Cuckoo. 11.7.77. Ringmere, Withcott. (two birds). EJ.
- Pheasant Coucal. 5.7.77. Ringmere, Withcott. REH. WJ.
- Barn Owl. 4.7.77. West Street (past DDIAE). WJ.
- White-backed Swallow. 4.7.77. Harlaxton. JC. 31.7.77. Withcott. MD.
- Lenon-breasted Flycatcher. 26.6.77. Crystal Creek. RGH.
- Golden-headed Cisticola. 19.7.77. Harlaxton. JC.
- Red Wattlebird. 3.7.77. Webb Street. GC.
- Blue-faced Honeyeater. 10.7.77. Webb Street. GC.
- Olive-backed Sunbird. 21.6.77. Eimeo Beach (Mackay). CB. 5.7.77. Townsville. RW.
- Great Bowerbird. 23.6.77. Mt. Elliott. RGH.

CB: Chris Bianchi. GC: Graham Corbin. JC: Jim Corbin. CD: Coranne Dolley.
 MD: Mick Dolley. SMG: Sylvia Graham. AG: Alan Graham. RGH: Rod Hobson.
 MJ: Marilyn Jacobs. WJ: Eileen Jolly. WJ: Bill Jolly. SK: Shane Kennedy.
 RS: Robert Shaw. AW: Anne White. Ron W: Ron Wilson. VW: Viv Wilson.
 RW: Rheta Wright. RH: Ron Hopkinson.

RAOU ATLAS OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS.

Following our communications with the R.A.O.U. regarding the Atlas of Australian Birds, the club will be making available to the Atlas all club records including our first Annual Summary as published in our February 1977 News-Sheet.

Additionally the club will be submitting a composite Record Sheet each month in respect of our local study area, such information being taken from the gold checklists which are already completed monthly by members. But because our local study area falls across two of the 10' blocks required by RAOU, a slight adjustment is required when marking the gold checklist. Two columns will appear next to the species name, one for "U" birds (Uprange) and the other for "D" (Downrange). It will only require an "X" in the appropriate column to indicate whether the bird was seen East or West of the dividing line. For all practical purposes this line is one of North-South direction which just touches the tip of Katoomba Point and crosses the Warrago Highway at the entrance to Redwood Park opposite Yukana Vale.

A list of the names of participating members will be forwarded to the RAOU so that those members will receive the Atlas Newsletter. Atlas kits will be available on the next Club Field Day (21.9.77). As need arises further supplies can be obtained through the club.

As Editor-in-Records Officer I will be co-ordinating the Club's contribution to the Scheme. This will entail assembling members' lists, condensing them into one composite Atlas Record Sheet each month, undertaking any necessary translation into RAOU usage,

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RAOU ATLAS OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS (cont/d.)

answering members' queries etc., and as such it will be my name that will appear on the sheet as the Club's nominee, (although, as already stated, names of all participating members will be forwarded to the RAOU). Information as to latitude and longitude of areas on the Downs may be readily obtained from either myself or Bill Jolly, however, if members wish to procure maps for their own use the very useful National Topographic Series are available from the Lands Office in the Court House building in Margaret Street. These are to a scale of 1:100000 which gives a wealth of detail and they show latitude and longitude in 10' increments. They are priced at \$2.10 per sheet.

Study area.

It has been suggested by several members that in view of the steadily increasing number of observers who are contributing to our activities this might be an appropriate time to consider the expansion of our local study area from its present 10 km radius to an area comprising the two 10' blocks referred to earlier, in effect one block Uprange, coinciding closely with our present area, and one block Downrange, incorporating all of Flagstone Creek Road and some way beyond Helidon township.

This would open up some interesting new areas for us, at the same time providing scope for an interesting comparative study between adjacent Uprange and Downrange areas of identical size, and will doubtless be a topic for discussion on our next Field Day.

Ron Hopkinson.

A WHITE-BLACK BIRD.

Further to Reg Eley's comment (News-Sheet No. 19) that many birds have been recorded with some variations of white, I would like to record the presence of a Torresian Crow (*Corvus orru*) of this type which is resident at Charlton. I have seen this crow many times over the last six months and have observed it to have some white neck and breast feathers, some white upper-wing coverts, 3 or 4 white secondary wing feathers on the left wing and one white tail feather. This pattern of white feathers is perhaps the kind of thing you would expect from random mutation.

John Coman.

(Editor's footnote: Two days after receiving the above note from John Coman I received the following from Shane Kennedy.)

BUS BIRDING.

Among other things, one of my daily duties here at Downlands College is a bus run to Kingsthorpe each morning and afternoon. These trips provide me most of my bird-watching outside of the Downlands area. Identification cannot always be positive and many is the time that I have zoomed past a U.F.O. without having the time to stop and check it out. One such time was 5/7/77 when I saw a Torresian Crow on the road ahead - I gave it little attention until it spread its wings to flee from my approach. Its flight uncovered large patches of white on both wings, and on the tail. Was it a Crow? Currawong? White-winged Chough? ZOOOOOOOOOOOM, too late.

Three trips later, I glimpsed it again. I was ready for it this time, so I slowed down a little yes, a mutated Crow. Mutations are not all that common and although this one is not all that spectacular it would be worth keeping an eye out for it if you are heading toward Oakey. Both sightings were about two hundred metres west of Charlton.

Shane Kennedy.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE
(*Elaeus notatus*).

Thank you Rod Hobson for your comments on the prey of these kites as this makes some sense of my observation.

Some months ago while our house was being built at Oakey I made prolonged observations on our pair of resident kites. They were seen several times having mock fights and chasing one another through their territory. Then one afternoon I observed the smaller male hovering over the female who was perched on top of a telephone post. She flew off and was followed by the male. This behaviour continued for about half an hour to the accompaniment of much screeching from both birds. Finally the female remained perched on a telephone wire and the male hovered over her and landed on her back. The male repeated this a few times and then the female twisted her tail to the side allowing their cloacas to be adpressed briefly. Having over, the birds flew off, indulging in some aerobatics.

As a sequel to this story the birds have since raised a pair of young birds which stayed with the parents for about three weeks after leaving the nest and have since disappeared.

John Coman.

BROWN BITTERN OR IMMATURE NANKEN NIGHT-HERON!

What makes a Brown Bittern(?) behave in a most un-Bittern-like manner ... and so contrary-wise to THE Bird Books?

On a recent week-day visit to Cooby Creek lower Picnic area, we were treated to the rare sighting of a Brown Bittern(?) sitting on a dead branch one foot over water at the bullrush area near the Echo Tunnel. We all walked to within 8 feet of him or her for closer inspection throughout the afternoon, and apart from turning the head and looking straight at us, the bird at no time showed any visible sign of fear.

When first viewed the beautiful legs were entwined one above the other on an angled branch, but later on the bird stood on one leg for well over half an hour. The yellow green bright face patches were clearly visible, and the legs, which were a beautiful blue green (almost an aqua) were fully eight inches in length and the feet quite large. The head, apart from turning to view us or the dartings of a nearby Azure Kingfisher, was set well down between the shoulders, and at no time did the bird stretch the neck (unfortunately). The plumage from above the bill to the tail was brown mottled and under the bill was buff. The only feature which differed to the Brown Bittern's description in both Slaters and the Readers Digest was the eyes, which I paid particular attention to, and they were dark brown ... very similar to the eyes of the bittern in the Readers Digest photo. The body was stocky with the head recessed and approximately 12 to 14 inches in length ... the legs were at least 8 inches ... and overall height would have been about 22 inches. The bill was mottled.

We viewed the bird quite openly for about one and three quarter hours. Fantastic!

rare sighting of a Brown Bittern(?) or an immature Night-heron(?) or a (?). What is it was, "IT" really made my day.

Vera Simon.

REPORTED SIGHTING OF PARADISE PARROTS.

In a conversation with Mr. Damien McGreevy, a research technician with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Mr. McGreevy told me of a reported sighting of Paradise Parrots (*Psephotus pulcherrimus*) near Kingaroy recently. Although the sighting is not substantiated, the observer is regarded by National Parks and Wildlife Service as reliable. So maybe it's not too much to hope

John Corman.

FIELD DAY REPORT - 24.7.77.

My hopes had momentarily diminished on first encounter with the clear blue, but blustery cold morning. However, as we set out along Old Goombungee Road in convoy it soon became evident that cold weather could do little to deter the general enthusiasm held by the group.

For some time now we have been only too aware of the need to investigate the regions of our local study area which up to now have not been explored as fully as others. One objective of the July Field Day was to cover as much of the Western perimeter as possible in order to gain an idea of the inhabitant birdlife.

We had not ventured far along our route before a wheeling flock of Straw-necked Ibis with the occasional White Ibis and White-faced Heron took our attention with the exception of one member whose binoculars chose to fall apart at this time. Further on, numerous swallows were observed flying over the sewage treatment pond at Wetalla. Vera adeptly located the presence of a suspected Dotterel-like form on the water's edge. On further inspection by all members, this bird, along with two others, proved to be a Black-fronted Dotterel. A new sighting for our Teewoomba list, bringing the total up to 180. Little could these delightful birds have been aware of the pleasure and excitement their presence gave to a line of keen observers.

Leaving our Dotterels behind somewhat reluctantly, we crossed the study area boundary just outside Gowrie Junction having previously stopped to take in excellent views of Banded Plover feeding in an open field. Warmth and shelter from the sharp winds provided by a sloping creek bank was most welcome for a morning tea stop. Here, while we warmed ourselves in the sun, a band of Zebra Finches held our attention by darting playfully in and out of a small, nearby tree.

Moving on once more most of the group gained the first of a few sightings we were to have of Brown Falcons, one of these being within the boundary, near Westbrook. Between Westbrook and Lion's Park, our lunching venue for the day, the sighting of Cockatiels high up in a decaying tree proved to be our only stop on the way.

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FIELD DAY REPORT - 24.7.77. (cont/d.)

Lyons Park

An initial perusal of the day and reed areas failed to locate by sight our Reed Warbler although its presence was evidenced by a variety of calls heard from the mass of rustling reeds.

Perhaps the most important part of a Field Day is in the time of congenial talk which invariably accompanies lunch, whether it be barbecue or sandwiches. Further patient observation of the pond and reeds after lunch produced open sightings of the Reed Warbler, Red-rumped Parrots, a lone Moorhen, Little Grebes, Blue Wren and Scaly-breasted Lorikeets were also present. It seemed fitting that above all, one could not but notice, if not feel, the commanding presence of the Black-shouldered Kite, ever watchful from his high vantage point - and could one perhaps see approval in his intent gaze as we drove away. I for one like to believe it.

Chris Bianchi.

Species List - Field Day - 24.7.77.

Little Grebe	Red-rumped Parrot
Little Pied Cormorant	Kookaburra
White-necked Heron	White-backed Swallow
White-faced Heron	Welcome Swallow
White Ibis	Tree Martin
Straw-necked Ibis	Fairy Martin
Black Duck	Richard's Pipit
Wood Duck	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Black-shouldered Kite	Willie Wagtail
Spotted Harrier	Clamorous Reed Warbler
Brown Falcon	Golden-headed Cisticola
Nankeen Kestrel	Superb Blue Wren
Dusky Moorhen	Noisy Miner
Masked Plover	Striated Pardalote
Banded Plover	Zebra Finch
Black-fronted Dotterel	Common Starling
Domestic Pigeon	Common Mynah
Galah	Australian Magpie-lark
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	Pied Butcherbird
Little Lorikeet	Australian Magpie
Cockatiel	Pied Currawong
Pale-headed Rosella	Torresian Crow.

FIELD DAY FOR AUGUST!

Date: Sunday, 21st August, 1977. Place: Redwood Park (top end).

Leader: Bill Jolly. Assembly Point: Pigott's car park. Time: 8.30 a.m.

NEW MEMBER.

The Club is pleased to welcome Leslie Boyce, 6 Range Street, Toowoomba.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

Q.O.S. Newsletter. Vol. 8, No. 6, June 1977. Vol. 8, No. 7, July 1977.
Darling Downs Naturalist, August 1977.
The Bird Observer, No. 547 June 1977. No. 548 July 1977.
Catalogue of The Bird Observers Club Library 1977.
Unimbinno, Vol. 11, No. 7, July 1977.