



Newsletter of the

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB inc.

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MEMBERSHIP : Adults/Families \$18 Students \$10

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

No. 203 - DECEMBER 1992

EDITORIAL:

Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas! Poor old Santa, scratching his silver head, wondering what gifts to bring all these birdos. Maybe some are longing for a better pair of binoculars or a telescope; others for some bird literature. How can I tell the old guy that for my Christmas present, I'd really like to see some unusual birds in wild and wonderful circumstances? It could be difficult for him to arrange. A bottle of Jack Daniels No.7 under the tree, together with a copy of "The Birds of Tierra del Fuego" and a note saying, "See how you go with these", is probably the best Santa could manage. That being the case, I'd be better wishing for one of those beautiful R.A.O.U. 1993 bird calendars, which, by pure co-incidence, we happen to have for sale. (Contact Ann if you wish to buy me one at our special price).

Don't forget about our Christmas break-up BBQ, a great chance to meet other people with a love of birds and to socialise with fellow members. See you all there. Merry Christmas!

T.B.C. NOVEMBER OUTING REPORT - The Palms N.P., Cooyar, 29.11.92

The Palms National Park is only an hours drive from Toowoomba and is a very picturesque area. It is an extremely small park and, because of this confinement of habitat, the birds are easy to observe. It was only a small group that left the meeting point at Crows Nest, others probably dissuaded by the early morning thunderstorm. However no inclement weather upset our outing and the park lived up to its reputation. When we arrived there was a great deal of bird activity along the reedy creek and in the eucalypt forest. Wrens, thornbills, and whistlers were everywhere.

On entering the vine scrub and beautiful palm grotto, we had great views of Rufous Fantails, Black-faced Monarchs, Emerald Dove, and a male Brush-turkey tending his mound. During our morning tea break, Pacific Bazas (Crested Hawks) were circling overhead and perching in the tree-tops, while a Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove called from the dense scrub. Further searching for this bird denied us a sighting. The flora of the area particularly caught our attention; the slender palms, stately rainforest trees, the heady-perfumed native Jasmine. A lovely outing with 81 species of bird recorded.

Lesley Beaton

FOOTNOTE: Guess who called for lunch during the November outing ?

The arachnid atom first spied by Don assaulting the vastness of the eucalypt trunk (because it was there ?) was of the bizarre and little known order Pseudoscorpionida (= Chelonethida). Variously called Pseudoscorpions, False Scorpions or Book Scorpions, they are related to those more familiar arachnids; the spiders, true scorpions and the ticks and mites. Although the pedipalps of many Pseudoscorpion species contain venom glands, these creatures are so small as to be harmless to humans. They live under bark, in leaf litter etc. and are predatory on smaller invertebrates. As their name suggests they resemble the better known true scorpions but without that order's slender tail and sting. These tiny creatures have the strange ability of suddenly walking backwards, a sort of Vince Lester like octopod. The Pseudoscorpionida contains about 2,000 world species, being most abundant in tropical regions. What a little ripper.

Records Officer.

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRD: No.275

Time/Date : BLACK-EARED CUCKOO, *Chrysococcyx osculans*
: a.m. 16/11/92
Place : Jones' Rd., Withcott.
Observers : A.Shore, P.Cleary.
Optics : Hanimex 10x50 binoculars
: Tasco 8x30 binoculars
: Helis 8x30 binoculars
Weather Conditions : Overcast, hot and humid. Visibility good.
Distance to Subject : 2-5 metres from ground level.
Comments : Foraging and feeding. Solo. Apparently unconcerned by observers' presence. Feeding amongst Lantana, *Lantana camara*, and Balloon Cotton, *Asclepias fruticosa*, amidst Casuarina and Melaleuca woodland. Bird subsequently shown E.& W.Jolly in same area that afternoon. Also P.McConnell (T.B.C.), afternoon, 18.11.92.
Field Marks : Uniform grey/brown above. Rump very pale by contrast. Tail tipped white. Very dark eye. Very obvious dark black eye-stripe extending from black bill through eye and curving down neck. White eye-stripe above. Underparts grey/white. Upper breast washed soft salmon/buff. Undertail brown, barred white. Black legs. Adult bird.
Similar Species Considered: HORSFIELDS' BRONZE-CUCKOO, *Chrysococcyx basalis*. Subject very plain coloured above with prominent, curving eye-stripe. Lacked any sign of barring on belly or flanks.

Precis of Toowoomba Bird Club - " New or Unusual Bird Report Form ", submitted 17.11.92, accepted 19.11.92.

Footnote: It appears that there might well be a recent irruption of this species into Toowoomba/Lockyer Valley areas, perhaps drought induced. Witness also recent sighting/s of Black-chinned and Painted Honeyeaters, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, Freckled Duck, Hoary-headed Grebe. A probable second Black-eared Cuckoo sighting at Soda Springs, P.McConnell on the morning, 17.11.92, confirmed by R.Hobson with the sighting of an adult bird, same area, mid-morning, 18.11.92. Keep eyes open and focusing fingers ready, folks - a rare opportunity. More on cuckoos anon.

Records Officer.

REPORT ON QUEENSLAND TWITCH COMPETITION - 24/25 Oct 1992

There was a sense of expectation in the air as we sat on the wooded bank at the rear of Lake Clarendon, counting down the minutes until twelve noon. It was at midday that the "Queensland Twitch" would begin, and Captain McConnell was busy marshalling his troops in preparation for 24 hours frantic birdwatching. The orders were laid on the line : record as many species as possible in the given time period. A group of Grey-crowned Babblers tumbled by. Damn, couldn't they delay their passing for two minutes more ?! "Keep an eye on them!", rang out the instructions, "they could be hard to get later!". A Willy Wagtail called out. "Stay right where you are, you little devil!", thought all simultaneously, and hoped wagtails had E.S.P.. It was important to nail common species at the first available opportunity and take nothing for granted; we dreaded the thought of finishing in 24 hrs time without Willy Wagtail on the list!

As Al Young (our time-keeper and driver) counted down the final seconds, the origin of the competition name became obvious. I looked across at our captain for inspiration; he was beginning to twitch and palpitate fervently in the excitement of the moment. It was infectious. Soon we were all quivering and squirming like a school of beached mullet. All of a sudden it was midday, and, just as though someone had opened the door of a cage containing dangerous animals, the "Unleaded Petrels" were unleashed. Grey-crowned Babbler and Willy Wagtail were the first two birds ticked.

Competition rules modified our behaviour. At least three out of four team members had to witness each bird and be agreed on its identification before it could be recorded. Over the next 24 hrs this was to cause several heart-aches as certain species were heard or seen by insufficient team members. Probably the most comical situation to arise whilst obeying this rule occurred on the second day, in Brisbane. It involved the spectacle of McConnell and Gaydon (both of whom had just sighted a Collared Sparrowhawk swiftly disappearing over a house roof) charging down a suburban street in Ormiston, binoculars dangling, dragging an as-yet-unsighted Atzeni by the scruff of the neck in a desperate attempt to obtain the vital third verification. After covering several blocks, frightening the local gardeners, and totally exhausting ourselves, "Collared Sparrowhawk" was ticked in resounding fashion, and Lesley didn't feel so bad about having stayed in the car.

When midday Sunday finally arrived, we had given the Lockyer Valley, Mt Glorious, and the Brisbane coast-line a fairly thorough working, finishing with the grand total of 200 species. As we sat outside the take-away shop at Wellington Point, ravenously consuming Chicko Rolls and slurping on flavoured milk, we wondered whether our aggregate would serve us well in comparison with other teams in the state-wide competition. We were hopeful, but on reflection were more than satisfied with a great weekend's birding and the camaraderie of our team effort, regardless of how we fared in the contest. We had recorded some interesting sightings, the most significant being an Osprey at Lake Clarendon. As it turned out we finished fifth state-wide, the winning team from Townsville recording an incredible 239 species.

Michael, Lesley, Pat, and I would like to express special thanks to our driver, Al Young, and apologise for not listing the Paradise Parrot he saw while we were all busy trying to identify a Pee-wee. All sponsorship money raised during the Twitch will go to the R.A.O.U Research Fund, to be spent on research into threatened birds like the Star Finch and Regent Honeyeater. It is hoped that next year we may enter several Toowoomba Bird Club teams in this event.

Don Gaydon

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.

Magpie Goose	Landsborough	15.11.92	B.fm.
Blue-billed Duck (2)*	Janke's Dam	01.10.92	C.D.
Square-tailed Kite	Lake Cootharaba	29.08.92	R.H.
Black Falcon	George St., Helidon	20.09.92	P.McC.
Black-breast.B-quail (2)	Ravensbourne	21.09.92	R.H., P.McC.
Little Button-quail (2)	Woodlands	12.10.92	R.H.
Baillon's Crake (6)	Freeman's Waterhole	01.09.92	R.H.
Australian Crake	Janke's Dam	09.10.92	R.H.
Spotless Crake	Puzzling Gully	01.10.92	R.H.
Painted Snipe (1 male)	Woodlands	05.10.92	R.H.
" " (6)	Lake Clarendon	13.10.92	C.D., R.H.
Red-capped Plover	Hood's Dam	13.09.92	P.McC.
Lesser Crested Tern (5)**	Wynnum Boat Harb.	13.09.92	R.H.
Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	Noosa N.P.	24.08.92	R.H.
Topknot Pigeon (c.20)	Stuart St.N., T'mba.	07.08.92	N.T.
Red-tail.Bl.-Cockatoo (3)	Wilsonton	23.09.92	T.P.
Crimson Rosella (4)	Nth.S.School, T'mba.	26.08.92	N.T.
Powerful Owl (juv)	Redwood Park	30.10.92	P.McC.
Masked Owl	Lockyer Forestry	10.09.92	C.D., R.H.
Sooty Owl	Ravensbourne	11.11.92	R.H., P.McC.
White-thr.Needletail***	Gatton (in township)	04.11.92	C.D.
Fork-tail. Swift (1 bird)	" " "	22.10.92	C.D.
Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike	Redwood Park	30.10.92	P.McC.
Red-capped Robin	Toowoomba Cemetery	25.07.92	N.T.
Crested Shrike-tit	Helidon Dip	16.11.92	J.L.
Rufous Songlark	Withcott	20.09.92	A.S.
Brown-headed Honeyeater	Jones' Rd., Withcott	25.10.92	P.C.et al.
Painted Honeyeater ****	Inverai	14.11.92	T.P.
Dusky Honeyeater	Fraser Island	25.09.92	N.T.
Paradise Riflebird	Ravensbourne	22.09.92	P.McC.
White-browed Woodswallow	Jones'Rd., Withcott	18/19.9.92	L.A.et al.

L.A., L.Atzeni; M.A., M.Atzeni; B.fm., Booth family; P.C., P.Cleary; C.D., C.Dollery; D.G., D.Gaydon; R.H., R.Hobson; J.L., J.Lund; P.McC., P.McConnell; T.P., T.Pacey; N.T., N.Thompson; A.S., A.Shore.

* These birds noted to have raised young at this place. Three well developed juveniles of the species noted here, 28.11.92, R.H., M.A., P.McC. Prior breeding of this species rarely, if ever, recorded in Queensland. Col Dollery's presentiment was right.

** 2 birds in breeding plumage, 3 in non-breeding. Observed in company of Caspian and Crested Terns. Lesser Crested Tern : " Uncommon offshore and rare in sheltered saltwaters ", Roberts, Gregory J., p.20, *The Birds of South-east Queensland*, Qld. Conservation Council, 1979.

*** First local sightings for the season of this species. Ditto for the Fork-tailed Swift. Can any other member/s beat these dates?

**** This sighting in the same stand of Brigalow, *Acacia harpophylla*, with fruiting Grey Mistletoe, *Amyema quandang* var. *bancrofti*, as previously sighted, 20.12.91, R.H., T.P. & 19.04.92, D.G., R.H., T.P. Looks like a good spot for this rare nomad.

Records Officer

THE SAME OLD BIRDS ?

There was a time when the joking remark "What, are you watching those same old birds again?" was addressed to me. However, I persisted, dropping whatever the job at hand might be to snatch binoculars and check on just what had caught my attention. Despite the implication that one's garden could not go on turning up trumps with yet more hitherto unseen species in that one small area, I still remained hopeful. This expectation was fully vindicated on 9 September when I noticed a small light-brown bird foraging on the ground a short distance below the house. There was no question - it had to be a female White-winged Triller, never noticed here before. She disappeared shortly but, following up activity in nearby small trees, I found her again, this time with a male partner.

The next day, again at lunch time, the female reappeared accompanied then by three males in differing stages of undress - wings and tail had the expected smart black and white patterning but the head and back presented the ragged, mottled effect of an incomplete change-over from eclipse to breeding plumage. Since then, their trilling calls can be heard frequently as they flit about in mine and neighbouring gardens. The blossoming Callistemons are a favourite haunt where they busily dip their bills into the flowers. This surprised me as I had thought of them as purely insectivorous birds. Now, some two weeks from the original sighting, the males are slowly acquiring their full plumage, one almost perfect while the other still retaining various amounts of brown. I wonder now - where will they nest?

It is not just the trillers that have been delighting me recently as on successive days different cuckoos were here, both ground-feeding when seen and both strangers in this garden - or at least to my knowledge. The first a Horsfield's Bronze and the second a Shining Bronze, the wonderful metallic green and rich purplish-bronze of the latter catching my eye as the sun glinted on its wings.

Who says they are just the same old birds? Isn't it always worth another look even in such well-known surroundings?

Ann Shore

THE SEASON OF THE TREE-CREEPER

Seeing the White-throated Tree-creeper is like seeing a good friend, it always gives me a feeling that the outing was worthwhile. Spying the Red-browed Tree-creeper at Goomburra was rewarding. Recently I had the pleasure of chasing a White-browed Tree-creeper across an almost treeless paddock near Eromanga, far-western Queensland, its white wing stripe giving it away instantly. All these were good sightings but the most memorable is my encounter with the Black-tailed Tree-creeper.

Up in the gulf country, near Doomadgee, I was staking-out a waterhole when I saw first the female, then the male. I began to stalk the male to see how close I could get. Five metres on any bird is pretty good. I was walking around the edge of the waterhole on a large patch of dried-out reeds/water-plants of some kind, when the tree-creeper disappeared around the side of a nearby tree-trunk. I took a crunching step. The TC popped his head around the corner. I froze. He popped back around. I took a step. Crunch. He popped up. I froze. He popped back. Step, crunch. Pop up, freeze, pop back, step, crunch, pop up, freeze, pop back. Finally I got too close for his comfort and he flew off to tell his lady some loony human kept taking a step every time he was out of sight. She probably told him not to encourage the weirdo.

David Hill

re previous article: For those who don't know him, David "Shagg" Hill is a old TBC member, now employed in the oil-rigging industry. In the course of his work, he spends lengthy periods of time in remote areas like Eromanga, Moomba, Jackson, or Doomadgee; areas rarely visited by birders. I thought I'd mention that, just to put this and future articles of his in context. Although maintaining a healthy interest in Toowoomba Bird Club activities, his writings are seldom about birding in Toowoomba because he's never here! I suppose he best fits into the category of a roaming reporter (that'll give him a big head), providing our news-sheet with an occasional touch of the far-away and exotic. Keep the stories rolling in, Shagg, you ugly individual.

Editor

**** COMING EVENTS ****

**December 1992 Outing/
Christmas Break-up:**

Location: Lockyer Wetlands \ Lake Apex for BBQ
Date: 20 December
Time: 9:00 am Lake Apex, Gatton
Leader: Rod Hobson (074) 627 364

Info: Although we normally have a Christmas Break-up BBQ, it's unusual for us to have a December outing, but this year anyone interested in a short, pre-BBQ birding jaunt is invited to assemble at the above time and place. If you'd just like to come to the BBQ, feel free. It will be at 12.30 pm at Lake Apex. We will utilise the coin-operated barbecues, and the format will be BYO. Following the BBQ, Rod Hobson has kindly offered interested parties a chance to peruse his personal library containing a wealth of natural history publications. Rod and Betty's home is nearby. Please phone Ann if you're interested in attending the BBQ.

January 1993 Outing

Venue: Lockyer Forestry
Date: 31 January
Time: 7.00 am
Leader: Rod Hobson, (074) 627 364

Info: Lockyer Forestry is a little-known area of bushland in the Lockyer Valley, merely half an hours drive from Toowoomba. Eucalypt forest dominates, and the area has provided some very interesting wildlife sightings in recent times.

SURFACE MAIL

THE TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

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