



Newsletter of the
TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB inc.
p.o.box 67 - darling heights q 4350

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

CLUB OFFICERS :

President -	Pat McConnell	076 976141	Editor -	Don Gaydon	07 8221684
Vice-P/Records -	Rod Hobson	074 627364	Librarian -	Sharyn Frederiks	076 331169
Secretary -	Ann Shore	076 303207	Committee Member -	Pat Cleary	076 303352
Treasurer -	Nicki Thompson	076 343074			

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

No. 204 JANUARY 1993

EDITORIAL :

Summer in Toowoomba is a great time; long days, warm nights, birds everywhere and the bounty of nature on show. The Lockyer Valley and the city look particularly lush, yet some farmers west of Toowoomba say they haven't experienced such a dry spell for many decades. Our club area's main geological feature, the Great Dividing Range, plays a major role in determining the local distribution of rains and is responsible for the large variety of habitats in our region. Lets hope western farmers get some good rains soon.

Special acknowledgment and thanks are due to Alex and Sharyn Frederiks who mounted an excellent TBC display in the Toowoomba Library during Bird Week, late October 1992. Many favourable comments have been received; well done Alex and Sharyn !

Have you paid your 1993 subscription yet? If not, this will be your last newsletter. Payment to Nicki, please.

Please note that the venue for the January outing has been altered from Lockyer Forestry (as advertised last newsletter) to Perseverance National Park.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: PROPOSED CLUB NAME CHANGE

A Special General Meeting of the TBC has been called for the 1 March 1993, to discuss a proposed name change for the club.

It has been suggested that "Toowoomba Bird Club" be changed to "Toowoomba Bird Observers" to clarify our interests and aims. The suggestion has been prompted by the widespread belief among people external to the club that we are a society of aviculturalists, not observers of birds

in their natural habitats. We continually receive letters from the public regarding avicultural matters, and have been omitted from acknowledgment lists by several conservation organisations who were under the false impression that we are a group of bird keepers.

As has been mentioned before, even though we are not a society of professionals, we still have much to offer to the study of ornithology through amateur observations which we publish. It is therefore important that we are recognised abroad for what we are; a group of field bird observers.

Please attend the Special General Meeting at the CWA Hall, Withcott, 7.30 pm, 1 March 1993, to voice your opinions and be part of the discussion. A vote shall be taken on the night providing we have a quorum, so please attend. More details from Ann Shore or Rod Hobson.

Editor

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB DECEMBER 1992 OUTING - GATTON & SURROUNDS.

The December outing, our last of the year was, appropriately, one of our most productive of 1992. A good roll up of members and their families contributed to the convivial atmosphere, ushering out the old year with the midday barbecue at Gatton Apex Lake. By mid-afternoon when flagging spirits and summer heat combined to disperse sated birders, 121 species had been accounted for on the day.

It all began at Apex Lake where a juvenile White-bellied Sea-Eagle was observed paying particular attention to the Cattle Egret heronry on the lake's sole island. The egrets were breeding at the time with chicks in the nests and this raptor, no doubt, was drawn to these easy pickings. This colony has been the subject of an extensive study of egret biology by Neil Mc Killigan, University of SQ, for several years now and he states that this particular eagle has been availing itself of quite a few egret chick meals of late. Aside to this little drama nothing more of note was observed here so we moved on to Placid Hills, to a farm dam which was reported to have a pair of Great Crested Grebes in residence. Three telescopes directed damwards pin-pointed the grebes, a pair in their spectacular breeding plumage, barrel chested and mutton-chopped like a couple of avian Pickwicks. These birds are irregular visitors to the area and were much admired, a new bird for many present.

From here we drove to a second Cattle Egret heronry at Cole's Road, the busy to-ing and fro-ing of adult egrets and the ceaseless squawking of begging offspring, testimony to the heronry's fecundity. Glossy Ibis were out on the lily pads, now high and dry, abandoned by the retreating waters. Here, also, was another irregular to the Lockyer, in the resplendent ensemble of the Forest Kingfisher, flashing " silver dollars " as it flew. A Brush Cuckoo was calling all the while away in the tea-trees but remained unsighted throughout. After minor stops at such edifying landmarks as the Gatton Sewerage Works, we arrived back at Apex Lake for lunch, a drawn out and indolent affair over steaks, sausages, a few beer for some, and bird talk. And take-aways for one, a batchelor's idea of a barbecue.

At this stage some opted for home but the majority battled on into the magnificent foothills of East Haldon and Blackfellows' Creek. This area is one of the beauty spots of a generally beautiful area, and great for birds. If you know where to go! Here we saw Bell Miners, the closest population to Toowoomba, and Peregrine and Brown Falcon. Zebra Finches and Chestnut-breasted Mannikins were in abundance, especially in the seeding Green Panicum, whilst White-throated Needletails and White-backed Swallows carved the upper air. And, several times, Wedgies were sighted prevailing over all. All this and more until stumps, about 4.00pm. What else of note before I finish? Azure

Kingfisher, Restless Flycatcher, Cicadabird, Australian Goshawk, Little Eagle, Wandering Whistling-Duck, Magpie Goose, Brown Quail, Rainbow Bee-eater " etcetera, etcetera " in the words of the King of Siam. In my own words, " It's been a great year, let's make 1993 as good, if not better. Happy New Year, happy birding. Dare we promise one hundred twenty-two to the cider-powered birdwatcher next month. "

R.Hobson,
WOODLANDS
13.01.93

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRD

No.276
: **SUPERB FRUIT-DOVE**, *Ptilinopus superbus*
Time/Date : Early a.m., 18.12.92
Place : Footpath, Dept. of Environment & Heritage, Hume St.,
Toowoomba.
Observers : N.A. (see comments)
Optics : N.A. Bird collected.
Weather Conditions : Overcast morning, fog and drizzle.
Distance to Subject : In hand.
Comments : A mature male bird found on footpath by Environment & Heritage staff. Recently killed as rigor mortis had not set in. Appears that bird may have been disorientated in foggy conditions and flew into plate-glass windows. Records Officer notified by C.Dollery, (Environment & Heritage, TBC) c8.00 p.m., 21.12.92. Travelled to Toowoomba, 22.12.92 and confirmed record.
Field Marks : A small, plump and gaudy male pigeon. White abdomen, edged and partially barred green. Black tail with greyish-white tips. Rich purple crown and orange to rust nape onto mantle. Blue-black breastband.
Similar Species considered : ROSE-CROWNED FRUIT-DOVE, *P. regina*. Male: Reddish pink belly onto abdomen of orange-yellow. Broad yellow tip to tail. Female: Duller. Immature: Yellow margins to wing and tail feathers. Yellow abdomen.

Precis of Toowoomba Bird Club - " New or Unusual Bird Report Form ", submitted 22.12.92, accepted 22.12.92.

Records Officer.

WADER UPDATE, LOCKYER VALLEY WETLANDS, 11.09.92- 31.12.92.

In " TBC Newsletter No.200 - September 1992 " was published an article on the wader habitues of Seven Mile Lagoon. The article, " Stop Press: The Waders are Back ", covered the comings (and goings) of wading birds commencing with the early arrival of Marsh Sandpipers on 18.07.92 to the diminishing population of Latham's Snipe, 11.09.92. This is intended to update wader information from that date to the present, 31.12.92. In the interim, the drought conditions have not abated, despite some severe thunderstorm activity, with the result that Seven Mile Lagoon is now

dry, the water bird population dispersed.

The Sharp-tailed Sandpiper numbers increased until they peaked in late September, early October. On 21st September, Pat McConnell and I conducted a species count with the following, and conservative estimates arrived at viz. 714 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, seven Curlew Sandpipers, three Red-necked Stints, 14 Red-necked Avocets, 21 Black-tailed Godwits and ten Marsh Sandpipers. Red-capped Plovers, Masked Lapwings, Black-fronted Plovers, Red-kneed Dotterels and Black-winged Stilts were not counted. The Red-capped Plover population had increased throughout and breeding was recorded on three occasions at least. As the drought prolonged Sharp-tailed Sandpiper numbers waned until they were reduced to 67 birds, 15.12.92. On that date neither Curlew Sandpipers nor Red-necked Stints, Black-tailed Godwits or Red-capped Plovers were sighted but, conversely, Marsh Sandpiper - 30+ of, Red-necked Avocet and Black-winged Stilt numbers had increased.

During the period under review, several noteworthy visitations occurred, culminating in Andrew Stafford's initial discovery of the large flock/s of Oriental Pratincoles here, 27.11.92 (P.Walbridge, pers. comm.). These birds were in residence for c16 days, six birds being last sighted here, p.m., 13.12.92 (C.Dollery, pers.comm.). Estimates of pratincole numbers varied widely from 60 to 300+ birds. On Nov.28, I counted sixty birds in a loose flock but many more were present, squatted in the grasses and in indents in the mud left by the hooves of resident cattle. A conservative estimate of 150-200 individuals would seem acceptable.

Australian Pratincoles also visited the lagoon this year, albeit in much smaller numbers. Two of the species were recorded here, 20th. Aug., a third the following day (R.H.). These birds had decamped by 11.09.92, my last sighting being on 6th. of that month. On the 15th.Sept. I found the remains of one of these birds on the south-western foreshore of the lagoon. The condition of the remains indicated that the victim had been taken by a bird of prey. A Peregrine Falcon had been sighted in the area at this time, a species easily capable of taking a pratincole. On 11.10.92 Australian Pratincoles made a re-appearance at the lagoon, a single adult then being sighted (R.H., P.McC.). The bird was joined by a second of its type, an adult on 19.10.92 (R.H.). I last saw this species here on the 29.10.92 and it has not re-appeared to date.

On the night of 23.09.92 I received a 'phone call from Col Dollery as to his sighting of a Oriental Plover at Seven Mile Lagoon, the day prior. (This through his recently acquired telescope - a brand spanker, a good baptism.). Col and I travelled to the lagoon on morning of the 24th. and again sighted the plover, an elegant non-breeding adult. The bird was last noted in residence on the 11.10.92. At about this time, 20.09.92, Chris Corbin sighted an Oriental Plover at the high-tide roost at Wynnum Boat Harbour (C.Corbin, pers. comm.). It is interesting to note, as well, that one of this species was sighted at Karrasch's Dam on 25.09.91 (R.H.). Note respective dates. This species is rarely recorded in SE Queensland. These are good records, and, perhaps, the occasional bird turns up hereabouts every year, late September. It may be recorded more frequently in the future, coinciding with the present upsurge in birdwatching in SEQ.

Whilst birdwatching along the lagoon's south-eastern verges, on the morning of October 2, I was attracted to a movement in the grasses abutting the shoreline. On focusing the telescope I was enthralled to see a lone Little Curlew probing among the tussocks. This is another rarity in SE Queensland. This bird stayed in residence for some weeks, always inhabiting the grassland rather than the exposed mudflats. The Little Curlew departed on, or about 29.10.92. On the afternoon, late, of 09.10.92, Col Dollery, Russell Jago and I sighted a Ruddy Turnstone in full-breeding, in the same area as was the previous species' domain. The Turnstone preferred the mud to the grasses, however. It was absent early the following morning when I checked. Although a common summer visitor around the entirety of coastal Australia, inland records are scant as evidenced by the following,

"Field Atlas records from inland 1 degree blocks were made only Sept.-Nov., which suggests that some Turnstones cross Australia on their southward migration. ", p.165, " The Atlas of Australian Birds ", Blakers M., Davies S.J.J.F & Reilly P.N., Melbourne University Press, 1984.

These, then, were the principal Seven Mile sightings in the relevant period although other interesting species also put in brief appearances. Lesser Golden Plovers were recorded 18.09.92, three birds; 30.09.92, a single bird; 07.10.92, one bird; 09.10.92, a pair (also a single Greenshank); and 10.10.92, three birds. A lone Greenshank was recorded, 02.11.92. Other water bodies in the Lockyer Valley produced some interesting sightings in this period including Painted Snipe; one male, Woodlands, 05.10.92, (R.H.); six birds at Lake Clarendon, 13.10.92,(C.D., R.H.) and one male, Placid Hills, 18.11.92, (C.D., R.H.). Another very good sighting, also at this last place, was that of a well marked Wood Sandpiper, 25.11.92, (C.D., R.H.), which lingered around in the well vegetated dam, it being last sighted on the following Sunday, (L.& M.A., P.McC.).

An interesting aside was the number of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper sightings at Seven Mile in the period, sightings of birds bearing orange leg-flags. These leg-flags were affixed to the bird's right tibia in all cases and had been placed there by the Victorian Wader Study Group the season/s prior. The leg-flags indicated that these birds had completed their northward migration and were heading south again, away from the northern winter. (There is the highly remote possibility that these particular bird/s may have overwintered in Australia. Very unlikely.). I recorded a single Sharp-tailed Sandpiper displaying these flags on five occasions viz. 06, 15, 25, 28.09. and 13.10.92. I have reason to believe that it was the same bird sighted on all occasions but cannot be 100% sure that such was the case. On 28.09.92 I noted a second of the species bearing a leg-flag and, as well, a Red-necked Stint with a similar, but smaller flag attached to its lower tarsus. Don Gaydon sighted a Sharp-tail with a like leg-flag at Raby Bay, Brisbane, 20.09.92. Members sighting any bird (or bat) species bearing leg bands, leg-flags or any other such markings should notify:

Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme,
GPO Box 8,
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Tel: 06.2500321 Fax. 06.2500399

and (waders only)

The Editors, A.Geering & M.Bernard,
Queensland Wader Study Group,
9/49 Maryvale St., TOOWONG QLD 4066

Reports of sightings should include observers name and contact, species name, place (incl. map.ref.), time and date, also approximate number of species present.

Now that Seven Mile is spent we must hope for replenishing rains to lure these fine birds during their north bound migrations this late Summer and Autumn. The above sightings wrap you about in exciting expectation. Now for several hundreds of breeding plumaged Oriental Pratincoles, rusty-red Curlew Sands, or a coloured-up Oriental Plover strutting its stuff; a Ruff, a " Pec " or a Broad-bill. Roll in rain clouds and fulfil barren promises. Whisk away the Summertime Blues, in a swirling mass of wader form. White, grey, white on pointed wing, the journeying is commenced, is tundra bound.

L.& M.A., Laurie & Mick Atzeni; C.D., Col Dollery; R.H., Rod Hobson;P.McC., Pat McConnell.

R.Hobson,
WOODLANDS
31.12.92

****** COMING EVENTS ******

January 1993 Outing:

Location: Perseverance National Park
Date: 31 January
Time: 6.30 am, Picnic Area, Hampton
Leader: Don Gaydon (07) 822 1684

Info: Perseverance is a little-known park to the south of Perseverance Dam. Vegetation is primarily open eucalypt woodland with native shrub understorey, including grass-trees. Major feature of the park is a spectacular sandstone escarpment with views over Perseverance Dam.

February 1993 Outing:
(Beginner's Outing)

Location: Redwood Park
Date: 28 February
Leader: Pat McConnell (076) 976 141

February 1993 Campout:

Location: Coolmunda Dam, Inglewood
Date: 27-28 February
Leader: Rod Hobson (074) 627 364

Info: The February outing to Redwood Park is our yearly beginner's outing and will be led by President Pat. As an alternative for more adventurous members, a campout is also offered at Coolmunda Dam, an excellent area for bush and water birds. Beginners are welcome to attend the campout if they wish of course, just as more experienced members are welcome at the beginner's outing

SURFACE MAIL

THE TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

Registered by Australia Post
Publication Number QBG3973

If undeliverable return to:
Toowoomba Bird Club Inc.
P.O. Box 67
Darling Heights Q 4350

POSTAGE
PAID
TOOWOOMBA
QLD.AUST.
4350

P. McConnell
17 George Street
HELIDON QLD 4344
C