



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 "

---

205  
No. ~~206~~ - FEBRUARY 1993

**EDITORIAL:**

February is traditionally the month for our beginners' outing. Although the weather's hot, birds are usually in abundance at this time of the year, hence we feel it's a fine time to introduce new people to the joys of birdwatching. Do you know anyone you might like to invite? How about coming yourself? The outing is open to everyone of course, not just beginners, and it's so close to home. If you'd rather venture further afield and go camping, we also have a campout arranged as an alternative. See back page for details.

Our club, together with the Withcott Progress Association and the Withcott P&C, is once again holding a theatre night at the Toowoomba Repertory Theatre, Margaret Street. The Toowoomba Actors Studio will perform Michael Frayn's comedy "Noises Off" on March 8 at 8 pm. Tickets include refreshments and represent exceptional value at \$8 each. The venture will raise money for our club and if last year is anything to go by, the evening will be superb. Tickets are available from Ann Shore.

Don't forget the Special General Meeting detailed below. It's an important occasion in the club's history; please come.

**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.

## TBC JANUARY OUTING REPORT - Perseverance National Park , 31.01.93

The day before had been hot and humid in Perseverance National Park; the tumultuous din from the cicadas deafening to the point of being painful. The birds had been completely subdued by the racket, and dark thoughts on the prospects for the following day's outing had begun to creep into my mind. It's destined to be another disaster, I thought, recalling the January 1992 jaunt to Dwyer's Scrub; destroyed by the heat, humidity and cicadas. I realised our only hope to quieten the noisy throng was to pray for overcast conditions, preferably with drizzle and maybe a bit of mist for good measure. Slim chance, I thought, perusing the clear sky with my fingers in my ears.

I couldn't believe our luck when, incredibly, the outing day dawned overcast, drizzly and misty. With the cicadas silent, fifteen of the club's finest assembled at Hampton before making the short trek through pine forest and private property to the obscure national park entrance. The main feature of Perseverance National Park is a spectacular sandstone escarpment which overlooks the southern, undeveloped end of Perseverance Dam. The predominant vegetation is open eucalypt forest with an understorey of grass trees and native shrubbery, however small patches of vine-scrub persist in some of the moister gullies. With mist caressing the black-boys and swirling around the sandstone outcrops, it's a magical spot - somewhere to sit and ponder, or to explore; a place so close yet delightfully bereft of man's influence.

Walking was the order of the day, and we were rewarded for our efforts in encountering a large variety of flora and fauna. Birds, a total of fifty-two species, included Varied Sittellas, Lea<sup>3</sup>n Flycatchers and Spangled Drongos, plus the unusual record of an Australian Owlet-Nightjar calling by day. In the eyes of many, however, it was the insects which stole the show. A female Mountain Grasshopper, *Acripeza reticulata*, was spied at the side of the track, her demure brown colouring blending superbly with the fallen leaves and bark. The sight of Rod Hobson was all that was required to initiate her threat display, and as she raised her wing covers to reveal her bright blue and red abdomen, we were treated to one of the most stunning sights in the Australian bush. What a creature!

Large flightless native cockroaches, of the family Blaberidae, were encountered on several occasions as were various butterflies including the Common Brown, *Heteronympha merope*. The three adventurous souls who climbed to the top of the sandstone escarpment received tremendous looks at Tryon's Velvet Gecko, *Oedura tryoni*, the Bar-sided Forest-skink, *Sphenomorphus tenuis*, and several beautiful cave moths including *Donuca rubropicta*. Of particular interest were a pair of Tussock Moths snugly nestled into a small sandstone cave; the flightless female resembling a ball of white cotton-wool with eyes. Clinging maternally to an egg-case made from her own body hair, she was watched over by the fully-winged male, a beautiful snowy-white individual with brown markings.

By the time the clock struck twelve we were leaving the park, exhausted from the walking, but satisfied after an excellent morning with mother nature.

Don Gaydon

## BIRDWATCHING IN THE JANDOWAE DISTRICT

Jandowae is a small township on the northern Darling Downs, 50 km north west of Dalby. I moved here in January 1991 and have just completed twenty months of birdwatching in the district. Although I have ventured further afield, most of my birdwatching has been confined (by choice) to a 25 km radius from town.

The vegetation is extremely varied within this radius and includes the open Jimbour Plains, softwood scrub, eucalypt forest (mainly spotted gum and ironbark), brigalow, small patches of rainforest in the foothills of the Bunyas, belah and cypress forests and some large areas of water and swamp. The area has been suffering from drought since my arrival so the list so far obtained may not be truly representative of the normal bird-life of this area. Most of my birdwatching is done in isolation and so

sightings contain a certain element of doubt. A number of suspicions have been verified on the occasions Rod Hobson and others have visited.

A total of 180 species have been identified within a 25 km radius during the twenty months. I certainly will not be listing all those in this article but I would like to mention some of the highlights of my time here. For me, the highlights would have to be the Freckled Ducks and Painted Honeyeaters.

I remember clearly telephoning Rod Hobson and telling him that I thought I had seen a Freckled Duck. Rod and Don Gaydon were coming to visit in about ten days and I checked every day until their arrival but had no more sightings. The weekend of the visit arrived and along with it, a veritable avalanche of Freckled Ducks. Isn't it nice to be right occasionally? The ducks remained on Jandowae Town Dam for about three weeks after that. Up to eight were sighted at a time.

The Painted Honeyeaters were an accident. Rod and I were actually looking for Spotted Bowerbirds that had been reported by a local resident. On our way to the locality mentioned, we stopped to look at some Black-faced Woodswallows. Suddenly there were small honeyeaters flying everywhere. It wasn't long before one stopped long enough for us both to have a good look. We couldn't believe our first identification. Both of us shouted "Painteds!" at the same time. Four weeks and probably two hundred sightings later, I was still as excited. They disappeared after those four weeks and I hadn't seen a sign of them until Don and Rod's visit several months later. We stopped the car to show Don where the Spotted Bowerbirds live (still to be seen by me!) and there was a sole Painted Honeyeater sunning itself on a bare branch next to the road. Don must have a fairy godmother.

The Blue Bonnets are another highlight. It was an unexpected sight the first time I saw a pair but I am now finding them to be quite common throughout the area. I will have to wait and see whether they are here because of the drought further west or whether they have been here all along. Past records and talking to locals tends to indicate that it is the drought or a general eastward movement and not oversight in the past. Time will tell.

The few wet areas (disappearing rapidly) have provided some other unusual sightings. Magpie Geese, Black-necked Stork, Brolga, Baillon's Crake, Chestnut Teal, Curlew Sandpiper and Plum-headed Finches all stand out. Fifteen members of family Psittacidae (cockatoos, parrots, lorikeets) and seventeen of family Meliphagidae (honeyeaters) show a very good representation of these two families. The Mulga Parrot still eludes confirmation by another birder but I am certain of the sighting. A resident of the area where I have seen a pair on two occasions identified the drawing in Simpson and Day's field-guide without prompting, mentioning the differences between the bird seen drinking at her water-trough and the Red-rumped Parrots which are common in the area. I will not give up and will direct all of you who visit to return home from Jandowae via Cooranga North so one day I will have my confirmation.

My favourite birds are all quite common. The Yellow-rumped Thornbills all over the lawn, barely moving out of the way as you move past. They even come to peck around my feet when I sit out in the back yard. The brilliant flash of red as the male Red-capped Robin flits across the yard to his new perch on the fence or the clothes line and the red, bright green and almost black of the Red-winged Parrot as it wheels its way overhead tend to make me smile for the rest of the day.

Then there was something special. I use the past tense because I have not seen it for several months. How many people have a Southern Boobook Owl that sits on the clothes line and waits for them to come and talk to it. It would fly off if anyone else tried but allowed me to come within touching distance so long as I talked soothingly. I actually touched it at times without it taking to wing. It became a talking point with my children. "My dad talks to owls. What's your disability?" I hope the Boobook is still around. I check most nights but .....

Well that's twenty months in Jandowae. I keep finding new birds and now have a four-wheel drive so I can explore the black soil roads even when there is rain about. I am sure there are plenty of



species out there just waiting for me. Why don't you come and join me? You are welcome at any time. Unfortunately I am working full time until the end of the school year (work is interfering with my birdwatching so I think I will have to give up work) but the weekends are free. Just give me a call on 076 685582 or drop a line to PO Box 75, JANDOWAE Q 4410.

Good birding,  
Terry Pacey  
October, 1992

---

### TO BEE OR NOT TO BEE ?

Whilst walking the upper bridle-trail in Redwood Park during September 1992, I noticed three Spangled Drongos making sporadic predatory forays from perches in a large dead tree. Each bird would dive down, catch an insect in mid-air, return to its perch, then proceed to beat the living daylights out of its prey by thumping its bill on the branch. The victim was swallowed, and after a period of rest the whole procedure was repeated. The drongos appeared to be taking turns in this cavalier exercise and, interestingly, were all diving to approximately the same place in the pursuit of their quarry. Closer inspection with binoculars revealed a hive of the introduced honeybee in an adjacent eucalypt hollow some twenty-five feet from the ground. The drongos were diving to a spot about one metre from the hive entrance, casually picking off bees as they arrived/departed. There was no sense of urgency in their hunting; no hurried feeding frenzy. The birds, assured of a continuous food supply, were like connoisseurs in a smorgasbord restaurant, calmly snacking at their leisure.

Don Gaydon

---

### THE HONEYBEE DILEMMA - A CONTROVERSIAL QUESTION.

Many newsletter readers will be familiar with recent articles and letters appearing in *Australian Natural History* regarding the impact honeybees have on native flora and fauna communities. Battle lines have been drawn, with the respective protagonists bitterly divided. The main contention of the "anti-lobby" appears their concern that feral populations of honeybees compete with, and displace native species for food and roosting/nesting hollows. Native insects and birds feed on nectar producing flora whilst various marsupials, bats and birds utilise arboreal hollows for roosting and breeding. Both these requirements are also necessary to the viability of feral honeybee populations. Given the abundance of these requisites within the Australian landscape, coupled with the aggressive abilities of the honeybee, many conservationists now view with concern this insect's spread into the countryside.

On the morning of March 8 1992, I was birdwatching on a property near Cambooya, a small rural community on the eastern fringe of the Darling Downs, S.E. Queensland. I was accompanied by the property owner and we were watching a pair of Galahs entering and leaving a nesting hollow in the limb of a Mountain Coolabah, *Eucalyptus orgadophila*. These trees were plentiful on the property. The owner, a keen field naturalist, commented that this was the first season that these birds had used this particular nesting hollow. For three seasons prior they had utilised a hollow in a coolabah about 0.5 km from the present site. Later in the day we had occasion to pass by that tree and, on a closer scrutiny, found the old nesting hollow now occupied by a hive of feral honeybees. A second hive was noted in a similar situation closeby.

There could well be various reasons why this hollow was rejected for breeding this last season but the prima face evidence weighs against the feral bee occupants. Galahs, having been content to breed in the now bee-infested limb for three seasons, in all likelihood, would have been content to use it for a fourth breeding. Obviously this was not now possible and the birds were forced to seek an alternative. Honeybees are active pollinators of native flora but this function has been the task of

native birds and insects since time immemorial and their displacement by these aggressive interlopers is clearly undesirable. The Mountain Coolabah is a good nectar- and honey-producing tree and bees breed well on the gathered pollen. Given the abundance of this resource in the area in question, it would seem that the above situation will be magnified with time, to the detriment of the local fauna. Many apiarists now situate their hives in stands of native trees to take advantage of their pollen/honey producing potential thus exacerbating the problem. A classic case of conservationist versus vested interests is in the offing. The honeybee may well join the "rogues gallery" with the rabbit, fox, Cane Toad, European Carp etc. but, as those species are not of economic significance, the honeybee presents a separate and bitterly disputed dilemma to the Australian environment.

R.G.Hobson,  
Ingoldsby,  
23.03.92

### DESIRABLE RESIDENCE FOR SQUATTERS ?

If one leaves one's house empty - and open for all the world to see - one really should not be surprised to find it looked over by a prospective new tenant. However, that this should happen to a Willie Wagtail's nest, immediately outside my window as I chanced to be watching, and the possible new resident was a Brown Honeyeater did rather take me aback.

Mr (or Mrs) Brown inspected the property closely from all sides before hopping in to try it for size. Hurrah! An excellent fit. But would it make a comfortable nursery? So, in the approved manner, the little honeyeater fluffed out its feathers and worked its body round and round as though moulding the material into shape, pecking at something here and there and tweaking off one of my long hairs which had not been woven in quite perfectly. Then quite suddenly, it was up and away.

What was the answer? Could the residence be altered to suit? Or was the honeyeater imprinting itself on the structure so that if the erstwhile owner returned for a second brood it would have the wrong smell? An intriguing question. Do Brown Honeyeaters ever take over other birds' nests?

Ann Shore

Follow-up article from Ann next month. - Editor

#### \*\*\*\* NEW MEMBERS \*\*\*\*

Welcome to

Bob and Dana McCown  
Iredale Road, MS 224, TOOWOOMBA

Veronica Gibbs  
1/1 Nellie Street, TOOWOOMBA

Sherry Owen  
c/- S.School, TARA Q 4421

May the birds follow you .....

\*\*\*\* COMING EVENTS \*\*\*\*

February 1993 Outing:  
(Beginner's Outing)

Location: Redwood Park  
Date: 28 February  
Time: 6.15 am, Warrego Hwy entrance  
Leader: Pat McConnell (076) 976 141

Info: The February outing to Redwood Park is our yearly beginner's outing and will be lead by President Pat. A great chance for new birders or dormant members to see some interesting birds close to home. Pat plans to walk from the highway entrance to the suspension bridge and back, a pleasant morning's jaunt. Please bring some water and assemble at 6.15 am for 6.30 am start. Phone Pat for more info.

February 1993 Campout:

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

Info: 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. Please phone Rod if you are interested in attending.

March 1993 Outing:

Location: Coastal Wader Outing, Brisbane  
Date: 28 March  
Leader: Don Gaydon (07) 822 1684

Info: The traditional March wader outing is on again. In the view of many, waders are the most captivating group of all the birds. They live incredible lives, wintering in Australia (during our summer) before undertaking mammoth world-wide journeys to breed in places like Mongolia and Siberia. In March, they're preparing to leave our shores and many are in spectacular breeding plumage. This outing is always greatly enjoyed; don't miss it.

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

P. McConnell  
17 George Street  
HELIDON QLD 4344  
C

