

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. 206 - MARCH 1993

EDITORIAL:

"Almost, but not quite yet.." is probably the most appropriate way of describing our club's transition from the 'Toowoomba Bird Club' to the 'Toowoomba Bird Observers'. The Special General Meeting, held at CWA Hall Withcott on March 1, attracted a healthy roll-up of twenty members to discuss the pros and cons of the name change and to take a vote.

The group voted unanimously to change the club name, and therefore the motion was successfully passed. Thanks to everyone who attended. Due to some seemingly pointless bureaucracy, however, we cannot officially call ourselves 'Toowoomba Bird Observers' until we receive confirmation of the acceptance of our name change from the Queensland Department of Consumer Affairs. Hence, as I said before, "Almost....".

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB BEGINNERS' OUTING, Redwood Park, 28.02.93

Hot and humid weather leading up to the outing was an ominous sign. However, light rain the night before and overcast conditions on the day made for a pleasant walk for the large group of people gathered at the gates of Redwood Park. The drought has certainly taken its toll on Redwood. Many trees are losing their leaves and the undergrowth is brown and dry. This may help explain the paucity of birdlife as only forty-one species of bird were seen in the morning. Despite this being a birding outing, two of the highlights were a Koala and a Yellow-footed Antechinus (a small mouse-like marsupial), the latter seen scurrying around the base of a tree like a tiny wind-up toy in over-drive. Two more of these little marsupials were also seen later on. Although good looks were not obtained, the birding highlight of the first-stage of our walk was a pair of Glossy Black-Cockatoos.

A quick stop for refreshments at the picnic area produced, for many, the most exciting species of the day; an Australian Owlet-Nightjar. This was spotted by the keen-eyed Trent, one of our younger members. The nightjar was sunning itself in the opening of a large hollow about six metres from ground level - a new bird for many present. Next the group was off to the suspension bridge; not many birds here but still a nice walk. Activities finished at about eleven-thirty, leaving the beginners an afternoon to ponder over the bird books checking what they had seen.

Pat McConnell

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB CAMP-OUT, Coolmunda Dam, 27-28.02.93

Our February camp-out to Coolmunda Dam can best be described as a success in the diversity of species recorded if not in the number of participants involved. A small but select turnout would be the most appropriate description of the participants who sallied forth on Saturday morning, south west by south towards our destination. Our circuitous peregrinations took us through the highroads and byroads to the north of, and parallel to, the main Warwick-Inglewood highway, through sheep country and state forest. Our first stop was at Nicki's ancestral home, "Stonehenge", where we were welcomed by her brother and family but not the Spotted Bowerbirds which had been reported from there recently. Yarning and an extended smoko whiled away the morning and the journeying was reluctantly recommenced just before the midday, full to the brim with tea and biscuits and country hospitality. By this stage, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Hooded Robins and Banded Lapwings, amongst others, had fallen under our ken, fitting forerunners to the 106 species which finally comprised our weekend's tally. Between "Stonehenge" and Inglewood we sighted our first Emus, and Wedge-tailed Eagles, also a Sand Goanna, *Varanus gouldii*; one Bearded Dragon, *Pogona barbata*, and several speedster Gilbert's Dragons, *Lophognathus gilberti centralis*.

Coolmunda Dam was arrived at just after lunch whereupon birdwatching was commenced in earnest. The dam is quite low at present despite recent good rains, nevertheless the waters hosted numbers of birds. Aside to the usual species expected, several Musk Duck were in residence, the males especially evident and displaying their distended gular sacs; lizard-like and prehistoric-looking creatures. Great-crested Grebes were about in numbers as were Silver Gulls, Whiskered Terns, Australian Pelicans and Black Swan. After a time scouring the dam proper we headed for the overflow at the base of the dam wall, an area of luxurious vegetation and home to large numbers of Clamorous Reed-warblers, Chestnut-breasted Mannikins and Plum-headed Finches. The heat of the afternoon was passed in a lethargy under friendly willows before circumnavigating the dam's perimeter as the weather cooled. The good sightings continued with records of Little Eagle, Black Kite, Red-winged Parrot, Australian Hobby, multitudes of White-plumed Honeyeaters and a big black buck Wallaroo, *Macropus robustus*, a beautiful marsupial.

The cloying and oppressive conditions of the afternoon resulted in showers just after dark so a "frogging" sortie was decided upon, a very fortuitous decision. Nicki now has a frog list, the progenitors of same being the frogs of this adventure. Species recorded were as follows: Gunther's Frog, *Litoria latopalmata*; Peron's Tree-frog, *L. peronii*; Red Tree-frog, *L. rubella*; Scarlet-thighed Pobblebonk, *Limnodynastes terraereginae*; Long-thumbed Frog, *L. fletcheri*; Ornate Burrowing Frog, *L. ornatus*; Spotted Grass Frog, *L. tasmaniensis* and Striped Marsh Frog, *L. peronii* - a good night's pop-eyed inventory.

Sunday morning dawned cool and overcast and after a casual scan of the dam whereat was recorded the interesting sighting of a pair of Red-capped Plovers, a casual drift homeward was agreed upon. "Never return home the way you left", the maxim of all good birders was hereagain applied resulting in a mornings meander eastward to Stanthorpe. Several birds contributed to the delight of these wanderings including Southern Whiteface, Diamond Firetail, more Red-winged Parrots, Little Eagles, Plum-headed Finches and hordes of Eastern Rosellas. Stanthorpe was arrived at around midday and from here, homeward, via the rural backblocks of Warwick with the addition of more interesting birds such as Rufous Songlark, Brown Falcon and Black-faced Woodswallow en route. We reached Toowoomba mid-afternoon after a great weekend. Really, we must birdwatch these areas more often, a treasure trove of interesting animals, spectacular and different from our local fauna and not far off, but an hour or two.

R. Hobson
WOODLANDS
29.02.93

RECYCLED HOUSING

It seems that not only humans are concerned with recycling. Following my observation of the Brown Honeyeater's inspection of the Willie Wagtail's nest outside my window (article in February's news-sheet), I watched whenever possible to see if there were any further developments.

Another inspection by the young honeyeaters and then all quiet but the willies had by then seen off the last of their first brood and I wondered if they would rear another as they were again very much in evidence in the vicinity. One morning I noticed the nest was looking rather ragged at the edge and shortly after saw the culprit at work - one of the willies! Noting where it flew off to, I followed and found a well-advanced new nest some 75 metres away. Obviously this was a better site so why not move the old house - even if you have to do it piecemeal!

Each day the old nest became more dilapidated until only a few shreds remained while the new one grew and looked considerably more substantial than the first. Also it seemed much better positioned to withstand active cats and, with good cover above, perhaps would escape the attentions of feathered marauders as well. Both nests appeared to take about one week to construct and, watching the diligence with which the cob-webs were fastened in place, backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards round the supporting twigs to keep all secure, left one full of admiration for these tireless little workers.

Footnote 1: A week later I noticed that another willie's nest, in a neighbouring bird's territory, had been vandalised in like manner. Maybe this happens more often than one realises, or might the dry conditions have some bearing on the matter?

Footnote 2, Mid November: Nest number two complete but abandoned! Why? Then spotted same bird retrieving last remaining shreds from original nest and the pair hard at work building yet again in a completely different direction. To date, end November, this nest appears intact with the birds sitting tight.

Ann Shore

Ann tells me that the pair of Willie Wagtails were successful in raising their second brood. - Editor

BREEDING TIME AT GOWRIE JUNCTION

First there were the magpies. In our immediate vicinity, we have a dominant male with two females. Last year, he housed his girls in different trees, but this year they decided nesting in the same tree would be a great deal easier and more efficient. Female No.1 raised three young and No.2 two young, just in time for one newly launched babe to be assassinated by a careless car driver at the proper time for such assassinations, October.

Then there were the Tawny Frogmouths. One day we found a rather scrawny (note that anthropocentric value judgement!) young sitting forlornly on the edge of a cattle trough. We caught him and put him up into a nearby tree. Next day, his (her?) mum or dad was sitting on the branch next to him and the other parent was about a metre away. They stayed there for several days, the young one almost lying along the branch with the parent squeezed up close to him. As we approached, both (even the baby) would slowly straighten up, as frogmouths are wont, and become dead branches.

Our resident Pied Butcherbirds were next to show their hands. An adult pair and three

two-year-olds live nearby. We did not see the nest, but three chocolate and white babies appeared in November. The two-year-olds are just now changing their immature clothes for adult plumage.

Orioles like to live dangerously. They nest in the very ends of pendulous branches, so that, when a strong wind blows, the branch and nest whip through an arc of perhaps one metre. Our Olive-backed Orioles nested in a celtis tree (nasty foreigner!) last year and built very close to the same spot, above a busy walkway, again this year. They raised one chick. He (she?) left the nest seemingly very early and sits around in the garden trees, piping to his parents all day as they feed him. Rather than fly or jump from branch to branch, he seems to swim, with wings outstretched and beating vigorously through the leaves and branchlets.

The Willy Wagtails were not to be outdone. They built a nest in very smart time on a roof brace in the hayshed. A very desirable position for a residence - safe from rain and also from marauding currawongs. (perhaps the willies remembered how they lost last year's brood from the nest in the callistemon.) They built the nest, she laid the eggs, sat, hatched them and, in short order, three babies rose like scones out of the nest and flew - just over three weeks from first egg to empty nest.

Now it's the turn of the Double-bar Finches and the Crested Pigeons. The doublies are building a nest in the ivy fronds trailing from a hanging basket on the side verandah. It surprised us that they should build so close to us and the hurly-burly of the household with its three dogs. The crested pigeons are putting together a few sticks in a fork of the silky-oak on the other side of the house. We look forward to the next act in this drama of life!

Gloria Glass

MEMBER'S BIRD NOTES. All sightings are submitted by members of Toowoomba Bird Observers. Accuracy not vouched for by TBC. Please check with observer before citing.

Emu (4 Adults)	Lower Jingi	20.12.92	TP
Great-crested Grebe (2)	Placid Hills	18.12.92	RH
Blue-billed Duck	Janke's Dam	13.12.92	RH NT
Square-tailed Kite	Woodlands	25.12.92	RH
Red-chested B.-Quail	Helidon Dip	24.10.92	PMcC
" " "	Woodlands Forestry	02.02.93	RH
Spotless Crake	Soda Springs	31.01.93	MA PMcC
Oriental Plover (2)	Gattagers Bay	26/27.12.92	CD
Red-necked Stint	Hood's Dam	30/31.01.93	MA PMcC
Red-tailed B.-Cockatoo (12)	Helidon	16.01.93	PMcC
Glossy Black-Cockatoo	Withcott	28.11.92	AS
" " "	Helidon	31.01.93	MA PMcC
Musk Lorikeet	Bothwell St., T'mba	29.12.92	PMcC
Blue Bonnet	Inverai	30.01.93	RH TP
Little Bronze-Cuckoo	Woodlands	01.01.93	RH
Masked Owl	Sheep Station Creek	28.01.93	RH PMcC
Eastern Grass Owl	Woodlands	11.12.92	RH
Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike	Redwood Park	02.01.93	CD
Ground Cuckoo-shrike (3)	Jandowae	11.01.93	TP
White's Thrush *	Redwood Park	10.01.93	CD RH
White-eared Monarch	Redwood Park	16.01.93	MA PMcC
Varied Sittella (c6) **	Woodlands	24.10.92	CD

Plum-headed Finch (60+)	Spadale	15.11.92	PMcC
Nutmeg Mannikin ***	Gatton (in township)	03.12.92	CD
White-eared Honeyeater	Nudley Forestry	29.01.93	RH TP
Painted Honeyeater	Jandowae, 5km W of	20.12.92	TP
Apostle Bird ****	Gowrie Junction	03.11.92	JB

MA - Michael Atzeni, JB - Jim Booth, CD - Col Dollery, RH - Rod Hobson, PMcC - Pat McConnell, TP - Terry Pacey, AS - Ann Shore, NT - Nicki Thompson.

* A pair of these birds observed at nest, c8 metres from ground level in the fork of a large tree. Nest exterior enveloped in green moss and very well camouflaged. Able to obtain good looks at a rich brown coloured bird with its rump displaying a very faint barring. White's Thrush is now believed to be a composite of two separate species, the Russet Ground-Thrush, *Zoothera (dauma) heinei* and the Australian Ground-Thrush, *Z.lunulata*. Some believe that the isolated Atherton population may deserve separate status as well, thus establishing a third species, *cuneata*. This matter is yet to be resolved. Because of the diagnostic features observed on the Redwood birds it is apparent that *heinei* exists locally. Members should be aware, however, that we live in an area of species overlap and that *lunulata* may well occur in the TBC area as well. It would be well to familiarise yourselves with the salient features before birding any of the local dry vine scrubs or rainforest. The Redwood birds were the first local records of the species since early 1990, the third breeding record for the park.

** A good record of the Orange-winged form (race *chrysoptera*) of the Varied Sittella. The local sittella is the White-headed form (race *leucocephala*) which, incidentally, also has an orange wing bar. The Orange-winged form has a greyish-brown streaked head, back and breast, the local race, a white head, streaked back and breast. Race *chrysoptera* is normally found to the west, south-west of Toowoomba. E.A.R.Lord recorded *chrysoptera* at Murphy's Creek, 06.11.52, p.121, *The Birds of the Murphy's Creek District, Southern Queensland, The Emu, Vol.56, 1956*. This is the only prior local record of this form of which I have any knowledge. Lord states (of *chrysoptera*), " They are probably not uncommon here, but often have been taken casually for the familiar *leucocephala*." At the time of Lord's observation these races had individual species status. I must agree with Lord's comment as quoted above. Check those sittellas, folks.

*** A pair of these finches noted nest building high in the outer foliage of a Mango, *Magnifera indica*. First local record of this species. Expanding range or aviary escapees?

**** c9 birds sighted near Gowrie Junction State School. Although a common species to our west, this is the first sighting so close to Toowoomba since its last being recorded this same area, October '87.

Records Officer

**** MORE ARTICLES, PLEASE ****

I hereby call upon fellow TBC members to unsheathe their pens and share interesting sightings or snippets of bird behaviour through this newsletter. Small and/or large articles welcome. - Editor

**** NEW MEMBERS ****

A big, friendly birdos' welcome to:

Eric Dale, 47 Kitchener St, TOOWOOMBA

Diana Holley, 7 Ross Street, WARWICK

Mike McGoldrick, 37 Alice Street, DALBY

May the birds continuously seek you out...

**** COMING EVENTS ****

March 1993 Outing:

Location: Coastal Wader Outing, Brisbane

Assembly: Lytton, 8.30 am

Date: 28 March

Leader: Rod Hobson (074) 627 364

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. Contact Rod for more details on point of assembly.

April 1993 Outing:

Location: Jandowae Area

Date: 24-25 April

Leader: Terry Pacey (076) 685 582

Info: The main outing will be Sunday 25 April, with an optional campout over the weekend. Terry has 'sussed-out' some very interesting country in the Jandowae area, and this outing presents us with an excellent opportunity to view some western birds close to home in rarely visited areas. If you've ever been on one of Terry's outings before, you will be aware of the infectious enthusiasm which prevails all day long and the usual great bird list at the end.

SURFACE MAIL

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