



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS 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 "

NEWSLETTER No. 210 - JULY 1993

EDITORIAL:

If the future prosperity of our club depends on the enthusiasm of our younger members, then let me assure you, our future looks prosperous. I'm sure anyone present on the most recent TBO escapade (to Coal Creek, Ipswich) would agree with me; we were almost swept away by a tide of ebullience emanating from the two smallest and youngest present! Anyone proclaiming the sighting of a previously unseen bird was practically bundled over by the two young tyros who'd nearly fall over each other (or anyone/anything else in their path) as they desperately vied to secure a good viewing position. Even Terry looked lethargic in comparison. A good portion of the credit for such rambunctious enthusiasm must go to Ken McKeown who, by all reports, has nurtured nearly a truck-load of fanatic grade 5 birders at East State School. Good one Ken; being taught an appreciation of nature is a lesson they'll remember long after they've forgotten their geometry and algebra.

Our club conducted a mini-display in Redwood Park following the Environmental Walk put on by the council and FOEP (Friends of the Escarpment Parks), 20 June. Thanks to Alex Frederiks who provided great support to Ann on this occasion. By the way, if anyone has any spare photographs of birds (from calendars etc.), Ann tells me she'd be more than happy to relieve you of them as we are always looking for more material to use in displays. Anyone interested in going on an exotic birdwatching holiday with a professionally-organised birdos' tour? Ann also has numerous brochures for your perusal if you are.

TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS JUNE OUTING - Ipswich Botanical Gardens, Coal Creek,
27 June

The best that has come of the present drought has been the stress it has placed on TBO birdwatchers. In response to dire local conditions they have had to "fold their tents and steal silently away", to follow their flocks to pastures green. Thus, we found ourselves on the banks of the Brisbane River where it is joined by Coal Creek, early on this delightful morning. The Promised Land had been reached. Birds were about aplenty and by day's end we had recorded 71 species, several of which we don't see locally.

The walking track layout is excellent for birdwatching, threading its way through areas of dry vine scrub, along ridges and waterways and through open areas providing good vantage points. Small bush birds were prolific on the day, especially the honeyeaters. The most common of the type were Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, garrulous little critters being constantly muscled from the avian limelights by their gaudy counterparts, those flash Scarlet Honeyeaters. Many eucalypts were in bloom attracting

hoards of wheeling, noisy lorikeets, three species; Little, Rainbow and Scaly-breasted being present. Golden Whistlers were common with several males perched in the open displaying their fine livery for the World to see. And compliment. Fan-tailed Cuckoos, those most elegantly formed and fitted birds, swooped from branch to branch and Eastern Yellow Robins scolded, clinging to trunksides. Pardalotes tunnelled "chip-chip"-ing, bee-eaters rolled reflecting shards of brilliant lights, Crested Pigeons promenaded, White-backed Swallows wheeled. Rose Robins, Emerald Doves, turkeys and Wedge-tails.

Little Shrike-thrushes were at large in leafy bowers, birds we rarely see locally. In an area of dry vine scrub we had clear views of one of this species punching holes through the integument of a paper-wasps' nest. The large football sized and shaped nest was affixed in the leafy crown of a sapling about six metres from ground level. The small pale yellow and brown, and irate inhabitants, *Ropalidia romandi cabeti* (no common name), were buzzing about indignantly but never appeared to attack their tormentor. The shrike-thrush, however, was feasting freely on the wasps. Several wasps decided to vent their spleen on the group of goggle-eyed terrestrials nearby so we moved on - in haste. I think that this was the only time during the entire day that the group broke from a gentle amble. We "plop-plopped" on mostly, like the Freshwater Mullet occasionally breaking the surface in shallow, lazy arcs from the river below.

Lunch was long and leisurely followed by a saunter along the river bank where we found a huge slab of sun-warmed concrete. Here we tarried awhile like large, awkward skinks, basking away, watching Brahminy Kites and White-bellied Sea-Eagles ride the thermals over the river. Moorhens astride their reflections on the placid waters and hoary-headed tortoises with inscrutable "smile" regarding the world through gold-rimmed eyes. And idle chatter,

" Hasn't that Bull Terrier got a red ball in its mouth?"

" I think you need new binos, its got coloured zinc cream on its nose.

" Oh!"

Records Officer thinks to himself,

" Hmmm! yessss, must be more careful with her monthly check-lists in future....", and with such and various ruminations we all went home. A great day spent.

R.Hobson,
WOODLANDS
30.06.93

<u>NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRD</u>	:	No. 277
	:	RED-WINGED PARROT, <i>Aprosmictus erythropterus</i>
Time/Date	:	4.15pm / 22.01.93
Place	:	George St., Helidon.
Observers	:	P.McConnell, R.Hobson.
Optics	:	" Zeiss " 8x32 binoculars
	:	" Zeiss " 10x40B binoculars
Weather Conditions	:	Warm, no breeze. Good visibility.
Distance to Subject	:	Perched c5 metres above ground level; c15 metres from observers.
Comments	:	Species first observed Helidon, 18.01.93, 1xmale & 1xfemale bird; 1xfemale bird, 20.01.93, P.McConnell. Immature bird, Helidon, midday 22.01.93, R.Hobson. Occasional sightings, various observers since to date of single-three birds in Helidon area. Species previously recorded Grantham on two occasions, March, 1991, R.Hobson. Movement of this species into area probably drought induced. A conspicuous species,

easily recognisable in field.

Similar Species

: KING PARROT, *Alisterus scapularis* (female and immature);
darker green, bill grey and belly red.

Records Officer
29.06.93

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRD

: No.278
: **BLACK-BREASTED BUTTON-QUAIL**, *Turnix melanogaster*
Time/Date : 7.30am / 27.03.93
Place : Main Range escarpment, Toowoomba.
Observers : R.Hobson, P.McConnell
Optics : " Zeiss " 10x25B binoculars
: " Zeiss " 8x32 binoculars
Weather Conditions : Warm, no breeze. Good visibility, dappled light.
Distance to Subject : Variable, between eight-ten metres.
Comments : Several unconfirmed sightings this species in same area of dry
vine scrub prior to the above viz. 02.01.93, C. Dollery; am,
13.03.93, P. McConnell; pm, 13.03.93, R.Hobson. Several
sightings of this species since to date, various members TBO.
Similar Species : None. NB. beware of fleeting glimpses of like-sized **PAINTED
BUTTON-QUAIL**, *Turnix varia*, which also inhabits range
escarpment and feeds along margins and into dry vine scrub.
Both species form similar feeding platelets in floor litter.

Records Officer
29.06.93

PLAYERS READY PLOVERS READY

Tennis players weren't welcome on Court 8 that day. Its new inhabitants were not keen on racquet sports and had made alternative plans for that expanse of ant-bed. I, for one, wasn't about to argue with our new-found adversaries - two rather agitated Masked Lapwings, jogging defensively along the sideline where eggs of speckled patterning lay in a crude depression. The mere look of them gave me the creeps. Two pairs of piercing beady eyes glared at us from behind heavy yellow masks, and huge spurs protruded like sharp thorns from their shoulders. I could even see blood on the tips. I reached for the car keys; there was **no** way that I was going to be a play-thing for a couple of spun-out plovers

My knees were shaking as I walked on to the court - a lamb to the slaughter. Why couldn't we toss a coin and go home? Having a violent confrontation with an angry plover wasn't high on my list of leisure options for that Saturday afternoon.

It was no surprise that the plovers made a mockery of our match. We were always at the mercy of their swift, fearless manoeuvres - charging at graphite frames and catgut strings like little kamikaze pilots on a mission to maim, and then regaining altitude with several quick flaps of shaped wings; over and over, making us look like awkward puppets. A game usually dominated by bullet serves, power groundies and aggressive net-rushing was transformed into a moon-balling competition, each team determined to make the other look up as much as possible. I recall being more interested in retaining my eyesight and spent the majority of the first set with one hand over my eyes - this was reflected in the pitiful scoreline. The sound effects were chilling - horror movie material - strident **ki's**, bloodcurdling **kek's**, followed by guttural yelps and shrieks of terror. It wasn't until one plunged dangerously close to my right ear that I realised it was actually saying **ki...ki...ki...k..ill...kill!** It was man versus bird. Do or die. No room for compromise. No medium for discussion.

A crowd soon gathered at Amphitheatre 8 to egg on the participants of this territorial squabb. Bird jokes, pouring in from the sideline, were not appreciated. "Don't forget to duck", someone said "Told you that tennis was for the birds...". It was my doubles partner, a fiery individual at the best of times, who was having the most trouble adjusting to the change of pace and incessant attacks from above. Eyes gleaming, and grinning like a madman, he took up a boomerang-throwing stance; his oblong-shaped racquet head (bearing testimony to its numerous encounters with the fence-post) directed towards the feathered tormentors circling above. At this point the Tennis Association President, feeling quite invincible having just spent an hour or so at the clubhouse bar, took charge. He strode onto court 8, wielding a Prince "Woodie" recklessly above his head, and in one foul swoop, scooped up the mottled eggs and removed them to a location beyond the court enclosure. There were sighs of relief all around. The eggs were safe. And so were we... or so we thought! No such luck... our friends continued their rampage all afternoon.

Had I been a birdo back then I may have realised that shifting the plovers' eggs wouldn't make one iota of difference to their protective swooping behaviour. The nest (eggs or no eggs) was the centre of their universe - a territorial marker, and as such, they were programmed to defend it. The idea that its eggs could somehow be relocated was obviously an unfathomable concept for a plover. I can't remember whether we won our tennis that day. I know that the plovers lost everything - their eggs, nest, territory - whereas our only injuries were the odd bruised ego.

We never saw the plovers again. The mother must have finally come to her senses about the nest being empty (probably felt like a right goose for not realising sooner) and the area was soon abandoned. Hopefully they made their next nest in a place with a bit more class than ant-bed court 8 somewhere where nothing exciting ever happened... say, what about the GABBA.... now that would surely ruffle some feathers.

Jane Gaydon

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES: All sightings as submitted by members of Toowoomba Bird Observers. Accuracy not vouched for by TBO. Please check with observer before citing.

Magpie Goose	Gatton Bypass Sth.	18.01.93	L.A.
Chestnut Teal	Janke's Waterhole	08.02.93	R.H.
Letter-winged Kite (c30)	Bowenville	09.05.93	C.D.,R.H.,P.McC.
Square-tailed Kite	Tara	13.02.93	R.H.,P.McC.,N.T.
" " "	Gatton Township	18.06.93	R.H.
Little Eagle *	Grantham Scrub Road	13.03.93	R.H.
Black Falcon	Glenvale St.School	10.02.93	N.T.
" "	Roma	20.06.93	T.P.
Peregrine Falcon	Gatton Campus	09.03.93	R.H.
Stubble Quail	Tabletop (summit)	03.07.93	D.G., J.G.
Buff-banded Rail	USQ Campus	12.03.93	M.J.
Spotless Crake	Soda Springs	06.02.93	M.A., P.McC.
Sooty Oystercatcher	Redcliffe	15.02.93	R.H.
Wandering Tattler **	Scarborough	15.02.93	R.H.
Marsh Sandpiper	Helidon Spa	28.03.93	A.S. et al
Sharp-tail. Sandpiper	" "	10.03.93	A.S. et al
Arctic Tern ***	Fraser Island	23.09.92	N.T.
Squatter Pigeon	Lake Clarendon	24.02.93	R.H.
Glossy Black Cockatoo	Soda Springs	06.02.93	M.A., P.McC.
Yel.-tail.Bl.Cockatoo	Helidon Dump	16.01.93	O.& K.B.
Little Corella (4)	Withcott	22.02.93	A.S.
Powerful Owl (2)	Redwood Park	11.04.93	P.McC.
" " (calling)	" "	16.04.93	R.H., P.McC.
W.-throat.Needletail****	Kumbarilla	20.02.93	R.H., P.McC.

Booby Pitta	Redwood Park	12.04.93	C.D.
Wh.-bell. Cuckoo-shrike	Toowoomba Cemetery	20.02.93	N.T.
Scarlet Robin	Blanchview Road	12.05.93	N.T.
White-eared Monarch	Redwood Park	09.04.93	M.A.,R.H.,P.McC.
Spiny-cheek.Honeyeater	Withcott	25.03.93	A.S.
" " "	Welcombe Av., T'mba	22/29/30.05.93	N.T.
" " "	Freeman's Waterhole	22.06.93	R.H.
Apostlebird	Bedford St., T'mba	31.05.93	N.T.

L.A., L.Atzeni; O.&K.B., O.&K.Booth; C.D., C.Dollery; D.G., D.Gaydon; J.G., J.Gaydon; R.H., R.Hobson; M.J., M.Jacobs; P.McC., P.McConnell; T.P., T.Pacey; A.S., A.Shore; N.T., N.Thompson;

* Raptor feeding on remains of Brown Hare, *Lepus capensis*.

** A single bird foraging over a wave washed and rocky headland. " Wandering Tattler, *Tringa incana*. Uncommon to rare. Mostly confined to coastal rocky outcrops (North Stradbroke & Moreton Islands, Currumbin, Caloundra, Round Hill Head). Occasionally on shingly beaches (Wellington Point, St. Helena Island. Mostly Summer visitor (August to May). ", Roberts, Gregory J. p.17 " The Birds of South-east Queensland ", Queensland Conservation Council, 1979.

*** Clear view of single bird at rest on open surf beach between Eurong and Dilli Village, Fraser Island. Observed in company of Crested and Little Terns. " Arctic Tern, *Sterna paradisaea*. Vagrant. C.Corben has observed at least three individuals in southern Moreton Bay and off North Stradbroke Island in March, May and August. " Roberts, Gregory J. p.19, *ibid*.

**** A single bird flushed from roost in a Paperbark, *Melaleuca decora*, during spotlighting operations on Is. Clear views obtained of single bird by TBO members and Al Young - University of Southern Qld. A very good record as this species very rarely recorded at roost in Australia.

TOOWOOMBA BRANCH OF NATURESEARCH TAKES NEW DIRECTION

This survey finishes in February 1994 for SE Queensland. We hope to make the most of these final six months by using a new approach. Instead of keeping to our home base grid, we hope to target prime areas with small teams. We hope to increase our information on reptiles, mammals, insects and plants in this way, along with our bird data. To aid in this approach we will be having several workshops this winter. We will have some firm dates for these very soon. Would you be willing to add your knowledge to such a team on a once or twice basis? If so, please contact one of the coordinators: Nicci Thompson (076) 343 074; Dana McCown (076) 303 645; or Ken McKeown (076) 303774.

Naturesearch 2001 head office is sending a professional survey team headed by Dr Ian Gynther to look closely at Mt Peel and Table Top Mountain. This team will use state-of-the-art equipment such as Elliot traps, harp traps, and sonar bat-detectors. Would you like to see these devices and the resulting catch on site? Then mark Saturday morning, 07 August, on your calendar. We will go on site (whichever is more productive at the time) and learn about the techniques and also see the captured fauna being measured and weighed before release. Call Dana McCown if you would like to participate.

**** NEW MEMBERS ****

A big, warm birdo's welcome to the following new members :

Brett Silcock
2 Azalea Court
TOOWOOMBA

Jane Gaydon
216 West Street
TOOWOOMBA

May your line of sight frequently coincide with the location of fascinating birds

**** COMING EVENTS ****

July 1993 Outing:

Location: Spicer's Gap

Assembly Point: Main camping ground, Spicer's Gap

Time: 8.00 am

Date: 25 July (Campers 24-25 July)

Leader: Pat McConnell (076) 976 141

Info: Spicer's Gap, on the main range just south of Cunningham's Gap, is an area of Open Eucalypt forest and sub-tropical rainforest. It is an area known for several very unusual bird species including the Eastern Bristlebird. This outing is an optional camp-out, with the main outing day being Sunday 25. Spotlighting for those inclined to camp. Directions: from Cunningham's Gap head towards Aratula. Before reaching Aratula the turnoff to Spicer's Gap is on the right-hand side of the highway. Part of the road in is unsealed and rough in places. Watch the weather as the road is closed to traffic following heavy rain. We will be camping in the main camping area. Day visitors welcome. Any enquiries, phone Pat.

July 1993 Alternative Outing:

Location: Stockyard Creek

Assembly Point: Junction of Stockyard Ck and Flagstone Ck Roads

Time: 7.30 am

Date: 25 July

Leader: Ann Shore (076) 303 207

Info: For those not wishing to venture far from home, Ann will be leading an alternative outing for July in the Stockyard area. You can expect to see many of our local bush-birds.

August 1993 Outing:

Location: Mulgowie/Blenheim area

Date: 29 August

Leader: contact Ann Shore

Info: Details are a bit hazy at this stage, however being a new area for our club, this outing promises to be of great interest.

SURFACE MAIL

THE TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS NEWSLETTER

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