



# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS inc.

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

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**CLUB OFFICERS :**

President -	Michael Atzeni	076 392761	Editor -	Ken McKeown	076 303774
Vice-P/Records -	Rod Hobson	074 627364	Librarian -	Sharyn Frederiks	076 331169
Secretary -	Ann Shore	076 303207	Committee Member -	Pat Cleary	076 303352
Treasurer -	Nicci Thompson	076 343074			

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**'To encourage the observations and study of the birds of the Toowoomba area'**

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**NEWSLETTER No. 221 - JUNE 1994**

**EDITORIAL:**

This month, yet again, we have interesting and varied items of avian importance. If you look at the bottom of the Bird Update you will notice only 12 members seem to note and record their findings. If you have been travelling, whether near or far, and have found anything interesting, the Records Officer would like to hear about it. If you would like to participate, it's quite easy to include an Area Check-list with your newsletter.

The Editor would also quite enjoy receiving stories about your adventures. Don't worry about the length. Stories on any birding topic would be most welcome. Also, if you have a locality you think the club should visit, please inform the executive and we will try to arrange it.

**TBO OUTING - LOCKYER REGION, 29 MAY 1994.**

As I drove down the Range on Sunday morning, the trees below were still draped in wraiths of mist and the sun was a large red disc sliding over the horizon. It was a beautiful winter's morning but what would a Club outing in the Lockyer Valley produce in the middle of a devastating drought?

I knew that many of the club's favoured wetlands had vanished. We met at Lake Apex and walked across herbage interspersed with caked and cracked mud, where once there had been a sheet of water. A small number of familiar waterbirds were still using the few remaining pools.

We moved on to Lake Gallately in the grounds of Gatton College where the water levels are still relatively good. Plumed Whistling-Duck predominated but there were Pink-eared Duck, Grey Teal and Black Duck on the water; Red-kneed Dotterel, Black-fronted Plovers and Stilts patrolled the margins and Cisticolas, Reed Warblers, Tawny Grassbirds and Fairy-wrens called and flitted about in the long grass and reeds on the banks.

From there we progressed to Lake Dyer to add, among others, Shovelers, Hardheads, Whiskered Terns and Spoonbills to our growing list. After enjoying a morning coffee break and an in-depth dissection of the previous week's State of Origin we headed up the Mulgowie Road. The road winds through an ever narrowing valley, hemmed in by green hills resplendent at this time of year with splashes of gold, as the White Cedars colour for late autumn. Very picturesque, but no water in the creek and very few birds, so we tried our luck on the main

Blenheim Road - a similar narrow valley leading towards the Main Range escarpment. Here we found water and bush birds and an idyllic spot among heaps of rock and gravel and lantana in which to eat lunch. A short stroll after lunch brought us to sward of green grass sweeping down to the waters of the creek. Too conventional for a birder's lunch stop, Mr Editor? It also revealed a Pacific Baza circling high over our heads.

In all, we clocked up seventy-six species - a respectable total for the drought-stricken countryside. We all look forward to good rain soon to ensure a future for the Lockyer farmers, but also to restore the wetlands to their former status as a haven for waterbirds.

Nicci Thompson

#### TBO OUTING REPORT - HELIDON/POSTMAN'S RIDGE, 12 JUNE 1994

Winter mornings - nature's sieve for sorting out the keen from the not-so keen birders! On this occasion, nine of us resisted the temptation to lull back into blissful slumber after silencing the frenetic scream of the alarm clock. Even the fearless leader, already suffering from a nagging cold, showed up sporting his latest ailment - laryngitis. We kicked off with a short walk along the creek at the Helidon rest area. An Azure Kingfisher and Red-backed Fairy-Wrens started us off on a colourful note. While thawing out in the sunshine at the Helidon Dip, we kept the list ticking over adding the likes of Little Lorikeet, Common Bronzewing, Varied Sittella, Fuscous Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeaters, nesting White-throated Honeyeaters (very brave, indeed!), Dusky Woodswallow and White-winged Chough.

All the while, our misguided leader was claiming Western Gerygones would be a piece of cake to locate. One would have thought he would have learnt about the vagaries of birdwatching by now and shouldn't be promising anything. In the areas where he usually saw the Western Gerygone at this time of year White-throated Gerygones appeared instead! The resident White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrikes and Buff-rumped Thornbills also decided to remain incognito for the outing.

Near Lockyer Siding, Nicci alerted us to a Wedge-tail in the distance and two more accompanying birds were quickly located. At the same time, a Collared Sparrowhawk flew over, perhaps with a fetish for a feed of fresh Tree Martin of which there were many on the wing. An Eastern Spinebill made a brief appearance and was my first sighting for the season. (I reckon their numbers have fallen off dramatically in the past two years, perhaps because of the drought. Does anyone agree?).

We wound up the outing with a few waterbirds near Postman's Ridge and at the Helidon Spa. At the Spa, a single Red-necked Avocet and a pair of Red-kneed Dotterels were the highlights. We recorded 83 species - not a bad morning's birding and well worthwhile forsaking that extra hour or so in bed.

Michael Atzeni

#### ONCE BITTERN .....

I recently had an experience with a mythical creature - a bittern. You know, one of those birds which (in the words of Nicci T) don't really exist. Although they beautifully adorn the pages of our field guides, they never adorn the lenses of our binoculars it seems. That's in theory anyway. As it turns out, they really do exist as I will testify.

It was mid-June and I was driving along Stockyard Creek Road, absent-mindedly taking in the scenery, thoughts far away. The road dipped down to cross the creek and as I passed over the small culvert, I casually noticed a skulker in the creek bed out of the corner of my right eye. Being miles away mentally, and having spent the last two and a half years living on the shores of Moreton Bay, I dreamily appraised it as an immature Mangrove Heron and continued happily on. (I can't believe I'm admitting to this.) Within micro-seconds however, my brain clicked back into gear, my foot found the brake, and as the rubber smoke cleared I gazed through my rear window from the other side of the culvert upon a beautiful adult Black Bittern.

The bird was skulking on the creek edge where the water bubbled out from the culvert pipes, completely in the open. It was now monitoring my car rather intently but hadn't flown. The dark base plumage contrasted markedly with its tawny-golden streaks and after several minutes surveillance I heartily declared it a most attractive bird. Upon starting my engine and backing up to obtain an even better view, the bird flushed and I immediately regretted my action. It flew along the creek towards thicker vegetation and was gone, like a wraith.

It was a real pleasure to see such a secretive bird out in the open in the middle of the day (2 pm). My only previous encounter with a bittern, some ten years earlier, was a fleeting glimpse of the same species flushing from thick callistemon on dying light, after I'd spent a whole afternoon fighting through thick creekside vegetation looking for it. And that was ten years ago. So hold firm, ye of little faith, and keep your eyes open; you never know when a mythical being may casually cross your path.

Don Gaydon

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

Short-tailed Shearwater	14.05.94	off Cape Moreton	D.G. et al
Wilson's Storm Petrel	14.05.94	off Cape Moreton	D.G. et al
Greater Frigatebird	04.12.93	Lady Elliot Is.	N.T.
Least Frigatebird	04.12.93	Lady Elliot Is.	N.T.
Red-tailed Tropic Bird	04.12.93	Lady Elliot Is.	N.T.
White-tailed Tropic Bird(4)	14.05.94	off Cape Moreton	D.G. et al
Black Bittern	13.06.94	Rockmount	D.G.
Green Pygmy-Goose	10.01.94	Cardross	R.H.
Black Kite	14.02.94	Janke's Dam	R.H.
Square-tailed Kite(2)	19.04.94	Gatton	R.H.
Brown Goshawk	05.01.94	Withcott	A.S.
Grey Goshawk	29.03.94	Redwood Park	M.A., P.McC.
Red Goshawk	02.03.94	nr Ravensbourne	R.H.
Wedge-tailed Eagle	21.02.94	Plainlands	T.P.
Little Eagle	26.02.94	Withcott	M.A.
Spotted Harrier	16.04.94	Woodlands	R.H., P.McC.
Marsh Harrier	20.05.94	Woodlands	R.H.
Red-backed Button-Quail	29.03.94	Gatton	R.H.
Buff-breasted Button-Quail	13.01.94	nr Chillagoe	R.H.
Buff-banded Rail	16.02.94	Charleville	C.D.
Hooded Plover	25.12.93	Lincoln N.P., S.A.	N.T.
Black-winged Stilt	22.01.94	Lake Annand	M.A.
Little Curlew(2)	23.02.94	Lake Clarendon	R.H.
Roseate Tern	04.12.93	Lady Elliot Is.	N.T.
Black-naped Tern	04.12.93	Lady Elliot Is.	N.T.
Bridled Tern	31.12.93	Rottnest Is. W.A.	N.T.
Diamond Dove	05.02.94	Langlands	T.P.
Emerald Dove	02.01.94	Redwood Park	M.A.
Squatter Pigeon	03.01.94	Chillagoe	R.H.
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo	09.04.94	Woodlands	R.H.
Blue Bonnet(2)	26.01.94	Kleinton	R.H., P.McC.
Elegant Parrot	25.12.93	Lincoln N.P. S.A.	N.T.
Rock Parrot	25.12.93	Lincoln N.P. S.A.	N.T.
Powerful Owl	21.11.93	Redwood Park	R.R., N.T.
Sooty Owl	15.12.93	Redwood Park	M.A., P.McC.
White-throated Nightjar	18.04.94	Lockyer S.F.	R.H.
Chillagoe Swiftlet	03.01.94	Chillagoe	R.H.

Noisy Pitta	09.01.94	Ravensbourne N.P.	A.S.,K.McK.
Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike	18.03.94	Redwood Park	M.A.,P.McC.
Spectacled Monarch	07.04.94	Redwood Park	A.S.
Chiming Wedgebill	02.01.94	Peron Pen., S.A.	N.T.
Blue-breasted Fairy-wren	08.01.94	Eyre Bird Obs.,W.A.	N.T.
Eastern Bristlebird	28.01.94	Spicer's Gap	P.McC.
Little Wattlebird(4)	30.01.94	Ravensbourne N.P.	R.H.
Purple-gaped Honeyeater	12.06.94	Murray Bridge S.A.	K.& W.McK.
Yellow-rumped Pardalote	12.06.94	Murray Bridge S.A.	K.NcK.
Little Raven	12.06.94	Gawler	K.& W.McK.
Black-chinned Honeyeater	28.11.93	Helidon L'stock Dip	N.T.
Rufous-throated Honeyeater	06.01.94	nr Chillagoe	R.H.
Banded Honeyeater	06.01.94	nr Chillagoe	R.H.
Scarlet Honeyeater	26.04.94	Perth St. T'mba	M.A.
Diamond Firetail	03.04.04	Helidon L'stock Dip	N.T.
Crimson Finch	14.01.94	Mareeba	R.H.
Masked Finch	06.01.94	nr Chillagoe	R.H.
Black-throated Finch	06.01.94	nr Chillagoe	R.H.
Gouldian Finch	06.01.94	nr Chillagoe	R.H.
Great Bowerbird	03.01.94	Chillagoe	R.H.
Victoria's Riflebird	15.01.94	Lake Barrine	R.H.
Little Woodswallow	06.01.94	nr Chillagoe	R.H.

L.A. L.Atzeni  
D.G. D.Gaydon  
K.McK. K.& W.McKeown  
N.T. N.Thompson

M.A. M.Atzeni  
R.H. R.Hobson  
T.P. T.Pacey  
A.S. A.Shore

C.D. C.Dollery  
P.McC. P.McConnell  
R.R. R.Roberts

The Records Officer would like to extend his apologies to TBO members for the paucity of the Member's Bird Notes in this year's newsletters but university studies have kept me busy. The Annual Bird Report is also late for that reason. As can be seen members have been busy near and far looking for our feathered friends. Some great sightings have been reported, especially of extralimital species such as Black Kite, Buff-banded Rail, Buff-breasted Button-quail, Little Wattlebird, Blue Bonnet and Diamond Dove; some very special birds also - Red Goshawk, Gouldian Finch, White-tailed Tropic Bird, Eastern Bristlebird, Sooty and Powerful Owls, Little Curlew, Red-backed Button-Quail and Black Bittern. Who would have expected a Black-winged Stilt at the Waterbird (Muscovey Duck) Habitat! Keep up the good work, folks. The university year draws slowly, and painfully, to close. Hopefully, then, all will return to normal.

#### Records Officer.

#### RAOU Murray-Darling Basin Waterbird Project.

Michael Hutchison, co-ordinator of the Murray-Darling Basin Waterbird Project is seeking volunteer bird observers in this area. This interesting project will try to address the following questions:-

- 1 What are the characteristics of wetlands that are essential for the survival of each species of waterbird?
- 2 What are the seasonal and long term changes in the relative abundance of waterbirds on the MDB wetlands?
- 3 What is the role of ephemeral (temporary) wetlands in maintaining waterbird populations?

- 4 Which wetlands are essential to waterbirds as refuges, breeding grounds and feeding areas in the MDB?

The Project is of international importance, as Australia is a signatory of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, and has treaties with China and Japan for the protection of migratory birds, many of which visit the MDB.

If any TBO members are interested, Michael will provide you with background information, registration forms, survey sheets and instruction booklet together with a map showing MDB boundaries of the study area. The project will be run along similar lines to the Australian bird count. This is a very worthwhile project and could be combined with your normal birding activities. The project will collect data for at least 5 years and volunteers will only have to visit their nominated areas four times per year. Some TBO members have already expressed their desire to join the survey but others are needed. If you are interested please write or phone for details to:-

Michael Hutchison  
Locked Bag 600  
St James Post Office  
Sydney 2000  
Telephone (02) 267 8515

### Wish List

Lately there has been quite a deal of interest with the Murray-Darling Basin. The National Museum chose Toowoomba as the only Queensland town in the basin to visit with its travelling historical exhibition. The new Toowoomba Art Gallery has been very busy with thousands of local school children busily completing activities as well as the general community enjoying a journey through history.

Luckily, Wendy and I were able travel to South Australia on the Queen's Birthday Weekend and indulge in a little travelling and bird watching. We spent most of our time in the area south of Adelaide. This area depends on fishing and tourism (mainly whale watching at Encounter Bay).

In 1802 and with the war between France and England at its height, cartographer, Matthew Flinders, "encountered" Frenchman, Nicholas Baudin, off the present Victor Harbor. Apparently they chose not to fight but to drink a glass of good French wine instead - little realizing what fertile wine country they were observing. I didn't see the penguins at Granite Island but the antiques were wonderful.

Next stop was the historic, old riverboat port of Goolwa at the mouth of the mighty Murray River. Here we viewed a barrage constructed to keep the fresh water of the Murray and the salty sea water apart. Lots of usual river birds present and the antiques were exceptional. It was here I extinguished one of my longtime wishes - to see the mouth of the Murray River.

After travelling east along the top of Lake Alexandrina, we crossed the river at Wellington and headed north to Tailem Bend and eventually Murray Bridge. Here we found some previously unseen birds in the thick Mallee. It was quite difficult to spot well-camouflaged small birds in the shadows late in the afternoon. That night we celebrated our sightings of the Purple-gaped Honeyeater, Yellow-rumped Pardalote and the White-fronted Chat with a bottle of red-coloured Wynns wine.

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

June Outing

Location: Girraween campout  
Date: 25/26 June  
Leader: Rod Hobson (ph 074- 627 364)  
Time: 7 a.m.

Always a great place to visit with perhaps a chance to view the Superb Lyrebird. BYO everything. About 2 hours from Toowoomba. Drive through Warwick to Stanthorpe. A bitumen road leaves the highway 26 km south of Stanthorpe and winds 9 km up the Wyberba valley to the park headquarters. For those wishing to attend on Sunday only, meet at 9 a.m. at the ranger's office. If camping, you will need to arrange a permit. Contact:-

The Ranger  
Girraween National Park  
Wyberba  
v a Ballandean 4382  
Telephone (076) 84 5157

Mid-July Outing

Location: Linthorpe Environmental Park  
Date: 17 July  
Leader: Nicci Thompson (076) 343 074  
Time: 7 a.m.

Meet at the BP service station after Southbrook on Toowoomba - Millmerran road. More info in next newsletter.

July Outing

Location: Mt Glorious  
Date: 31 July  
Leader: Ken McKeown (076) 303 774  
Time: 7 a.m.

Meet at Maiala. This park is one of four in the D'Aguiar Ranges. It offers scenic views of the coastal plain and has varied forest communities.

If undeliverable return to  
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