

TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS inc.

p.o.box 67 - darling heights - 4350

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

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			

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

NEWSLETTER No. 226 - November 1994

EDITORIAL:

For those of you unable to attend the AGM, this newsletter will deal with reporting the details of the night. By law, the Financial Report must be included, and speaking of money, subscriptions are due by 01 November at the rates shown on the cover.

As continuing Editor, I wish to thank several members for their valued help in the production of the newsletter. Firstly, President and rigorous proof-reader, Michael, Nicci for those deft touches on husband Graham's photocopier and collation, Barbara for collation and posting and of course the small band of members who have shared their avian experiences with us. Remember it's your club so please help keep the newsletter alive with fresh ideas and stories and we are always open to suggestions for outings including visits to private property if permission can be obtained.

OUTING to HIGHFIELDS - 16 OCTOBER

Highfields Falls is a well hidden spot where, amazingly, the Falls still run. A pleasant surprise in these droughty times and consequently a haven for a large variety of birdlife.

The local environmental group with some outside help is continuing its efforts in clearing Privet and Lantana from the heavily infested hillside, leaving fallen bushes and timber to protect the slope and provide shelter for fauna and emerging native saplings and creepers. A network of pathways with steps and easy gradients enables walkers to make full use of the area. Seventeen TBO members and three visitors met there and enjoyed a most pleasant morning's birding as they wandered along the tracks with many stops along the way. The high but broken canopy cover provided plenty of dappled shade with mild temperatures and a light breeze.

The shrill voices of Little Lorikeets were frequently heard from aloft while White-throated, White-

naped, Yellow-faced and Scarlet Honeyeaters were observed feeding in the blossoming Eucalypts. There was much activity from Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes swooping through the branches; Dollarbirds cavorted above and Lewin's Honeyeaters enjoyed wild chases around us.

In and just above the thickets of felled Lantana, small bush birds were busy; Silvereyes, Red-browed Firetails, Brown Thornbills, White-browed and Large-billed Scrubwrens, Whipbirds and the odd Fairy-wren. Grey Shrike-thrushes added their clear notes to the bird chorus, together with the calls of White-throated Treecreepers, Olive-backed Orioles and Spotted Pardalotes, with soft coos emitted by a pair of handsome Brown Cuckoo-Doves. Definite highlights of the morning were the sightings of the beautiful Yellow-tufted Honeyeater and a Crested Shrike-tit.

Most members rounded off the outing with morning tea at nearby Williams Park where a number of different species were added to the list, totalling sixty-four, including a Rufous Fantail, several Australian King Parrots and a Common Koel. Six nesting boxes have recently been installed at suitable heights in creekside trees so it will be interesting to find out in years to come just what species are taking advantage of them.

Ann Shore

Minutes of the AGM of the Toowoomba Bird Observers Inc.
held on 17 October 1994 at the QCWA Hall, Withcott.

1. **Opening of Meeting:** The President, Michael Atzeni, opened the meeting at 7:40 pm, welcoming those present: 15 members and 7 visitors (as per Attendance Book).
2. **Apologies:** Received from Lesley Beaton, Laurie Atzeni, Olive and Kaylene Booth, Marilyn Lund, David Cleary, Don Gaydon, Col Dollery, Wendy Mc Keown, Barbara Weller and Julie O'Connor.
3. **Minutes of the 1993 AGM:** These had been printed in the November 1993 Newsletter and were duly moved and approved. They were tabled for members to view.
4. **Business Arising:** Nil.
5. **Correspondence and Business Arising:** Nil.
6. **President's Report:** Michael reported on the club's activities during the past year. (See separate report). He moved that it be accepted. Seconded Jack Lund. All in favour. Carried.
7. **Treasurer's Report:** Nicci Thompson gave details of the Auditor's Report on the club's financial status for 1993/94. (See separate report). Nicci moved that it be accepted. Seconded by Barbara Wilson. All in favour. Carried.
8. **Election of Officers:** As Michael was seeking re-election he vacated the chair which was temporarily occupied by Rod Hobson and the election proceeded as follows:-
 - a. **President** - Michael Atzeni
nominated A. Shore, seconded N. Thompson
 - b. **Vice-Pres/Records Officer** - Rod Hobson
nominated M. Atzeni, seconded N. Thompson

c. Editor - Ken Mc Keown

nominated R. Hobson, seconded N. Thompson

d. Secretary - Ann Shore

nominated P. Cleary, seconded S. Frederiks

e. Treasurer - Nicci Thompson

nominated A. Shore, seconded K. Mc Keown

f. Librarian - Sharyn Frederiks

nominated R. Hobson, seconded A. Shore

All the above nominations were received in advance and all elections were carried unopposed.

g. Committee Member - Pat Cleary

nominated from the floor by A. Shore, seconded B. Wilson. No other nominations. Declared elected.

h. Auditor - Tony Hooper, Betts and Dighton

nominated M. Atzeni, seconded R. Hobson. All in favour. Carried.

9. **Close of Meeting:** There being no other business, the President closed the meeting at 8:00pm. when members remained to listen to an interesting talk given by Dr Michael Hutchison, RAOU Co-ordinator of the Murray-Darling Basin Waterbird Survey, a project in which a number of the club's members are already participating at dams and wetlands west of the Great Dividing Range.

The President introduced Dr Hutchison explaining that he was a biogeographer working for the RAOU on this important project, sponsored by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. Dr Hutchison opened his address by thanking the TBO for inviting him and Nicci Thompson in particular for showing him around Toowoomba and for taking him to Cooby Dam. He outlined the project (illustrated by slides) as follows:-

At least every three months volunteers should go and count waterbirds. Some 200 hundred are already taking part and the survey will continue for a minimum of three years. Approximately 140 species are found within the survey area but not all species have been recorded yet. Those involved send data which is subsequently entered into a data base. Comments are added, with details on breeding and feeding.

The survey is important for a number of reasons. Various migrating birds come from afar in summer and it is important to identify the areas they are using and particularly those that serve as refuges. Population declines might be detected over time. Other scientists will be able to refer to the study.

The Murray-Darling Basin Survey covers a very wide area from Augathella in the north to Lake Alexandrina and the Coorong in the south, and east to the Snowy Mountains where a few species are found. In between are a range of wetlands, some with very complicated systems which support many species. Some of the ephemeral lakes can be very dry for many years but once filled may be used by Freckled Duck, waders and others. When dry they accumulate much organic matter and so become good feeding areas when they are wet again.

Running waters are also important and artificial wetlands are being looked at as well. The shallow parts of reservoirs are quite good, also ricefields where Painted Snipe, crakes and rails may be found. In

cotton growing areas in the west there are some important shallow storage areas. On the flood plains of the Balonne River, Magpie geese are found. Dr Hutchison is waiting for his first report from the Darling Downs of this species. In the past they were seen in the south of the country.

At the conclusion of Dr Hutchison's talk, Michael Atzeni moved a vote of thanks and invited members and guests to join him in a social get-together and refreshments.

Signed Ann Shore

Secretary

24 October 1994

PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

The year has been fairly quiet with most of the executive being heavily committed in other aspects of life. Nonetheless, there have been plenty of interesting sightings and a couple of major events. As at 9/10/94 the club had 56 financial members and had its head above water.

Early in the year I suggested a new project may stimulate the interest of members otherwise not actively involved. One possible joint project was a survey of the species in Redwood Park in areas where clearing of lantana and privet is proposed by the Friends of the Escarpment Parks. After lengthy discussions it was decided we did not have the resources to carry out such a survey. We also believed would not shed any light on the rare and cryptic species. It appears that the outings, newsletter and monthly survey are sufficient and I think the simplicity of our activities is why so many enjoy the club.

Outings were generally well attended despite the drought conditions. It was apparent that some members preferred the short local outings while others liked the full-day forays further afield. Therefore, from May we have had two outings a month, one of each, and this seems to have been well-received. Several memorable outings were conducted at venues such as Stradbroke Island, Boonah, Killarney and Lake Broadwater and locally, Stockyard Ck and Highfields Falls.

In February, Pat Cleary and Ann Shore tabled the Club's comments on a draft plan for management of the escarpment parks. The club supports the promotion of the parks but not further development of them. We felt the parks were being overrated as a tourist attraction and their significance as fauna sanctuaries, especially Redwood Park, was being underplayed.

I never joined the club to become involved in environmental and political issues but sometimes it is unavoidable. The proposed burning of Redwood Park without any form of fauna survey was a real concern, as several uncommon and poorly understood species such as Sooty, Powerful and Masked Owl and Black-breasted Button-Quail occur there and may be threatened. We voiced our concerns both through the paper and to the Toowoomba City Council (TCC) and discussed them further with Paul Lloyd, the TCC environmental officer, and staff of the Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH). The burning went ahead, nevertheless, and its effect long term will remain a mystery. We are currently discussing the possibility of funding for owl research in Redwood Park.

Nicci resigned from the Special Environmental Advisory Committee (SEAC) in February leaving the club without a representative. Her departure reason goes back to the club's aim, namely, to encourage bird observation, **NOT** stress-inducing politicking on environmental matters. The Executive fully endorsed her resignation. This led us to review our involvement in environmental matters which has increased markedly in recent years. It was agreed that we had spilt energy, sweat and blood unnecessarily and should be more selective in future. The club has very little clout and should probably remain that way since it's a club for those interested in birdwatching. There are many other clubs that can provide for those also interested in environmental issues.

The monthly newsletter is a real team effort. After teething problems with word-processors,

proof-reading and print quality, Ken and I were producing the mastercopy on time and of the quality produced by the previous editor, Don Gaydon. Thanks to Ken, Nicci and Barbara for the editing, printing and collation/posting of the Newsletter each month and to all contributors. Thanks also to Patrina Gill, a very patient friend, for her help with Wordperfect and to our ever-tolerant spouses whom I know frequently came a distant second when it was "that time of the (TBO) month!"

The club recently upgraded its display at the Waterbird Habitat in time for the Carnival of Flowers. David and Pat Cleary, Nicci Thompson and Ann Shore all helped in its refurbishment. The TCC will replace the perspex cover. This upgrading followed on the heels of an unsuccessful bid for funding for an improved display but thanks, nevertheless, to Karen Smith of DEH for helping with the application.

As usual, we were involved in a number of public relations exercises throughout the year. Some members are involved with NatureSearch and the Murray Darling Waterbird Project. To everybody that contributed or participated during the year and to my fellow executive members, my sincerest thanks.

Michael Atzeni.

ACTORS' STUDIO

The Actor's Studio will present "Halfway Up A Tree" by Peter Ustinov on 06 December. Starts at 8:00pm. This is a fundraiser for the TBO and always good fun. Admission price is \$10 which includes wine, tea/coffee and nibbles. Contact Ann Shore 303 207 for tickets.

ANNUAL SPECIES SURVEY, 29/30 OCTOBER

Welcome rain ruined our chances of a thorough survey this year as it deterred most people getting out on the Saturday. Sunday was fine and to mitigate Saturday's setback, I've counted any sightings from both days and ignored the 24 hr (noon to noon) restriction. This time there was also a shortage of participants (14), not all sectors were covered and some of the better areas were only visited late in the day. Nonetheless, members recorded an impressive list of 145 species.

Most of the survey concentrated on the more interesting areas around Helidon and Lower Flagstone and Lockyer Cks. The Helidon region (Sector 7) landed the highest tally (108 species), followed by Sector 4 (SE Toowoomba including the Waterbird Habitat) with 70 species and Sector 8 (Carpendale and Lower Flagstone Ck areas) with 68 species. Unfortunately, no team visited Redwood Ck early Sunday morning resulting in a poor Sector 3 list of 47 species and some glaring omissions such as Wonga Pigeon, Black-faced and Spectacled Monarch and Large-billed Scrubwren. My team saw the majority of its species within the first hour 6-7am. We started on Lockyer Ck near Helidon and finished at Redwood Park taking in the Helidon Dip, Lockyer Siding, Postman's Ridge, Flagstone Creek areas along the way.

Below is a breakdown of the survey into sectors with the number of species given in brackets and a list of the more interesting sightings for each sector. Many thanks to all who participated. I know you enjoyed yourselves.

Sector	
1 (30)	Red-rumped Parrot, Rufous Fantail
2 (0)	
3 (47)	Cattle Egret, Varied Triller
4 (70)	Rufous Night Heron, Hardhead, Australian Brush-turkey, Eurasian Coot, Southern Boobook, White backed Swallow, Spangled Drongo, Satin Bowerbird
5 (47)	Pallid Cuckoo, Australian Owlet-nightjar, Restless Flycatcher

- 6 (21) Australian Pelican, Brown Goshawk
 7 (108) Australian Pelican, Little Egret, Rufous Night Heron, Pacific Baza, Collared Sparrowhawk, Buff-banded Rail, Spotless Crake, Diamond Dove, Azure Kingfisher, Crested Shrike-tit, Black Honeyeater, Plum-headed Finch, White-winged Chough
 8 (68) Australian Pelican, Great Cormorant, Magpie Goose, Pink-eared Duck, Eurasian Coot, Red-kneed Dotterel, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Cicadabird, Brown Songlark
 Total number of species: 145

Michael Atzeni

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

November Outing

Location: Stradbroke Island
Date: 26/27 November
Leader: Rod Hobson (074) 627 364
RSVP: 19 November (074) 627 364

This outing will possibly consist of one day watching waders along the foreshores of coastal Brisbane, followed by the next day at Straddie looking at whales, dolphins, rays, turtles, and more waders and seabirds. A great weekend always. BYO everything. It is essential that you notify Rod if you are attending as we need to book the ferry and co-ordinate cars.

December Outing

Location: Coal Creek
Date: 18 December
Leader: Ann Shore 303 207

An interesting variety of accessible habitats. BYO everything. More next newsletter.

Mid-January Outing

Location: Ravensbourne National Park
Date: 15 January
Leader: Michael Atzeni

More next newsletter.

If undeliverable return to
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