

MARILYN.

"To encourage the observation and study
of the birds of the Toowoomba area."

President: Bill Jolly,

"Ringmere", Withcott, 4344.

Ph: 30.3206

Secretary/Treasurer: Robert Shaw,

c/- Post Office, Darling Heights,
Toowoomba, 4350.

Editor/Librarian: Ron Hopkinson,

50, Bass Street, Toowoomba.

Ph: 35.4952



NEWS-SHEET No. 23 - NOVEMBER, 1977.

The Club's Annual General Meeting took place on Friday, October 21st and was well attended, with nineteen members present. The Secretary's report on the evening appears in this issue. All three Officers have been confirmed for a further twelve months.

Our Second Annual Bird Census was taken on Sunday, October 23rd as members who participated can doubtless confirm. Many thanks to those who took part in this most useful and informative exercise. We can now begin to relate this information with last year's and make interesting comparisons between the Uprange and Downrange blocks. Three new birds were added to the 10km circle list as a result of the day's observations and the exciting prospects awaiting us next year when we change to the larger area were made evident with sightings like Black Swan and Whistling Kites. A fully detailed report will be published with the January issue but at this point we can say that a total of 5947 individuals were recorded comprising 4259 Uprange and 1688 Downrange. Once again, thank you for your effort.

The next event in our Club life will be the camp-out at Bunya Mountains National Park. Assembly point will be the Queen's Park Kiosk in Lindsay Street. This change is in deference to the Saturday traffic in Pigott's car park. As mentioned last month if you have equipment problems let us know and perhaps some help can be arranged. See you there.

Mr. Don Vernon, Curator of Birds at the Queensland Museum will be a guest of this Club on Friday evening December, 16th. Don has recently returned from overseas and will talk to us on endangered species as well as showing slides of the Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge. All in all it should be a most interesting evening. The venue for the night will be advised in our next issue.

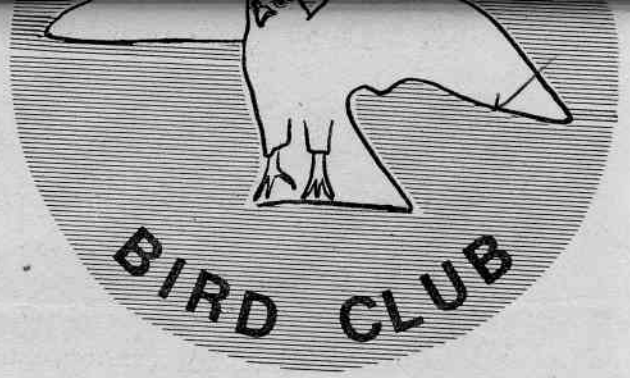
It is pleasing to announce that Bill Jolly has been able to arrange a Club discount on bird books purchased from Queensland Book Depot in Margaret St. If you are planning to give (or hoping to receive) bird books this Christmas, production of this issue of the News-sheet at the counter of Q.B.D. will gain a ten percent discount. A detailed list of books in stock at the moment follows in this sheet.

As will be seen from the section on New Toowoomba Birds some exciting events have occurred in the past few days. Within two days last week we had access to birds, in the hand, which are not very often seen. Not all Club members could be given the opportunity to view them and this points to the need for a Club chain of communication which could be employed in such cases. Your officers have agreed to undertake to notify members who would like to be advised if a bird comes to hand. To this end it is proposed to establish a list of names and telephone numbers. If you would like to be on the list please advise us. Though you may not have the phone connected, perhaps there is a neighbour's number where you could be reached. You can play a part too

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Ron Hopkinson.

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRDS.

- ✓ 182. White-throated Honeyeater (*Melithreptus albogularis*). 23.10.77.
Flagstone Creek. Ron Hopkinson, Roger Livesey.
- ✓ 183. Topknot Pigeon (*Lopholaimus antarcticus*). 23.10.77. Redwood Park.
Rod Hobson, Rheta Wright.

Details from Rod and Rheta of diagnostic features supporting this sighting to be supplied in next issue.

- ✓ 184. Barking Owl (*Ninox connivens*). 23.10.77. Redwood Park.
Rod Hobson, Rheta Wright.

Details from Rod and Rheta of diagnostic features supporting this sighting to be supplied in next issue.

- ✓ 185. Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*). 3.11.77. Concordia College.

One mature male of this species attacked by Australian Magpies in grounds of Concordia College. Bird subsequently passed to Mr. E. Potts (Toowoomba Field Nats.) and thence to Ron Hopkinson and Bill Jolly. Identification agreed by all observers. (Refer to item in this news-sheet).

- ✓ 186. Australian Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*). 6.11.77. Ringmere,
Withcott. WJ. EJ. AW. RS. REH. CB.

Huge bird. Black above, white beneath, massive bill. Seen in flight and on water. (Refer to separate item in this news-sheet).

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES.

- Australian Pelican. 23.10.77. Airborne over Helidon Spa. REH. RL.
31.10.77. Leslie Dam. JMC.
- Brown Bittern. 31.10.77. Gowrie Little Plains. JMC.
- Royal Spoonbill. 23.10.77. Withcott. WJ. EJ.
31.10.77. Leslie Dam. JMC.
- Brown Goshawk. 2.10.77. Ringmere, Withcott. WJ. EJ.
- Little Falcon. 9.10.77. Ocean Street. GC.
- Brown Quail. 23.10.77. Ringmere, Withcott. WJ. EJ.
- Japanese Snipe. 6.11.77. Withcott. EJ. AW. RS. (Observed regularly since).
- Silver Gull. 31.10.77. Leslie Dam. JMC.
3.11.77. Marburg. CB.
- Indian Koel. 4.10.77. Ringmere, Withcott. WJ. EJ.
10.10.77. Ocean Street. JCC. JEC.
- Dollarbird. 5.10.77. Ringmere, Withcott. WJ. EJ.
23.10.77. Webb Park. GC. JCC. JEC.
31.10.77. Leslie Dam. JMC.
- Noisy Pitta. 16.10.77. Heifer Creek. JW. RW.
- Black-faced Monarch. 9.10.77. Ocean Street. GC. JCC. JEC.
- Regent Honeyeater. 16.10.77. Black Duck Creek. JW. RW.
- Green Figbird. 25.9.77. Dodd Street. WM.
- Dusky Woodswallow. 23.10.77. Withcott. WJ. EJ.
- Australian Raven. 2.10.77. Yandilla. JW. RW.

CB: Chris Bianchi. JMC: John Coman. GC: Graham Corbin. JCC: Jane Corbin.
JEC: Jim Corbin. REH: Ron Hopkinson. EJ: Eileen Jolly. WJ: Bill Jolly.
RL: Roger Livesey. WM: Bill McKenzie. RS: Robert Shaw. RW: Ruth Walter.
JW: John Walter. AW: Ann White.

BLUE-WINGED KOOKABURRA.

It is interesting to note that following on from possible sightings and soundings of this species mentioned in News-sheets Nos. 12, 16 and 17, member Marilyn Jacobs positively identified this species in the Lake Clarendon area while taking part in the Q.O.S. Annual Bird Census on 16.10.77.

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Ron Hopkinson,
Editor.

LETTER-WINGED KITE.

Member Mick Dolley has reported sighting four Letter-winged Kites (*Elanus scriptus*) on his property "Corandru", Withcott. They appeared about mid-morning of a dull cloudy day in September.

Their appearance was sufficiently different to the Black-shouldered Kite (*E. notatus*), common in the area, to cause Mick to reach for his Slater and check the distinctive under-wing markings while the birds were still in view.

Ron Hopkinson,
Editor.

LITTLE BITTERN.

Contrary to the long-standing adage relating to little children, it is generally held that Little Bitterns tend to be heard but not seen. The most popular adjective to be found in the literature concerning this miniature member of the heron family is 'skulking'. And it may be fairly expected that when a generally brown and black shape not much bigger than a butcherbird skulks in a reed-bed he will be rarely seen.

Such is indeed the case with *Ixobrychus minutus*, and the male of the species which was recorded in Toowoomba on Thursday, 3rd November might well have been overlooked as his kind usually are, had he not come under attack from two magpies whilst endeavouring to walk across the playing fields at Concordia College. Under such circumstances adopting a pose which enables a bird to merge inconspicuously into a background of reed stems is of no great value, and this beleaguered bittern was suffering some damage until rescued through human intervention.

The combined offices of Ernie Potts, Marilyn Jacobs and Ron Hopkinson finally brought to "Ringmere" this seldom seen inhabitant of marshes and reed-beds across much of Europe, Africa and Asia, still straining vainly to merge with his background, this time alas a canary cage. Many bird club members had by now been alerted and a group had gathered to observe and record his liberation at 8.30 a.m. on Saturday into the small, but rapidly growing area of reeds alongside the dam at Ringmere.

At this time we were to be granted rarely enjoyed views of a well plumaged male Little Bittern in his natural environment. Once the confining cage was removed the bittern did indeed all but disappear without so much as moving, proving dramatically the effectiveness in the proper habitat of his much practised reed-like stance. But we knew he was there all the time, and through binoculars and camera we were allowed a full five minutes in which to admire his delicate buff and greenish-black colouring and the dramatic yellow eyes which watched us simultaneously from either side of an equally yellow, heron-like beak.

Eventually the bird seemed to realise we weren't going to go away, and took the plunge himself, making for the security of the small reed-forest in what can only be described as a speedy skulk.

Latecomers on Sunday were advised that to the best of our knowledge a Little Bittern was somewhere around the fringes of the dam, but were warned in all fairness that they could not reasonably expect to locate him in his natural environment - but they did! So twenty-four hours after his release he was still enjoying Ringmere's hospitality, not really reason enough to add him to our downrange 10' block for the R.A.O.U. Bird Atlas, but if he's still with us in a couple of weeks, maybe we'll count him for December.

Bill Jolly.

N.B.

Sunday, 6th November was to see not only a Little Bittern at Ringmere, but also Toowoomba's first recorded Australian Pelican and second only

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AUSTRALIAN PELICAN.

Several exciting events transpired just prior to and over the week-end of November, 5/6th, not least of which was the release of a Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*) into the rush-fringed edge of the dam at "Ringmere", on Saturday 5th.

On the Sunday afternoon Robert Shaw and Anne White visited the dam in the hope of catching a glimpse of the Bittern. They were rewarded with a good view of the bird and were describing their sighting to Bill Jolly at the house when a large shape flew low overhead. An Australian Pelican had made the scene (and the Club List) and provided a low level view for which binoculars were not needed.

The bird was obviously about to let down so all watchers retired to the house in the hope that it might choose the "Ringmere" water. But a dam on a neighbouring property was chosen and the great bird alighted.

By this time the telephones were ringing up the Range and yours truly was on the way down and arrived just after it became airborne again and was a diminishing spot against the grey clouds.

However, your average birder doesn't give up and after some scanning of the grey the flight silhouette of our subject reappeared, heading towards us again.

You haven't experienced silence until you have been one of several birders, who, by not breathing, hope to attract a Pelican down from the sky. But we had to be content with several circuits of the area, for our bird then headed off and disappeared from sight below the tree line between us and the highway.

Ron Hopkinson.

RAVEN'S NEST?

High in the forked branches of a tall Eucalypt alongside Rifle Range Road a great mass of sticks sways dangerously in the strong winds.

This structure is being tended industriously by two large black birds (Ravens?) and I would suspect from their coming and going that the as yet unseen young are being well fed.

The parent birds never appear to fly directly to the nest but descend from a branch above the nest level. The only call heard from either bird near the nest has been the usual "crow" call but on numerous other occasions in the immediate territory, the throaty gargle of the Raven has been evident.

Are we really watching Australian Ravens at work and is it something to crow about?

Barry Kenway.

AUSTRALIAN MAGPIE LARK.

Early in September I observed a pair of Australian Magpie Larks (*Grallina cyanoleuca*) nesting in a pine tree. The nest was situated high in the tree and about twelve feet out from the trunk.

When I first saw them the male was on the mud nest looking about, with beak open, for intruders. The female flew in and the male left. The female would turn the eggs over for a new sitting position. I observed this several times during the day.

The following day I watched the male defending its mate and the eggs. It stood beside the nest, waiting to relieve the female, when a Pied Currawong (*Strepera graculine*) appeared. He acted promptly and chased this larger bird for at least twenty metres and returned to the nest.

I'll have more information concerning the young Magpie Larks in the next News-sheet.

(Ixobrychus minutus) into the rush-fringed edge of the dam at "Ringmere", on Saturday 5th.

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I'll have more information concerning the young Magpie Larks in the next News-sheet.

John Duff.

LETTER FROM THE NORTH.

Since our last letter to you we have had a few changes in the garden birdlife - our once common resident, the Spangled Drongo, has left. According to local birdos their annual move south commences around 12th October - our Drongo was last seen on the 10th. Possibly by now the Drongos are being seen in your area again.

The Olive-backed Sunbird and Dusky Honeyeater have been joined by Yellow-spotted and Banded Honeyeaters. The Forest Kingfisher, Helmeted Friarbird, Varied Triller and Pheasant Coucal make many daily appearances and in the past few weeks Torres Straits Pigeons have become far more common. Rod Hobson's sighting of the Torres Straits Pigeon on 28.8.77. (News-sheet No. 22) must have been an early sighting as the locals have recorded the first sighting for this year as 4.9.77. Many, many more are however now to be seen in the Cairns area. The mangroves at the north end of the city seem to provide a perfect habitat - on one occasion last week (6.10.77.) I counted 21 pairs flying around the area or resting in trees.

Another very note-worthy sighting here has been of an Osprey family. Near the Centenary Lakes at the northern end of the city are some tall, dead trees one of which supports a large untidy raptor nest. Daily I pass this tree and without fail manage to see two adult Osprey plus one (that's all I can see) immature at the nest. I am hoping to get some photos of these and if I succeed I'll send some down for the interest of members.

On another occasion (7.10.77.) I was lucky enough to be driving near Centenary Lakes when three Bush Stone-curlew calmly walked across the road. I have often heard their calls but this was the first time that I had seen them.

Alan and Sylvia Graham.

Editor's Note: Alan and Sylvia supplied a lengthy list of their sightings for October. Because of space limitations this had to be shortened to the list given below.

List of sightings - Cairns area.

Jabiru	Terek Sandpiper
Whistling Tree-duck	Torres Straits Pigeon
Brahminy Kite	Grey Swiftlet
Grey Goshawk	Forest Kingfisher
White-breasted Sea-eagle	Pied Monarch
Bush Stone-curlew	Olive-backed Sunbird
Eastern Curlew	Yellow Oriole
Whimbrel	Black Butcherbird.
Grey-tailed Tattler	

FIELD TRIP FOR NOVEMBER.

Date: Saturday-Sunday, 19th/20th November, 1977. Place: Bunya Mtns. Nat. Pk.

Leader: Ron Hopkinson. Assembly Point: Queens Park Kiosk, Lindsay Street.

Time: 8.30 a.m., Saturday 19th.

NEW MEMBERS.

The Club is pleased to welcome the following new members:

Susan Bright, 728, Oxley Road, Corinda, Brisbane.

Phillip Elms, 28a, Whittle Street, Gatton.

Roger Livesey & Margaret Robertson, c/- D.D.I.A.E.

Sandra Pottinger, c/- D.D.I.A.E.

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PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

The Bird Observer No. 550, September, 1977. No. 551, October, 1977.
Darling Downs Naturalist, October, 1977. November, 1977.
Urimbirra. Vol. 11, No. 9, October, 1977.

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