



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS inc.

p.o.box 67 - darling heights - 4350

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

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

NEWSLETTER No. 236 - September 1995

EDITORIAL:

Spring's in full swing with reports confirming the arrival of many of our Spring/Summer visitors. Channel-billed Cuckoos started appearing in August!. With the Club's year quickly drawing to a close, I trust we are all looking for that elusive new bird for the area. Last year, around this time many of us were gleefully ticking Black Honeyeaters on our life lists and local lists. Keep an eye out for them in the Callistemons along the watercourses - you never know your luck!

This newsletter has an international flavour with offerings from South African, Ritamay Roberts, English folk, Ann Shore and Michael Hirst. Ann has just returned from England and Michael Hirst has recently departed for the old country. Many thanks for your efforts. Could we please have more items for future newsletters?

Don't forget the AGM on the 9 October and the October Species Count.

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OUTING REPORT - GOOMBURRA 27 AUGUST

Ten of the TBO's finest turned out for the outing. We decided to tackle the Cascade Falls Circuit in the morning and, after a bite to eat, headed to the rainforest where we walked to Sylvester's Lookout.

Firstly, an apology to those who did the entire circuit. As I didn't have time to reconnoitre the track, and then took the advice of some passing hikers regarding distance, time and terrain, we completed the hilly circuit in three hours without taking drinking water with us. We did however see Red Wattlebird, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Grey Goshawk, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Crimson Rosella and had close views of the Green Catbird after we heard two calling to each other, and one or two Bell Miners.

On one of the many creek crossings we were lucky to observe a Yellow-tufted Honeyeater bathing in a shallow pool oblivious to our presence. After rest and food, we drove up the range and walked out to Sylvester's Lookout and availed ourselves of the superb views over the Fassifern Valley. Unfortunately, birdlife was very scarce at the time.

We rounded off the day by driving north to the Mt Castle Lookout. Here we enjoyed the spectacular views of rugged Mt Castle and in the distance those with more powerful binoculars could just make out the tall chimneys of the Swanbank Powerhouse near Ipswich. On returning to our vehicles, John Harris and Ritamay Roberts excitedly informed us of several Topknot Pigeons sitting in a huge fig tree. These were duly noted and photographed by both John and Bob Lutteral.

After saying farewell to our fellow birders, we drove down the steep range to the main picnic area and half-way down, sharp-eyed Ritamay spied a drowsy young Koala which appeared to be in fine health. This was a great way to end the day. Total species observed 40.

Ken Mc Keown

CAPE MAGIC

My first evening at Pajinka was spent watching the sun set over the islands, the beach and the sea, as I sat on a rock hearing the deep and resonant call of a Pied (Torresian) Imperial-Pigeon from the beach-lining mangroves. There were few signs of man. The next morning I saw my first Yellow-bellied Sunbirds, male and female, darting about in the flowering trees. The following day, at Evans Bay, I heard and watched several White-breasted Woodswallows gliding and diving through the air. Soon to follow was a view of a Red-headed Honeyeater and, also amidst the mangrove foliage, several Varied Honeyeaters. Back at the Lodge, a Blue-winged Kookaburra graced my view, as well as a Spectacled Monarch, Rufous Fantail, Shining Flycatcher, Leaden Flycatcher, Little Shrike-thrush, Tropical Scrub-wren, Figbird (northern race) and an Orange-footed Scrubfowl.

On Christmas Eve I saw a Papuan Frogmouth, large, red-eyed and typically stealthy in flight. So this was the bird whose loud oom-oom I often heard during the night. Some days later I caught sight of this beautiful bird in daylight, dozing, branch-like, on its flimsy nest, beak towards the heavens. I frequently heard the descending notes of the Marbled Frogmouth and the barking of owls.

On Christmas Day, at the tip of Australia, I heard and found a Pheasant Coucal, booming its call across the Torres Strait. As I sat contemplating the universe I could just make out several pairs of crocodile snouts waiting in the island-lining shadows, a small turtle surfacing and diving and to the east, a school of large, Diamond-backed Mullet bobbing with the tide in shallow waters. Several air-borne sea birds blurred in my binoculars. At daylight, on Boxing Day morning I accompanied Chris, the resident naturalist, and two Alaskan guests to the Lockerbie scrub, a well-known and significant area for migratory birds. What a chorus! The familiar Sulphur-crested Cockatoo flew above, then an Emerald Dove and wow, a glorious Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Noisy Pitta, Lemon-bellied Flycatcher, a rather special Yellow-breasted Boatbill, a White-throated Honeyeater, a Graceful Honeyeater (at last, not a Lewin's!), a Tawny-breasted Honeyeater, a Mistletoebird and Spangled Drongo. On leaving Chris suddenly turned, "Palm cockatoo." That far away, high-pitched call, blended with all the other calls. We back-tracked and sure enough, there he was, high in a pandanus palm, nodding his crested head, his red face-patch contrasting with the black.

On the way back to the Lodge we stopped in an area with quite different vegetation and here I succeeded in stalking a Red-bellied Pitta after he'd evaded me for some time as I misjudged the distance between us because of his misleadingly far away call. But when I eventually watched him for some

minutes as he called mournfully from a fallen log I was amazed at the brilliance of his red belly. A Trumpet Manucode flew above and I caught sight of a Yellow-billed Kingfisher, too high and in the wrong light. Even so, I enjoyed his pervasive trill! This was the spot, where, on daylight I would have the unforgettable and all too short thrill of hearing and seeing, a whistling male Magnificent Riflebird. That shimmering breast, those tail plumes, that sound of beating wings....heaven can wait.

And I haven't told you about the trip to the Jardine River, the White-browed Robin, the White-streaked Honeyeater, or the trip along Crocodile Creek, the Fawn-breasted Bowerbird at its bower and the exquisite Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove. Nor have I mentioned the Sugar-gliders, Bearded Dragon, bandicoots, Echidnas, White-tailed Rats, Melomys, Geckos, Hercules Moth, a pink and lime green stick insect, several different butterflies or the elusive Dugong and Amethystine Python.

Nor have I mentioned the fascinating history of the Cape and the different vegetation. And the Papuan Frogmouth now has a chick.

My last evening at Pajinka was spent watching the sun set over the islands.....

Ritamay Roberts

DIET OF THE PIED CURRAWONG

The Pied Currawong is omnivorous, and with its strong, dagger-like bill, one can easily understand it preying on small birds, eggs, large insects, fruit etc. However, while walking along Stevenson Street today, at the entrance to the Picnic Point Park, I was interested to see a group of eight to ten currawongs picking up leaves high up in some eucalypts. What they were taking was too small to see, but not something obviously large like a phasmid (stick insect), a supposedly favoured item of their diet. My suspicion that they were taking lerps from the leaves was supported by my finding newly fallen leaves with psyllids attached.

If this is the case, it is wonderful that they can so delicately manipulate their large and apparently clumsy bills so as to remove the tiny insects, more often regarded as food for honeyeaters, pardalotes etc. The hook at the point of their bill must be useful for this. I can see no mention, except for a reference to insects in general, and phasmids in particular, of this item of diet in any of the guides that I have consulted.

Michael Hirst, 08/08/95.

JUST TO PUT THE RECORD STRAIGHT

I'm sorry the Editor thinks it poetic justice that a broken wrist is pay-back for not mentioning the rucker in the account of my short visit to South Africa!! Just to put the record straight, yes, rucker did come briefly into the picture. Due to the World Cup, flights were booked out weeks in advance at the times I wished to travel. When I did, it was in the company of a large contingent of All Black supporters. Then on the flight to London, I had Irishmen around me, apparently drowning their sorrows. My knowledge of what happened in between was scant. Although my host endeavoured to see something of the televised games, the frustrations of South African TV, with many games in Afrikaans, were not conducive to relaxed viewing and of course birdwatching was my main interest anyway, so please forgive me...

Now despite the break and all its inconveniences, compulsive birding continues for the enthusiast even though she is dependent on kind friends for transport beyond the Shorelands confines. A recent visit to Lake Broadwater, with two other members, officially wearing U3A (University of the Third Age) hats, proved well worthwhile notwithstanding the drought and very low water levels. En route, numbers of white flecks on the road, reminded us that we were in "Mouse Country" with strychnine baiting taking place daily to combat the plague. I'm glad to say we didn't observe any dead birds.

Under the guidance of Michael Hirst, we checked out the various habitats. Noteworthy among bushbirds seen was a party of handsome Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters in the Wilga scrub. A large and very noisy congregation of Ibis (mainly Sacred) and Spoonbills (with the Yellow-billed variety predominating) moved between the trees and muddy foreshores with herons, stilts, egrets, Australasian Grebe and the odd Black Swan also seen but there was an almost total absence of duck. Great consternation ensued with the arrival of a pair of Swamp Harriers and a Whistling Kite who several times put the assembly to flight. They patrolled the lake at low levels and sometimes landed but we did not see an actual capture.

By mid afternoon in the unseasonal heat, the western track was quiet apart from the voices of whistlers and Brown Honeyeaters but as we left, we disturbed a number of kangaroos from their siestas under the Pines and Grey Box.

Earlier in the month, Adele Warburton took me to Highfields Falls, always an enjoyable and productive hunting ground where it is still cheering to see running water. Our most exciting moments were spent watching Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters collecting nesting material close by. We watched for some time and then saw a tiny Spotted Pardalote doing likewise.

Ann Shore.

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

Peregrine Falcon	27.05.95	Gatton	P.McC,K.W.
Black-br.Button-Quail	12.06.95	Yarraman	P.McC,K.W.
Topknot Pigeon	24.06.95	Highfields Falls	N.T.
Glossy Black Cockatoo	25.06.95	East of Ravensbourne	N.T.
Spotted Quail-thrush	13.05.95	Gittens Rd, Withcott	P.McC.
Masked Woodswallow (6)	29.06.95	Jondaryan	J.B.

J.B., J.Booth; P.McC., P.McConnell; N.T., N.Thompson; K.W., K.Watson.

The June-July period have resulted in many reported sightings of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos by many members. Please keep these records coming in as this information is very useful. It will be interesting to see whether they will continue to visit the area once the drought has broken. Because of the number of sightings over this period I have not made special mention of any of them above.

Pat McConnell, Acting Records Officer

NEW MEMBERS:

We welcome the following new members to the club:- Stephen Harper of Gatton, Des Shore of Toowoomba, and Kath Watson of Highfields. May the birds follow you!

TOOWOOMBA FIELD NATURALIST CLUB:

The Field Nats are advertising an inviting **Weekend with Nature** at Lake Perseverance Lodge, on the 13-15 October. Speakers include:-

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|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Rodney Kerr | Identification of plants |
| Neil McKilligan | Walk to the Valley of Diamomds |
| Rick Galbraith | Local wildlife and spotlighting |
| Lesley Beaton | Birdwatching |

If you are interested, please contact The Secretary, PO Box 133, Toowoomba or Fax 384 271.

A.G.M.-MONDAY 09 OCTOBER

This year, our guest speaker is raptor enthusiast, Greg Czechura, from the Queensland Museum. Greg is State Co-ordinator of the Australasian Raptor Association.

Please remember membership is due on **01 November** and is paid on a pro rata basis. Fees are as noted on the cover of the newsletter.

If you would like to nominate someone for a position on the executive, please use the form below and send to Ann Shore, PO Box 67 Darling Heights, 4350 by 03 October.

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**TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS INC
NOMINATION FORM FOR EXECUTIVE POSITIONS 1995-96
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD MONDAY 9 OCTOBER 1995**

POSITION:

NOMINEE:

NOMINATED BY:

SECONDED BY:

ACCEPTANCE (Signature of Nominee):

DATE:1995

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*** COMING EVENTS ***

September Outing

Location: Cooby Dam / Highfields Falls
Date: 01 October
Time: 7.30 am
Leader: Ann Shore 303 207

Info: Please note the September outing has been transferred to 1 October. Meet at the entrance to Highfields Falls at the bottom of Dau Rd, Highfields.

TBO Annual General Meeting

Location: QCWA Hall, cnr Biggs Rd and Warrego Highway, Withcott.
Date: Monday, 09 October
Time: 7:00 p.m.

Info: Our guest speaker will be Greg Czechura from the Queensland Museum. Greg is well known to most birders, particularly raptor fanciers. He will discuss raptor identification and will mention the Red Goshawk which he has been researching. It is usual protocol for members to provide a tray of nibblies/savouries and drinks.

Mid-October Outing

Location: Ma Ma Creek
Date: 15 October
Leader: Pat Cleary 303 352
Time: 7:30 a.m.

Info: This outing we will visit the property of Judy Whistler. This interesting area abuts Dwyer's Scrub. Meet at the Mt Whitestone School.

October Outing

Location: Species Count
Date: 28/29 October
Organiser: Michael Atzeni 392 761

Info: This annual event is an endeavour to cover the survey area comprehensively and record as many species as possible over the weekend. It's hectic and exhausting but great fun. Some teams will be arranged at the AGM. If you wish to participate at some stage of the weekend contact Michael. To lip up with a team on the Sunday, be at the Helidon Rest area at 7 a.m. sharp. Every minute counts!

If undeliverable return to
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DARLING HEIGHTS Q 4350

**SURFACE
MAIL**



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