



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS inc.

p.o. box 67 - darling heights - 4350

MEMBERSHIP: Adults/Families \$20 Students \$10

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

NEWSLETTER No. 239 - January 1996

EDITORIAL:

At last the drought appears to be over and the experts think it could rain until Autumn. The good news is the excellent rain but the bad is the birds have spread out to distant areas as the falls have been widespread.

This newsletter also has good and bad news. We have reports on two club outings, the first part of account of a birdwatching trip up north from our Japanese member, Koji Tagi, and John Harris submits his maiden effort. Sadly, we report the death of Barbara Wilson, a cheerful, gracious member and a staunch TBO supporter for many years.

In case you were confused by the minutes from the AGM, subs were due on 01 September. A **RED DOT** on your newsletter will indicate that this will be your last, until you are financial again.

Finally, could we please have articles for **YOUR** newsletter. I'm desperately short of material.

TBO WADER OUTING - COASTAL BRISBANE, 26 NOVEMBER 1995

The previous day's visit to North Stradbroke Island had been a most enjoyable one, with sightings of Masked Booby and Common Noddy in addition to Manta Rays, Bottlenosed Dolphins, Indo-Pacific Humpbacked Dolphins and some fascinating Wallum plants. Unfortunately, only two TBO members plus associated family were able to make it. Today, however, it was a group of ten who gathered opposite the sewage treatment plant at Lytton, ready for a morning of coastal birdwatching.

Apart from several prancing Greenshanks and a small group of Pied Stilts, the high-tide roost at Lytton was devoid of birds. An examination of the tide times soon provided a reason for this: it was mid-tide and all the waders were out feeding on the exposed mud-flats, dispersed far and wide around the shores of Moreton Bay. Come high tide, after the mudflats become submerged, the birds would head for one of several high-tide roosts for a 'sleep'. Such occasions provide the bird observer with an opportunity to view numerous species together in one location. Since high tide was still 3-4 hours away, we started our outing by perusing the recently-filled swamplands along the sides of Lytton Road.

White-breasted Woodswallows, Magpie Geese, nesting Pied Cormorants, and Mangrove Gerygone were among the birds to reward our efforts. The sight of a male Variegated Wren resplendent in the morning sun was a new sight for some and a glorious sight for all, as a Brush Cuckoo whistled in the background.

Then it was on to the mangrove boardwalk at Wynnum which we entered via the new entrance at the former Lytton dump. Here we obtained excellent views of Mangrove Kingfishers and Warblers and the unexpected sight of a White-throated Tree-creeper in the mangroves. As the tide was slowly encroaching below the boardwalk, numerous Toad Fish scavenged and jostled amongst the pneumatophores. On leaving the mangroves, we were treated to the sight of a lone Speckled Warbler foraging on the side of the path, while a Golden-headed Cisticola 'flung out his soul' to the world from atop a stunted shrub.

It was then on to Lota for a morning-tea break prior to visiting the Manly Boat Harbour high-tide roost. The roost was thick with waders resting, and a majestic Osprey perched high on the mast of a yacht. Bar-tailed Godwits constituted the greatest number with significant showings of Great Knot, Grey-tailed Tattler and Mongolian Dotterel. Comment was passed on the incredible size variation between the huge Eastern Curlew and the diminutive Red-necked Stint which shuffled continuously around the toes of some of its bigger relatives looking for food. This being late Spring, all waders were adorned in their demure winter plumage which many would shed in favour of their colourful breeding attire prior to migration in Autumn. Terek Sandpipers, Curlew Sandpipers, Whimbrels, and Ruddy Turnstones were amongst the less numerous occupants of the high-tide roost this morning.

After checking each and every godwit to ensure that it was a godwit (and not an Asian Dowitcher, a recently-sighted rare visitor), we decided to bring the outing to a close. It was agreed that, as per usual on the shores of Moreton Bay, an enjoyable morning was had by all.

Don Gaydon, THORNESIDE

NEARING ONE HUNDRED

Since we moved to Gatton in late February 1995, I have been regularly surveying Lake Apex. This was part of the reason of taking the house - its position over the road from the lake. Well, at the end of December, I had recorded 98 species and I'm hoping to make the list at least 100 before the end of February. Of the 98 species, approximately 30 have been recorded as breeding, especially the Cattle Egrets that turn the island into a multi-story apartment building.

Some of the more notable or exciting species for me include Greenshank, Latham's Snipe, Blue-billed Duck, Red-necked Avocet, White-backed Swallow, Cotton Pygmy-Goose, Pink-eared Duck, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Striped Honeyeater, Rainbow, Little and Musk Lorikeets, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin and Little Grassbird.

Although most of these species are relatively common in South East Queensland, some are not

found in Victoria at all. Two species were new for my list - White-backed Swallow and the Cotton Pygmy-Goose.

I am preparing a comprehensive list of the birds of Lake Apex and would appreciate any lists from previous years. These lists and monthly records may be sent directly to me at the following address:

PO BOX 419, Gatton 4343.

Thanks,
John Harris

BARBARA WILSON

The death of Barbara Wilson in early December robbed the TBO of one of its most loyal and committed members. Barbara came to Toowoomba after the death of her husband in 1987, from Calliope Station, a large cattle grazing and Hereford Stud near Gladstone. With a degree in Science (she taught at The Southport School before the war) she was always interested in birds, but the busy life of a grazier's wife left her with little time to pursue her hobby.

Despite being a very private and shy person, she made the effort to make the most of her retirement with voluntary work and by joining organisations such as ADFAS and U3A, but it was her membership of TBO which gave her most pleasure. Unasked, she volunteered to undertake the distribution of the Newsletter, a job which she performed for many years. She always enjoyed the outings and made many friends in the club. It is sad the last year of her life was marred by M.E. (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) which prevented her from doing many of the things she loved, including bird watching. However just before she died, she felt sufficiently well to travel up to her daughter in Central Queensland, to the country that she loved and where she spent so many happy years.

Barbara, we miss you and thank you for what you did. The President and members of TBO send their deepest sympathies to your family.

WILDLIFE WATCHING AT CAIRNS

One day in October, I received a letter from a Japanese bird watching friend. He had decided to visit Cairns with friends and asked me to show him around as I had been there before and had recorded 150 species.

This time I hoped to see several mangrove species, escarpment species and summer migratory species which I had missed previously and several marsupials.

Fortunately, the weather was fine when I arrived on 8/11/95. After renting a car, I visited the Mangrove Board Walk near the airport. It was hot and very humid in the mangroves but luckily the mosquitoes were absent. However, we did manage to see a few birds. A Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove was calling in the distance and at the end of the board walk I was able to see a Varied Honeyeater. This large yellowish honeyeater can only be found in the mangroves. A Large-billed Gerygone sang beautifully for us as well.

After four o'clock, we set out for the Cassowary House at Kuranda. On the way we saw Forest

Kingfishers, White-breasted Woodswallows and Helmeted Friarbirds. We reached our destination by five o'clock and greeted John and Rita the owners of the house.

Victoria's Riflebirds, Spotted Catbirds and Dusky Honeyeaters were calling whilst at the feeders were Macleay's, Graceful, Yellow-spotted and Dusky Honeyeaters feeding. John told me that a Striped Possum had visited every night lately. We were excited to hear of its presence.

There was another birder staying at the house. Jan was a Dutch American who had recently arrived from Sydney after watching Superb Lyrebirds. He had not seen many of the endemics around the Cairns area so we decided to go bird watching the next day.

That night we were obliged to eat in darkness as a couple of trees had come down over the power line. Suddenly a Striped Possum came out on the handrail. It was very skunk-like in appearance! This possum is normally insectivorous but visited nightly to eat a piece of banana.

I arose at 5:30 in the morning with the sun already up, so I took a walk around the house. Spectacled and Black-faced Monarchs were singing. You can guess how surprised I was to meet an adult male Cassowary on the path. I raced back to tell Jan who had never seen it but unfortunately we didn't see it again.

Early in the morning the house is always good for birding. Red-necked Crakes and Long-nosed Bandicoots come to feed in the backyard while honeyeaters visit the veranda.

(To be continued in next edition...)

Koji Tagi

FIRST AID KIT

The club has recently purchased a basic First Aid Kit which will be carried in a Bum Bag on outings. It is mainly for cuts, scratches and insect bites.

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

Little Curlew	Oct 1995	Lake Apex	JH
Black Bittern	Nov 1995	Peachy Swamp	JH
Rufous Night Heron	" "	" "	JH
Masked Booby (3)	25/11/95	Pt Lookout	JWH
Blue-winged Kookaburra	06/11/95	Lake Clarendon	JH
Eastern Reef Egret	29/11/95	Caloundra	JWH
Australian Crake	29/12/95	Hood's Lagoon	PMcC
White-throated Nightjar	01/01/96	17 Mile Rd	JWH
Little Corella	07/01/96	T'mba Waterbird Habitat	NT
" "	08/01/96	Lawes	JWH
Red Goshawk	10/01/96	Helidon	PMcC
Little Grassbird	16/12/95	Lake Apex	MA,JWH,NT
Rufous Songlark	28/12/95	Back Flagstone Ck Rd	MA,LA
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	28/12/95	Helidon	MA,LA,PMcC

Whiskered Tern (nesting) 28/12/95 Hood's Lagoon MA,LA,PMcC,KW

MA Michael Atzeni LA Laurie Atzeni JH John Hadley JWH John Harris
PMcC Pat Mc Connell NT Nicci Thompson KW Kath Watson

OUTING REPORT 17/12/95 - LOCKYER WETLANDS

This was an enjoyable and well-attended outing that kicked off unofficially at 5 a.m. in Redwood Park in a bid to bolster the species list and to take in a few bush birds (minus the din of cicadas) before the official 7 a.m. rendezvous at Gatton Apex Lake. We lasted till lunchtime before deciding to call it quits, the oppressive heat being the main deterrent.

Redwood was fairly quiet with Regent Bowerbird, Black-faced Monarch and Rufous Fantail the more interesting species noted. A brief stop at Helidon netted an Australian Hobby and Plum-headed Finches. While the birds usually hold the limelight, the most thrilling spectacle of the day this outing was the sight of so many resurrected waterbird habitats! There are even some new waterholes around the traps. It has seemed an eternity since the likes of Karrasch's Lagoon, Lake Clarendon, Jankhes's Lagoon and Coles Road Swamp were worth stopping at. Ages since one could venture out feeling there was a chance of a Painted Snipe, Blue-billed Duck or some other local rarity. Arriving at each water body, at least for me, was like being reunited with a long lost friend. Even though the numbers of birds and species were down - things hadn't settled down after all the rain - and nothing outstanding was seen, it was refreshing and encouraging to see the likes of Pink-eared Duck, Great Crested Grebe, Whiskered Tern and Comb-crested Jacana in the Lockyer Valley once again. And each place smacked of better things down the track.

A stroll around Gatton Apex Lake provided a good start with Little Grassbird, Hoary-headed Grebe, Red-necked Avocet and Whiskered Tern. At Jankhe's Lagoon, a couple of Pink-eared Duck fed amongst the many Magpie Geese and White-breasted Woodswallows hawked over the lagoon. In the distance, a pair of Wedge-tails soared, one with prey in its talons. Unfortunately, no sign of the Blue-winged Kookaburra seen a few days earlier by John Hadley. We made full use of our telescopes at Lake Clarendon, electing to stay at the shaded picnic tables quite a distance from the water's edge. Not much of interest apart from displaying Great Crested Grebes and of course the fact that the lake finally has water in it.

Coles Rd Swamp looked absolutely wonderful! It was anomalous that it harboured only a handful of waterbirds - we were evidently visiting too soon after the rain. On to Karrasch's Lagoon where Jacanas and Australian Hobby were seen and finally, Lowe's Rd Swamp which turned up nothing new but the promise of better things to come.

Michael Atzeni

Species highlights:

Great Crested Grebe, Hoary-headed Grebe, Little Egret, Magpie Goose, Plumed Whistling-Duck, Black Swan, Pink-eared Duck, Whistling Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Australian Hobby, Comb-crested Jacana, Red-kneed Dotterel, Whiskered Tern, Red-necked Avocet, Plum-headed Finch, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, White-breasted Woodswallow

COMING EVENTS

February Outing:

Location: Beal's Property
Date: Sat 24 February
Leader: Gloria Glass 307 054
Time: 7:00 am

Info: This is an area of softwood scrub on the north-western side of Toowoomba. We will walk over a 40 hectare hill block. Wear long pants and enclosed shoes/boots. Sock protectors would be an advantage. For the less intrepid, the first portion can be spent around the house and garden and nearby areas, then driving around to the top of the hill for morning tea. Koalas and echidnas are a possibility and there will be plenty of birds, butterflies and spiders. If you own a copy, bring "Wildlife of Greater Brisbane".

Head west along Bridge St. Approximately 3 km past the airport turn right into Gowrie Junction Rd. About 4 km on you'll cross the railway line and creek. Turn left at the shop and proceed about 1.3 km and take a sharp right turn onto a dirt road (Magpie Lane) with a letterbox marked Beal and Glass.

March Outing:

Location: Ravensbourne N.P.
Date: Sunday, 30 March
Leader: Michael Atzeni 076 392 761
Time: 7.00 a.m.

Meet at the bottom picnic area. BYO everything.

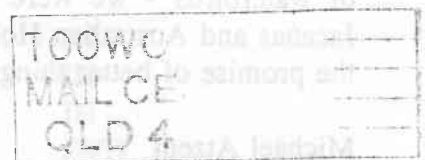
April Outing

Location: Blanchview
Date: Saturday, 28 April

Full details next newsletter.

If undeliverable return to
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PO Box 67
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**SURFACE
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