



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS inc.

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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. 242 - April 1996

EDITORIAL:

In March, TBOI resubmitted an **application for funding** under the National Landcare Program. The funding is required to hire a consultant to determine habitat requirements and draft a management plan in order to conserve four rare species frequenting Redwood Park, namely, Sooty, Masked and Powerful Owls and Black-breasted Button-Quail. We have the written support of both the Toowoomba City Council (TCC) and Department of Environment. Rod Atkins of the TCC's Parks and Recreation Branch is finalising the TCC's management plan for the escarpment parks and he kindly attended our latest Executive meeting and discussed his role and how we might help. We have previously provided written comment on the draft management plan of the escarpment parks, particularly Redwood, in relation to controlled burning, clearing of lantana and privet and removal of dead trees.

In our view, we need to target the four species mentioned above as they are the most vulnerable to changes in the habitat. The owls are at the top of the food chain and have large territories and the Black-breasted Button-Quail's association with lantana thickets is well-known. It is important to secure the funding for the research to be undertaken in order to establish how best to preserve these species in Redwood and in similar remnant habitat elsewhere.

Locally, we are in an interesting transition period at present with some species leaving and others arriving. The Western Gerygones are back at the Helidon Dip and there have been several sightings of Red-capped Robin. Recent Diamond Dove and Red-tailed Black Cockatoo sightings suggest the drought is still influencing their movements.

Because of the interest of the recently held **RAMSAR CONFERENCE**, I have written a further background on it. Once again, thanks to the Australian Nature Conservation Agency. We have Part 4 of Koji Tagi's visit to the Cairn's area, and an report on the well-attended Ravensbourne Outing from President Michael. John Harris is requesting your input for a **proposed book** by the club. Many thanks to all these writers but we can always use more reports.

1996 RAMSAR CONVENTION (continued)

What are wetlands?

Wetlands are broadly defined as areas featuring permanent or temporary shallow open water. This includes billabongs, swamps, lakes, mud flats, mangrove forests, virtually any land which is regularly or intermittently inundated with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or saline, including areas of marine water which do not exceed a depth of six metres at low tide.

Some wetlands are valued landscapes because of their scenic beauty and popularity as recreational sites. However, this attractive appearance can ironically lead to their demise by overuse (tramping, boating, noise pollution, over-fishing etc). More generally, wetlands have acquired a poor image, frequently the setting for dark and murky deeds in literature and often referred to as dangerous or worthless, mosquito-infested places.

Why conserve wetlands?

Wetlands are not only among the world's most productive environments, in the developing world they are essential in supporting human populations and their continuing loss or deterioration is a major global concern. Wetlands are important because:

- * they are breeding grounds for many animals especially fish and waterbirds - the billion dollar commercial and recreational fishing industries in Australia depend on the health of wetland areas
- * they are vital habitats for the survival of many species, some of them in danger of extinction such as the Western Swamp Tortoise, the Orange-bellied Parrot, the White-bellied Frog, the Honey Blue-eye Fish and the Tasmanian Mountain Shrimp
- * they support wildlife which can help control insect pests on farms
- * they help to purify water by acting as " kidneys " along waterways, trapping sediments and nutrients
- * they protect the coastal shoreline from the effects of waves
- * they reduce erosion on farms and in urban areas
- * they are natural fire-breaks
- * they are important refuges for livestock and wildlife
- * they provide places for a range of recreational activities such as swimming, fishing and boating.

WILDLIFE WATCHING AT CAIRNS PART 4

We awoke at 6 am to see an Olive-backed Sunbird perched motionlessly on top of a dead tree and wondered whether this normally, very active bird was sleeping. We headed up Mt Lewis and I noted the road was much rougher than on my previous visit. After driving up without damaging the car, I felt I was skilled enough to take part in a rally!?

We visited the bower of the Golden Bowerbird in dense rainforest. This bowerbird is the smallest

in Australia but it builds the largest bower. We waited for 45 minutes and at last a male appeared and made me very happy. After the male departed, a female arrived but the male remained hidden. What was his problem? Stupid or lazy? Golden Whistlers were common and Topknot Pigeons were feeding at the tops of trees over 20 metres high. As well, Australian Birdwings *Ornithoptera priamus* were flying and gliding gracefully.

We then visited the Abattoir Swamp Nature Reserve which is quite close to Kingfisher Park. This wetland reserve was short on waterbirds at the time of our visit but I noticed a strange call coming from a low tree that turned out to be that of a Banded Honeyeater, an irregular nomad in the region. We then drove along East and West Mary Road hoping for an Australian Bustard. However, it was already midday and we were unsuccessful as it was too hot.

We spent some time back at Kingfisher Park and saw Yellow, Blue-faced, Yellow-faced, Yellow-spotted, Graceful, Macleay's, White-throated, Brown-backed and Dusky Honeyeaters feeding on fruit and Bar-shouldered and Peaceful Doves as well as Metallic Starling were bathing. After 4 o'clock, we tried for the bustards again and this time we found a pair along the West Mary Road. The male puffed out his throat like a white lei. He was repeatedly calling and displaying in the paddock.

That night, I had my final chance to see a Lesser Sooty Owl. Each Tyto owl has its own characteristic screech. (The Barn Owl is seen as a messenger of the devil in parts of Europe). We could hear the screeches, however, this time, the devil stayed out of sight.

(To be continued in next edition...)

Koji Tagi

DATE CLAIMER

Advance notice for our annual **Theatre Night** for **Friday 06 December**. Always a wonderful night out and a good little fundraiser for the club.

THE BOOK

I have started to assemble information for the book at long last, after a number of years of it being talked about. My proposed title for this "feat of ornithological literature" is the "Birds of the Toowoomba and Lockyer Valley".

With this in mind, I would like suggestions from members as to bird locations that could be included in it. I have a number of my own suggestions such as the Helidon Dip, Hood's Lagoon, Waterbird Habitat, Redwood Park, Lake Apex, Atkinson's Dam and Bill Gunn Dam (Formally Dyer's Lagoon), but others would be much appreciated. Once I have decided on the locations, I am then after species lists for each location, whether they be life lists, seasonal, or one-off lists.

I can arrange photocopying if there are many. All observers will be acknowledged in the final product. I hope to have a draft ready by January '97 so please do not dally with suggestions or lists as it will be your book compiled from 20+ years of observations.

John Harris

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.

Great-billed Heron	09.04.96	"	K&WMcK
Wandering Whistling-Duck (+ young)	09.04.96	Hood's Lagoon	MA, LA, PMc
Burdekin Duck	12.04.96	Mt Carbine	K&WMcK
Brown Falcon	22.04.94	DPI, Toowoomba	MA
Wompoo Fruit-Dove	12.04.96	Ravensbourne NP	MA
Emerald Dove	09.04.96	Redwood Park	MA, LA, PM
Diamond Dove (1)	21.04.96	Helidon Dip	MA, LA
Glossy Black-Cockatoo (3)	08.04.96	Redwood Park	MA, LA, PM
Red-tail. Bl-Cockatoo (12)	31.03.96	Rowbotham St, E. T'mba	MJ
Turquoise Parrot	21.04.96	Helidon Dip	MA, LA
Double-eyed Fig-Parrot	09.04.96	Daintree	K&WMcK
Black-eared Cuckoo	21.04.96	Iredale	MA, LA
Papuan Frogmouth	12.04.96	Newell Beach	K&WMcK
Fork-tailed Swift	4&11.04.96	E. Toowoomba	MA
Pacific Swallow	09.04.96	Daintree	K&WMcK
Red-capped Robin	21.04.96	Helidon Dip	MA, LA
Rose Robin	19.04.96	Ravensbourne NP	MA
Little Shrike-Thrush	19.04.96	Ravensbourne NP	MA
Western Gerygone	21.04.96	Helidon Dip	MA, LA
Crimson Finch	13.04.96	Ingham	K&WMcK
Paradise Riflebird	21.03.96	Ravensbourne	MA et al
Victoria's Riflebird	12.04.96	Julatten	K&WMcK
Black-faced Woodswallow	18.04.96	Hodgson Vale	LA

LA L Atzeni MA M Atzeni PMc P McConnell MJ Marilyn Jacobs
K&WMcK K & W McKeown

RAVENSBOURNE NATIONAL PARK OUTING - 31 March 1996

It was just one of those days when I could do no wrong. Birds at my beck and call and some quality to boot. And of course, as the designated leader, I revelled in the accolades lauded on me and took all the credit for such a fine outing. Some good advice about starting at the top picnic area rather than the bottom one and good luck had absolutely nothing to do with it!

It was good to see some new faces amongst the 16 attendees and all went home satisfied. For most, the highlight was the sighting of several Paradise Riflebirds, including a male resplendent in the full sunlight, on the edge of the forest at the top picnic area. For some it was a "lifer" and the harbinger of others. Several of us had an excellent look at a Rose-crowned Fruit Dove perched in a tree heavily laden with small plum-coloured fruit but nobody was positive about the identity of the tree. John Harris and Richard Thomis even managed to photograph it and for John, Lifer No. 2 was immortalised forever.

Much of the enjoyment stemmed from the continuous procession of bright-coloured species seen at close range in good light including Golden Whistler, Spotted Pardalote, Mistletoebird and Red-browed Firetail. White-throated Needletails flew overhead and Terry Pacey picked up a Fork-tailed Swift amongst them. White-headed Pigeons regularly cruised between rainforest patches and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo dropped in to check out the fuss over the Riflebirds. Jennifer, a Canadian visitor whom I took

with me, made the comment on the way home that, after her retinal overdose on new species, she can now appreciate how some of her visiting birders felt when she showed them around in Canada.

Species of interest observed along the walking tracks included Noisy Pitta, Spectacled Monarch, Emerald Dove, Topknot Pigeon, Rufous Fantail and White-headed Pigeon. No luck in the Black-breasted Button-Quail department apart from a few recent platelets. A Peregrine Falcon flying high overhead was the only raptor recorded in the park. Just outside the park on the way home, Jennifer and I also picked up a pair of Brown Falcons and I heard an Eastern Spinebill bringing the total list to 51 species for the morning.

What an outing! What a leader!! Thanks to all those who helped make my ego trip a safe and enjoyable one.

Species recorded: Straw-necked Ibis, Peregrine Falcon, Brown Falcon, Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove, Topknot Pigeon, White-headed Pigeon, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Emerald Dove, Peaceful Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove, Galah, Australian King-Parrot, Pale-headed Rosella, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, White-throated Needletail, Fork-tailed Swift, Sacred Kingfisher, Noisy Pitta, Welcome Swallow, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Cicadabird, Eastern Yellow Robin, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Spectacled Monarch, Rufous Fantail, Grey Fantail, Eastern Whipbird, Superb Fairy-wren, Large-billed Scrubwren, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Gerygone, Brown Thornbill, Striated Thornbill, White-throated Treecreeper, Lewin's Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Mistletoebird, Spotted Pardalote, Silvereye, Red-browed Firetail, Figbird, Regent Bowerbird, Satin Bowerbird, Paradise Riflebird, Green Catbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow. (Total of 51 species).

Michael Atzeni

RAVENSBORNE REVISITED - 12 April 1996

During my holidays, I returned to Ravensbourne NP with Father Georges Maurel, a Catholic priest from Brisbane, hoping to find Black-breasted Button-Quail for him. No luck in that respect - not even fresh platelets - but we did record the following species which weren't seen on the recent TBO outing:

Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Russet Thrush, Rose Robin, Rufous Shrike-thrush, Variegated Fairy-Wren.

As you can appreciate, Father Maurel's weekend obligations largely restrict his birdwatching efforts to the working week. There are several new species for him around here including some reasonably easy ones such as Plum-headed Finch and Tawny Grassbird. I have given him a few sites, but a companion with local knowledge never goes astray, especially when time is limited. Georges is flexible during the week and would welcome an invitation to team up with anyone familiar with the species in the area. If anyone can assist, please ring him on 07 3802 0363.

Michael Atzeni

COMING EVENTS

April Outing

Location: Blanchview
Date: Saturday, 27 April
Leader: Pat Cleary. 303 352
Time: 7:30 am

Meet at the junction of the Blanchview and Flagstone Roads. We will be visiting two properties in the area. BYO everything.

May Outing:

Location: Redwood Park
Date: Sunday, 26 May
Leader: Pat McConnell 976 141
Time: 7:00 am

Meet at the bottom entrance on the range highway. Park here or over the road in front of the house opposite the entrance. BYO everything.

June Outing

Location: Girraween NP
Date: 30 June
Leader: Sharon Frederiks 331 169
Time: 7:00 am

More in next newsletter

If undeliverable return to
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