



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS inc.

p.o. box 67 - darling heights - 4350

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

CLUB OFFICERS :

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Treasurer -	Gloria Glass	076 307054			

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

NEWSLETTER No. 246 - August 1996

EDITORIAL:

As the last month of Winter nears its end, Toowoomba is really living up to its reputation as a cool place to live. Perhaps your area is also feeling the cold blast from the snow in the Granite Belt. On the birding scene, **Little Corellas** have finally been seen by more than one member simultaneously in the area, so can now be officially added to our local list. Nicci Thompson and Fr Georges Maurel saw 4 of them at the Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat on 12th August. A week later Pat McConnell saw a flock of about 8 near K Mart at the southern end of town. On last month's outing a small group were seen at Lower Tent Hill. As they could be dismissed as Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, please check all white cockatoos carefully, taking particular note of their size and call, and report any Little Corella sightings to the Records Officer.

This month's newsletter features **two Richard Thomis'** reports from the **far north**. Onya Richard!! The **Lockyer Wetlands Outing** report will be held over while **John Harris** settles into his new job at Beenleigh. We wish John, Jude and the kids all the best and thanks for many contributions to TBO while a local. I'm certain the **Naturesearch people** would appreciate that you supported them by letting the **Minister for Environment** know your feelings by using the letter supplied from Caloundra or even one of your own.

To date **Ann** has received **no communication** regarding the possible **Affiliation with BOCA**. Could we please have some feedback? For the **non-BOCA** among us, I have included results of a **survey BOCA** conducted on the **future direction** of the club and the new priorities of the club for the next five years.

Don't forget the **AGM on Monday, 14 October** at 7.30 pm. If the Club becomes affiliated with BOCA, something BOCA are very keen for us to do, then **Ken Simpson, the President of BOCA** and co-author of the Simpson and Day field-guide, will be the **Guest Speaker**.

Finally, many thanks to Richard and Koji for their recent articles on North Queensland birding. Let's give them a break and hear from other TBO members about your experiences.

LIBRARY INVENTORY

The club intends to make an inventory of all its **LIBRARY MATERIALS**. Could all outstanding items please be returned to **Sharyn Frederiks**, 18 Mahogany St, Toowoomba, by the end of September.

FINE FEATHER TOURS - PART 2

The Cape Tribulation area is not regarded as particularly good birding country, but was a good spot to take the in-laws for a weekend. It still provided us with a few good moments; Wompoo Pigeons at close quarters, a family group of Bush Thick-knees and male Victoria's Riflebird. On the way I pulled into Newell Beach Caravan park near Mossman for a two night stay, and another opportunity to catch up with local tour operator Del Richards.

The park is almost on the beach and a great spot to sit and watch birds go by. That afternoon, I observed both Brush and Gould's Bronze-Cuckoos and Yellow Honeyeaters in the garden. Brown Goshawk and Brahminy Kite were also present overhead.

The next morning, I set off with Del for a Daintree River boat trip. We were mainly in pursuit of the Great-billed Heron, a bird that had previously eluded me on the Cairns Inlet. Although we missed the heron, we did see several Shining Starlings, Forest, Sacred, Azure and two Little Kingfishers, Rufous Night Heron and a wintering Channel-billed Cuckoo. Pacific Swallows much outnumbered the Welcome Swallows over the river, not easy to distinguish without Del.

Back on land I was shown a Burdekin Duck that had dropped into a local farm dam several months previously and had decided to remain. Around Mt Molloy we saw Red-winged and Fig Parrots, several Great Bowerbirds, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Fairy Warbler and Northern Fantail.

We began the next day visiting two roosting Papuan Frogmouths near Newell Beach as we were en route from nearby Cooya Beach. Here we had good views of the elusive Mangrove Robin and Varied Honeyeater.

It was then up to Mt Lewis in search of the Blue-faced Parrot-Finch. On the way we observed the minor race of the White-throated Treecreeper. It is a much smaller bird that looks and sounds different, making it hard to see why it is not a separate species. On the top of the mountain we had close views of Mountain Thornbill, Bower's Shrike-thrush, Tooth-billed Catbird, Golden Bowerbird, Yellow-spotted, White-cheeked and Bridled Honeyeaters. With expert assistance I finally found the Atherton Scrub-wren, dumpier and more of a ground dwelling bird than the common Large-billed Scrub-wren. Fernwrens taunted us with their haunting calls but could not be found, and the finches remained birds to get next trip. On the return trip, a Russet-tailed Thrush flew across the road and remained visible just long enough to be identified before disappearing into the forest.

On Nine Mile Road we finally located a family of Lovely Fairy-wrens, a bird we had been after for the previous two days. As Del pointed out, this aptly named bird is quieter than other wrens, goes higher into the trees and its shorter, broader tail is well suited for the rainforest. The female is also very attractive. It seemed a suitable spot to bring to an end two enjoyable days birding with Del.

Del Richard's Fine Feather Tours 070 983 103.

REPTILES and the REEF

When one is in North Queensland, the Cairns Crocodile Farm is well worth a visit. Crocodile farms would normally hold about as much interest for me as zoos, but this one provides a habitat that birds seem to like more than the crocodiles for they are free to come and go.

Just after turning off highway south of Edmonton, one passes a turf farm that attracts Little Curlew, Pratincoles and Grey Wagtails over summer. Interesting waders are also likely visitors at the crocodile farm.

After fruitless pursuit of the Red-necked Crake, it was a joy to encounter White-browed Crakes appearing in front of us in the first pond almost immediately upon entering the farm. Helpful signs recommend that you do not swim in the ponds and remind you that crocodiles can bite. Handsome Chestnut-breasted Mannikins were seen at the pool's edge.

On our first trip to the farm, we missed the slightly overgrown "Rainforest Walk" and serendipitously turned down a service road. Crimson Finches flew round us and we encountered a Pied Heron at the end of the road. I learnt later that this was a new bird for the farm, as well as for us. Good views of Gould's Bronze-Cuckoo were obtained at the same spot over winter. Brown, Yellow and Dusky Honeyeaters enjoy the bushes that line the paths and an assortment of raptors could be seen overhead. Black and Brahminy Kites are very common and we had lovely views of a Little eagle on our first visit.

Around larger pools are Jabiru, ibis and a variety of heron and egrets. Buff-banded Rail are common but rarer rails have been recorded, as well as Little Kingfishers. Shelters are strategically located around the farm and are a popular nesting spot for Crimson Finches.

As with North Queensland in general, just about anything could turn up at this spot. Refreshments are also available, the staff are very friendly and welcome birders, and then, there are always the crocodiles.

My last full day in Cairns was spent on an outer reef cruise on the "Seastar II". It was mainly for those interested in diving and snorkelling but also advertised as catering for the birder, taking in Michaelmas Cay and Hastings Reef.

As soon as we were out of Cairns, Brown Boobies began appearing on the channel markers, but much of the outward trip was occupied with snorkelling instruction. As we approached the Cay, we saw it was alive with birds, on the ground and in the air. Frigatebirds could be made out and I was eager to go ashore and take in the details.

We were shuttled ashore and just as I was wondering where to start, the captain called me back into the shuttle boat. It might have been my camera, tripod, binoculars, long-sleeved shirt, long trousers and funny hat that made him think I was more interested in the birds than the water. Whatever it was, he took me around the Cay to check out the birds on the other side. Brown Boobies were seen at close quarters and within a group of Black-naped Terns was a solitary Roseate Tern. Back ashore I was able to concentrate on the other birds. Crested and Sooty Terns were in their thousands, Common Noddies lived up to their name, but there were no Black Noddies on this occasion. Several frigatebirds soared above, mainly Lesser with the white "arm pits" clearly evident in the otherwise all black males, but a few Greater Frigatebirds were also present.

Not much birding was to be done on the remainder of the trip, and so I played tourist and reflected on the holiday. On the return to Cairns I flicked through my field guide to work out how many new birds I had seen on the trip. It was mainly a technique to delay sea sickness, and for a short time it worked.

Richard Thomis.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Recently the club received some BOCA correspondence after inquiring about the proposed affiliation. In an article titled "Future Directions" was the results of a survey completed in "The Bird Observer" in March this year. Perhaps these results could point the way for our club in the future.

Responses at present

1 Contact club for people interested in native wild birds	34%
2 Club for people who want to go birdwatching in groups	28%
3 Organization which teaches about birds and their needs	17%
4 Conservation group which lobbies for the protection of Australian native birds	16%
5 No response	5%

Members were then asked to tell how their response would be in ten years' time

1 A conservation group which lobbies for the protection of Australian native birds	35%
2 A group which teaches about birds	25%
3 Contact club for people interested in native wild birds	21%
4 Club for people who enjoy bird watching in groups	16%
5 No opinion	3%

The message was that members would like BOCA to strengthen its image as a conservation and teaching organization, while retaining its function as a means for birdwatchers to get in touch with each other of similar interests.

As a result of receiving the membership survey report, the members of the BOCA Council held a special meeting at which the following decisions were made:

The priorities for BOCA for the next five years will be conservation, education and ethical birdwatching

Conservation and public education: to increase the public understanding of the ecological importance of birds and their habits and to engender attitudes sympathetic to their conservation.

BOCA will continue to raise public awareness of the **ecological importance of birds** and their habitats, and will actively promote the conservation and enhancement of threatened habitat.

BOCA will **increase its role in education** and will provide a greater variety of opportunities for members to learn about identification and habitat requirements of native birds.

Ethical birdwatching: to promote birdwatching as an individual and social activity directed to benefit wild birds.

OBJECTIONS to TBO AFFILIATION with BOCA

In view of the fact that the expiry date of our Public Liability Insurance Policy is 18 October, it is important that a decision be made by the TBO Executive **before** the AGM and preferably at the Executive meeting on 26 August so that the necessary paperwork can be finalised in time. Our affiliation will preclude the need to pay the premium which represents a large saving for the club. Members should notify the Secretary in writing if they have any objections to the TBO becoming a BOCA Group as outlined in the July Newsletter.

NATURESEARCH

With economic rationalism becoming even more necessary, Naturesearch 2001 is under extreme pressure from funding cuts taking place, and it will be a disaster for the environment if it is "axed". As many TBO members are also keen and experienced naturesearchers, I have taken the liberty to circularise this letter in the hope Naturesearch may continue. Please feel free to use it or send your own version to the relevant authority.

The Honourable Brian Littleproud MLA
Minister for Environment
P.O. Box 155
Brisbane Qld 4002

Dear Minister

Re: Naturesearch

I am writing to ask you to continue your support for the Naturesearch Project.

This programme is invaluable for both the future of Queensland's natural environment, and the amenity and lifestyle of future generations.

It is unique in that it is almost totally volunteer driven, from surveying in the field to entering data on computer. It has attracted both interstate and international interest as a model project for community participation.

It is extremely cost effective, costing the Department virtually nothing to gain ecological information, which, in the normal way, would cost thousands of dollars.

It is a major achievement for the Department.

I urge you, therefore, to continue the funding for Naturesearch, at least to the current level, to ensure a future for our environment, and the personal satisfaction of the volunteers.

Yours faithfully

COMING EVENTS

August Outing

Location: Felton District
Date: 25 August
Leader: Michael Hirst (076) 32 55 64
Time: 8:00 am.

Info: Head south from Toowoomba towards Warwick. Meet at the corner of the Cambooya turn-off and the New England Highway just past the new BP garage. The property we will be visiting is near Felton. Walking will be rather rough and hilly in places. Later we will explore local lanes and a dam. BYO everything.

September Outing

Location: Highfields/Cooby Areas
Date: 29 September
Leader: Nicci Thompson

Info: Swift parrots were seen in the area this winter. This should be enough to tempt most of you. More next newsletter.

October Outing

Location: Annual Species Count
Date: 26-27 October
Coordinator: Michael Atzeni
Time: All weekend

Info: This is an important event. Small groups, each containing at least one experienced birder, will cover the TBO study area. If you wish to participate, contact Michael for allocation to a group. More in next newsletter.

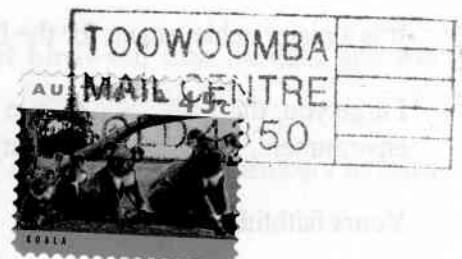
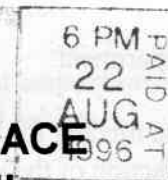
Annual General Meeting

Location: CWA Hall, Withcott (opp. pub.)
Date: Monday, 14 October
Time: 7.30 pm

Info: Another important event. Assuming TBO becomes affiliated with BOCA, the Guest Speaker will be Mr Ken Simpson, well-known author and President of BOCA. Please make every effort to attend. More in next newsletter.

If undeliverable-return to
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