



# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS inc.

(An Affiliated Group of the Bird Observers Club of Australia)

p.o. box 67 - darling heights - 4350

---

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

---

## CLUB OFFICERS :

President -	Michael Atzeni	076 392761	Editor -	Ken McKeown	076 303774
Vice-Pres./Records -	Pat McConnell	076 976141	Librarian -	Sharyn Frederiks	076 331169
Secretary -	Ann Shore	076 303207	Committee Member	Michael Hirst	076 325564
Treasurer -	Gloria Glass	076 307054			

---

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

---

**NEWSLETTER No. 248 - October 1996**

## EDITORIAL

This newsletter deals mainly with reporting the details of the AGM. By law, the financial report must be included (see attached) and speaking of money, subscriptions were due by 01 September.

About 50 people attended the AGM and Ken Simpson's talk was well-received and obviously inspirational judging by the seven new memberships we gained. We welcome Michael Hirst and Pat McConnell to the Executive and thank Pat Cleary and John Harris for their good work during the past year.

As continuing Editor, I would like to thank those members who helped by writing items for the newsletter and President Michael for proof-reading.

This edition has Nicci Thompson's Highfields/Cooby Dam outing report, Michael Hirst's description of his Murray-Darling Project, and the AGM reports.

## OUTING REPORT - HIGHFIELDS FALLS & COOBY DAM, 29 SEPTEMBER 1996

Initially the outing was delayed when the leader and some members met in a different spot to that of the rest of the participating members. With that little hiccup sorted out and the members of the second group reporting a sighting of a Forest Kingfisher we entered the Highfields Falls Reserve under very grey skies. There were many birds but identification was not easy because of the poor light. One of the best sightings was that of a Yellow-tufted Honeyeater. As we descended to the falls it began to rain lightly and by the time we reached the bottom it became quite heavy, but we did see a Rufous Fantail flitting in the bushes beside the falls and a Spangled Drongo high in the branches of a eucalypt. It was good to check off some more migrants. As the rain didn't ease we decided to leave the dripping forest and move on to Cooby, hoping it would be drier.

We then encountered an unexpected problem. The rain had changed road conditions and regaining the bitumen had become problematic for some. However, this was finally solved by the heaving muscles of the male members and although most of us were quite damp we set off for Loveday Cove. On arrival, hot coffee was suggested and the suggestion being eagerly seized upon we headed for a shelter shed with our thermos flasks and telescopes. The coffee was good and there

were quite a few birds on the lake despite the conditions - a cold north-easterly was making life unpleasant. Among others we soon located a Great Crested Grebe and a male Musk Duck. By the time the coffee had been consumed and recent birding anecdotes swapped the rain had stopped and some of us decided to proceed to the Dam wall.

As we entered the walking track along the water's edge the vegetation protected us from the wind. We spent a very pleasant couple of hours with waterbirds on the lake beside us and bush birds, wallabies and a koala in the varied vegetation along its shores. At one stage we paused to watch a male Musk Duck go through the whole of his spectacular display before two quite disinterested females. When his overtures became pressing they simply swam off leaving him quite literally deflated. By midday we were sitting high above the water with views over much of the lake while all around us in the drooping red-blossomed callistemons the small birds made background twitterings as they went about their business and the cormorants and coot fished the waters of the cove below us. It was with a great deal of reluctance that we moved to return to the cars.

After lunch Michael Hirst and I decided to check the creek below the wall. Basking in the sun on a snag projecting from the water was a very large Eastern Water Dragon who was in the process of moulting, with loose flaking skin hanging from his body and shiny new skin showing in patches. Finally we walked through the public access area on the north-western corner of the dam - mainly open ironbark scrub and added Weebills and Speckled Warblers to our list and one very large Lace Monitor. The final species count for the day was 83 - quite satisfying after such a watery beginning.

Nicci Thompson

### THEATRE NIGHT FUND-RAISER

The Actor's Studio, Repertory Theatre, Margaret St, Toowoomba will be presenting the Killing of Sister George on 6/12/96 at 8pm. Refreshments supplied. Tickets are \$10 and available from Ann (303 207). Please support the club by attending this good-value entertainment.

### MURRAY-DARLING REPLY

Goaded by Nicci Thompson's challenge in the December newsletter, I would like to describe the results of the two sites that I survey for the RAOU Murray-Darling Basin Waterbird Survey Project, a 2.6 km portion of Oakey Creek near Bowenville and a nearby 20 ha ring tank.

Though not in the same august class as Cooby Dam and Lake Broadwater, they are interesting in the way they illustrate the effects of rain and drought on bird populations and the importance of a range of waterbird habitats of different types to allow for these effects.

I started the project in April 1994, and have since surveyed on a monthly basis, during both drought and floods, with very few gaps. The figures illustrate some striking trends.

The maximum number on the ring tank was approximately 3000 Grey Teal, the maximum number of species was seven and the total species over 2.5 years was 22. For the creek, the maxima were for Wood Duck 91 and 52 for Black Duck: maximum species for a single day was 10 and total species was 19.

The counts on the two sites tend to vary inversely to each other, with the ring tank serving as a drought refuge, and the waterbirds, particularly the ducks, dispersing to creeks and waterholes in a plentiful season. When full, the ring tank is not a good feeding place, as there is no shallow water and very little emergent vegetation. At such times, the birds that are present tend to be in the sump that collects the overland flow and the tail water. The sump was also included in the survey.

To illustrate the fluctuations, in July 1994, during the drought period, on the ring tank, there were the 3000 Grey Teal already mentioned, 50 Wood Duck, two Black and two Pink-eared Ducks, two Little Pied and one Little Black Cormorant and a pair of Masked Lapwings. On the creek, there were only 10 Wood Ducks, 16 Black Ducks, a pair of Pelicans, an Ibis and an Egret.

On the other hand, in September 1996, on the ring tank, there were only 6 Black and 10 Wood Ducks, two Grey Teal and a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, while on the creek there were 91 Wood Duck, 46 Black Duck, 4 Grey Teal and single specimens of the following species:- Dusky Moorhen, cormorant, heron, egret and ibis.

The smallest count for the ring tank was a lone Intermediate Egret on the sump in July 1996 and for the creek in the droughty April of 1994, 13 Black Duck, two Wood Duck, two White Ibis, one Darter and a Little Pied Cormorant.

These contrasts are not unexpected, but such hard data are a firm basis for any plan to manage the Murray-Darling Basin for nature conservation as well as for production.

Michael Hist

**MINUTES OF THE AGM of the TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS INC.**  
**held on Monday 14 October 1996 at the QCWA Hall, Withcott.**

1. **Opening of Meeting:** The President, Michael Atzeni, opened the meeting at 7:30 pm, introducing himself, welcoming all those present and mentioning that we had an eminent person present who would address us shortly. Forty-six members and visitors, as per Attendance Book.
2. **Apologies for Absence:** Marjorie Davidson, Jim Booth, Kaylene Booth, Rod and Betty Hobson, Terry Pacey, Richard Thomis and Lorraine Wilson.
3. **Minutes of the last AGM, 9 Oct 1995:** These had been published in the October 1995 Newsletter. The President moved that they be accepted. Seconded by Michael Hist. All in favour. Carried.
4. **Business Arising:** Nil.
5. **Correspondence :** Nil.
6. **President's Report:** Michael Atzeni read his report on the year's events, outings and other happenings in the club - followed by acclamation.
7. **Treasurer's Report:** Gloria Glass gave her report, reading the details from the Auditor's Statement of Receipts and Expenditure and explaining that as things stood the club had an operating loss. However, due to our recent affiliation with the Bird Observers Club of Australia, we should now be covered by its insurance policy, thus saving over \$200 per year. Also the auditor, Mr Earl Stower had kindly completed the audit without charge, thus saving another \$95.

Gloria moved that her report be received, adding that she would be moving at the next Committee Meeting, for the annual subscription to remain at \$20. Seconded by Michael Hirst. All in favour. Carried.

Michael Hirst asked if we could now also save the \$20 Incorporation fee. Regrettably not.

9. **Election of Officers:** The President asked Laurie Atzeni to occupy the chair temporarily during the election of president.

**President**

Michael Atzeni  
Nominated A.. Shore, seconded P. Cleary.

**Vice Pres**

Pat McConnell

**Records Officer**

Nominated J. Harris, seconded A. Warburton.

<b><u>Treasurer</u></b>	Gloria Glass Nominated M. Hirst, seconded L. Atzeni.
<b><u>Secretary</u></b>	Ann Shore Nominated G. Glass, seconded O. Booth.
<b><u>Librarian</u></b>	Sharyn Frederiks Nominated G. Glass, seconded J. O'Conner.
<b><u>Editor</u></b>	Ken Mc Keown Nominated M. Atzeni, seconded P. McConnell
<b><u>Committee Member</u></b>	Michael Hirst Nominated P. Cleary, seconded G. Glass.
<b><u>Auditor</u></b>	Earl Stower Nominated G. Glass, seconded M. Atzeni.

All the above nominations were carried.

10. **Close of Meeting:** The business then being completed, the President closed the meeting, thanking everyone for their attendance and inviting them to remain for the address from Ken Simpson, President BOCA, before enjoying a social gathering and light refreshments.

### **President's Report, Annual General Meeting, 14 October 1996.**

#### **Introduction**

I am pleased to report that the past year has been a good one for TBOI. The breaking of the drought revived enthusiasm for birding, replenished the waterbird habitats and attracted species not seen locally for several years. Several outings were well-supported and many enjoyable articles helped make the monthly newsletter a good read. Coping with the usual frustrations of a small organisation run by a handful of busy people was not made any easier in the wake of Ann's poor health, John Harris's departure to Brisbane and family and work commitments, and I thank and commend the Executive on their mighty effort.

We find ourselves now in an important and exciting transition period. TBO is now an officially affiliated group of the Bird Observers Club of Australia (BOCA) and we are privileged to have Ken Simpson, President of BOCA, with us tonight. Since its inception in 1975, our club has been completely autonomous, relying primarily on the monthly newsletter and outings to keep in touch with members and to attract new members. The mutual benefits of the affiliation are yet to be realised but it will without doubt give the club more exposure, better direction and greater opportunities for members to get involved. We remain financially independent but no longer incur our own Public Risk Insurance premium which was in excess of \$200 - money that could be better utilised elsewhere.

#### **Birds**

Last October, 148 species were recorded for the annual species census which was a good effort considering the drought and lack of waterbird habitats. We are looking forward to a much higher species count this year.

An unexpected visitor in May had everybody gathered at Bob Doneley's West Toowoomba Veterinary Clinic on the Labour Day holiday. A live Black-winged Petrel was brought into Bob in the wake of widespread inclement weather. We had to resort to an article in the local paper to establish that the bird was found at Carbarlah, north of our survey area. Disappointment for everyone as we couldn't add it to our local list. Last we heard it had been rehabilitated and released in more familiar territory. The article also established other "seabirds" had strayed inland including two Wedge-tailed Shearwaters at Oakey.

Interesting sightings for the survey area during the year included Brolgas and Little Corellas, two new species for the area. Blackbirds and Blue-bonnets were also recorded but only by single members and therefore did

not qualify for the official list. Some of the other interesting sightings during the year were Jabiru at Withcott, Black-eared Cuckoo at Iredale, Australian Crake, Square-tailed Kite, both Wandering Whistling Ducks and Whiskered Terns breeding at Hood's Lagoon, Turquoise Parrots and Red Goshawk all at Helidon, and Red-backed Kingfishers at several places. Raptors were in good numbers following the mouse plague and Black Kites bred near Wellcamp, west of Toowoomba.

Although none turned up within the survey area, Freckled Duck turned up in large numbers in the Lockyer Valley and several members kept a tab on them and an article appeared in the Gatton Star.

### Projects

Once again we applied for funding, supported by the Toowoomba City Council and the Department of Environment, to have a consultant establish a management plan for the Black-breasted Button-Quail, Powerful, Masked and Sooty Owl populations in Redwood Park, east of Toowoomba. All four species are uncommon and 3 are considered rare or threatened in south east Queensland. We have not yet officially heard the outcome<sup>1</sup>. However, it should be a major concern to all of us, that the Masked Owl and Sooty Owl have not been seen for over 2 years and only the Black-breasted Button-quail, has been reported within the last 12 months. The Powerful Owls have not been found in any of their regular Redwood haunts since January 1995, despite several attempts to locate them.

The idea of publishing a book on the birds of Toowoomba has been around for along time. John Harris explored funding options and the format and content of the book has been discussed but no further progress has been made at this stage.

### Events

The club organised a library display with a seed-eater theme last October. We participated in World Environment Day once again. Four members attended a Nature Search Workshop at Mt Berryman which was well-organised and stimulating. The Unleaded Petrels, lead by member, Pat McConnell, took part in the QOS-organised twitchathon and did well to finish second with 207 species in 24 hours. Our annual Theatre night was well-supported and netted \$144 profit for the club.

Gloria Glass led a class from the Martin Luther Primary School to the waterbird habitat, driving home a good message about balanced diets when the contentious issue of feeding bread to the ducks arose!

The club lost one of its stalwarts, with the death of Barbara Wilson in December. Barbara was a valued member and a fine person, one of those rare assets every club needs - a member who volunteers their services without having to be asked.

A Zeiss sales representative presented a demonstration of binoculars and telescopes to interested members.

Outings were near and far and included some excellent species lists and attendances, particularly to Ravensbourne National Park and the Lockyer Wetlands. Other venues included Redwood Park, Ma Ma Creek, Cooby Dam and Felton. Outings to Girraween National Park and North Stradbroke Island were poorly attended and it is apparent the venues closer to town are more appealing.

Sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to the newsletter, lead or attended outings, submitted checklists and members bird notes and finally, family members for their support. In closing, I strongly encourage some new blood to enter the Executive ranks. We *need* others input and we can assure you of all the support you will need to make the transition

I wish everyone another exciting year of birding.

Michael Atzeni

---

<sup>1</sup> We have since been advised our application was unsuccessful.

## COMING EVENTS

### October Outing

**Location:** Annual Species Count  
**Date:** 26-27 October  
**Leader:** Michael Atzeni 076 392 761  
**Time:** All weekend

**Info:** You can go out on your own or as a group. Volunteers to do the western areas are required. Anyone wishing to link up on Sunday morning, meet at the Helidon Rest Area at 7 a.m. to go immediately to the Helidon Dip and Hood's Lagoon. Ring through or pass on Saturday's sightings to Michael that day to help prepare for Sunday's effort. On Sunday, around lunchtime (12.30-1.00 pm), try and meet back at the Helidon Rest Area to compile the lists and celebrate. Good Luck!!

### November Outing

**Location:** Mulgowie/Thornton  
**Date:** Sunday, 24 November  
**Leader:** Noela Caffin 074 601 372 (AH)  
**Time:** 7:00 a.m.

**Info:** Always interesting with the local creeks running. Meet at Bill Gunn Dam (formally Lake Dyer), via Laidley, in the picnic area. BYO everything as there are no shops in the vicinity.

### December Outing

**Location:** Ravensbourne NP  
**Date:** 15 December  
**Leader:** Michael Atzeni  
**Time:** 7:30 a.m.

**Info:** This will be our Christmas Outing. Bring the family, enjoy a stroll in the rainforest and pack a picnic.

### January Outing

**Location:** Oakey  
**Date:** 25 January

**Info:** More in future newsletters.

### February Outing

**Location:** Southport  
**Date:** 23 February

**Info:** More in future newsletters.

If undeliverable return to  
Toowoomba Bird Observers Inc  
PO Box 67  
DARLING HEIGHTS Q 4350

**SURFACE  
MAIL**



P McConnell\*  
17 George Street  
HELIDON 4344