



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 :

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

250 DECEMBER
NEWSLETTER No. 249 - November 1996

EDITORIAL

What an incredible finish to the year climatically!! Intermittent rain then huge wildfires stretching the weary local bush fire-brigades, only to be saved by more welcome downpours. Even a helicopter was commissioned to water-bomb the most inaccessible areas.

Luckily our beloved Ravensbourne N.P. wasn't destroyed as previously reported but unfortunately huge tracts of land adjacent to it, east of the Seventeen Mile Road were destroyed. Also areas between White Mountain Road and Paradise Road accessed from the Fifteen Mile Road were devastated. **THE DECEMBER OUTING AT RAVENSBOURNE N.P. IS STILL ON!!**

This newsletter continues the South Australian sojourn by Fiona Wells and an article about something we don't hear of often, a new bird report from North Queensland - the Pacific Swallow found by Del Richards and Lloyd Nielsen. More members' bird notes are included in this issue.

It seems the rumour of the impending departure of many members for distant areas over the Christmas break is true. Could these lucky birders please take notes and please write an article for the less fortunate of us to share? We can always use more articles!!!

Speaking of holidays, the TBOI executive would like to wish members a Happy and Safe Christmas.

SOUTHERN SOJOURN (continued)

Lake Albert at Meningie was peaceful under the setting sun. We saw Purple Swamphens, Pacific Black Ducks, Pelicans, Australasian Shovelers, Grey Teal, Dusky Moorhens, Eurasian Coot and Swans at the lake's edge while Masked Lapwings scolded us from the shore and White Ibis flew overhead.

Next morning, we drove past "The Pelican Rookery" to Narrung which is situated on a peninsula into Lake Alexandrina. There are many salt lakes in the middle of lush irrigated pastures with only a few very windswept trees. A large group of Black-winged Stilts was in one small waterhole and there were numerous Masked Lapwings and Red-necked Avocets. Australian Kestrels, Whistling Kites and Brown Falcons were quite common.

In a stand of trees near Pelican Point were White-backed Magpies, White-fronted Chats, Blue Bonnets, Superb Fairy-wrens and Yellow-rumped Thornbills. A stop at Marks Point was particularly rewarding. Here we saw Banded Stilts, Black-fronted Dotterels, Hooded Plovers, Little Terns, Pied Oystercatchers, Chestnut Teal and both Crested and Caspian Terns.

Every jetty and fence post in the Coorong was taken up by cormorant of one type or another with the occasional Royal or Yellow-billed Spoonbill.

Near Salt Creek we were serenaded by a Singing Honeyeater as we came by chance on a Malleefowl's magnificent mound but unfortunately no sight of its owner. We crossed over to the Southern Ocean Road at the 42 Mile Crossing. A windswept foreshore stretched endlessly to left and right, the beach being covered by broken shells feet deep.

A curiosity at Goroka was a magpie which was all white except for a black head and wings. The ubiquitous pair of Australian Shelducks still appeared regularly along the way. We entered the Little Desert from the south and were soon lost amid the criss cross of tracks. There were numerous delicate wildflowers and small bright wattles. Tawny-crowned and New Holland Honeyeaters were prolific as were Red-rumped Parrots and Eastern Rosellas.

We also sighted Gilbert's Whistler, White-fronted Chats, Grey Currawongs, Dusky Woodswallows, Red Wattlebirds, Common Bronzewing and White Plumed Honeyeaters. Eventually we found ourselves on Mc Donald's Highway!!! which runs through the park from West to East. A stroll through Stringybark Walk yielded more Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters, a Striated Pardalote, a Little Grassbird and some White-eared Honeyeaters drinking and squabbling at a waterhole.

Fiona Wells, Warwick.

NEW BIRD FIND IN FAR NORTH

Two self-taught ornithologists in the Far North have discovered the region's sixth species of swallow and the first new permanent bird species in Australia for the past 16 years.

Del Richards from Newell Beach (who guided Richard Thomis and then Wendy and myself north of Cairns) and fellow birder Lloyd Nielsen of Mt Molloy say they are pleased it took locals to identify a species overlooked by countless numbers of international experts who had visited the area.

The pair first came across the Pacific Swallow in a coastal area north of Mossman about two and a half years ago. Del, a licensed bird-bander and bird-watching guide, who operates Fine Feather Tours, is hoping the find will act as a significant drawcard to the region's already rich bird habitat.

Lloyd, originally from the Dalby district, has already included the bird as a late entry in his book, to be launched next Sunday, *Guide to the Birds of the Wet Tropics of Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef*. Multi-talented, Lloyd has written and illustrated all 440 entries in this book. He is also preparing a paper on its little-known life cycle for Australia's major ornithological journal, *The Emu*.

The two bird watchers said their greatest difficulty was proving their find, which required catching the bird and photographing it, then comparing it with a skin sent over from New Guinea in June last year.

One reason the bird was overlooked, they said, was because of the similarities to the Welcome Swallow, which is common Australia-wide, and can be differentiated only by its tail markings. The Pacific Swallow has previously been found only in a tropical belt stretching from India to Tahiti. However the new discovery suggests a stable population of a "few hundred" of the birds living for the last 20 or 30 years in lowland habitats between the Daintree River and Port Douglas.

A spokesman for the Royal Australasian Ornithological Union's national records appraisal committee confirmed the men's finds were in the process of being officially validated.

Fine Feather Tours. 070 983 103.

(Thanks to the *Cairns Post* and Richard Thomis for providing same.)

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES: All sightings were seen this year by members of the Toowoomba Bird Observers. Accuracy not vouched for by TBO. Please check with observer before citing.

Dusky Grasswren	29.07	Cloncurry	R.H.
Carpentarian Grasswren	30.07	Gunpowder	R.H.
Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeon	01.08	Nitmulik N.P.	R.H.
Partridge Pigeon	02.08	Merl, N.T.	R.H.
Rainbow Pitta	03.08	East Alligator R.	R.H.
Banded Fruit-Dove	06.08	Nanguluwur N.T.	R.H.
White-lined Honeyeater	07.08	Anbangbang, N.T.	R.H.
Pictorella Mannikin	12.08	Borrooloola, N.T.	R.H.
Black Noddy	09.10	"Maheno" Fraser Is.	R.H.
Spotted Quail-thrush	26.10	Amos Rd, Withcott	P.C., D.C.
Sanderling	02.11	Hook Pt Fraser Is.	R.H.
Black-breasted Buzzard	03.11	Dilli Village F.I.	R.H.
Pomarine Jaeger	04.11	Sandy Straits, F.I.	R.H.
Letter-winged Kite	04.11	Nanango	R.H.
Pacific Heron	06.12	dam Postman's Ridge	K.McK.

D.C. P. Cleary D.C. D. Cleary R.H. R.Hobson
K.McK K.Mc Keown

OUTINGS ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL

In future, could all members and visitors attending outings please contact the leader by the Friday before the outing, so we know who to expect and therefore who to wait for at the nominated meeting place. The Leader's phone number is always published in the list of Coming Events.

Leaders should take the Attendance Book and First Aid Kit. Those attending should sign the Attendance book for insurances purposes.

COMING EVENTS

December Outing

Location: Ravensbourne NP
Date: Sunday, 15 December
Leader: Michael Atzeni 076 392 761
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. Travel north from Toowoomba to Hampton. Turn right and follow the signs to Ravensbourne N.P. **Meet at the bottom picnic area.**

January Outing

Location: "Silverbrook", Oakey
Date: Saturday, 25 January
Leader: Michael Hirst 076 325 564
Time: 7 a.m.

Info: Meet Michael at the Devon Park turnoff 3 km west of Oakey. This turnoff is on the right (i.e. the northern side) of the Warrego Highway. Our hosts, the Ford's, property is a further 3 km so wait for Michael to guide you there.

February Outing

Location: Franklinvale
Date: Sunday, 23 February
Leader: Michael Hirst 076 325 564
Time: 7:00 a.m.

Info: This is new territory for us and should be quite interesting following the recent rain. Go through Laidley and then east to Grandchester. **Meet Michael at the T intersection** just before you arrive at Grandchester. The left road goes to Grandchester and the right and southern road goes to Mt Mort and the property Old Hidden Vale. Franklinvale is 12 km south.

March Outing:

Location: Flagstone/Stockyard Cks
Date: 30 March

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



**SURFACE
 MAIL**



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