



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS inc.

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

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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'

NEWSLETTER No. 252 - February 1997

EDITORIAL:

OK! You can all stop those raindances. We seem to be going from one extreme to another, what with the November fires, then welcome rain, a dry December and January and now, unfortunately, Charleville revisited.

If you want to view waterbirds close by, visit Cooby Dam. I recently accompanied Nicci Thompson there to complete the Murray-Darling Project survey and discovered huge numbers have returned.

This newsletter contains an **outing report from "Silverbrook" near Oakey by Michael Hirst** and as usual more **member's bird notes**. In addition, a welcome return by **Ann Shore who reports on an unusual Shorelands sighting**. I have also included information on the practice of **bird banding**.

Congratulations to **Belle and Richard Thomis on the birth of their first child - a 9lb son - Daniel Peter**. The arrival of this new member should help bring down the average age of TBO members a little, not to mention the monthly outing attendance, as I imagine we won't be seeing Richard so often. Start potty-training ASAP, Richard.

There's a spate of outings and events coming up and I draw your attention in particular to the **9 March wader outing** to Moreton Bay, slotted in to the outing agenda at short notice due to popular demand, a **slide show presentation on the 14 April** by professional photographer, Chris Cameron, at the Toowoomba City Hall, and an invitation to join the Toowoomba Avicultural Society on a bus trip to visit the **research facilities at Currumbin Bird Sanctuary** on 23 March (\$25/ticket). Unfortunately, this is the same day as our TBO outing but please don't hesitate to go on the bus trip instead.

Not much to report in the way of bird news on the local scene but good to see some new names contributing to the Member's Bird Notes. Let's hear from a few more people.

NEW VICE PRESIDENT

We welcome Jack Lund to the TBO Executive. Jack was elected Vice-President at last month's Executive meeting on 27 January. Jack is a long-term Helidon resident and has an intimate knowledge of the area. He has been an active member of the club for many years and he kindly offered to become Vice President following the lack of nominations at the October AGM. We look forward to his increased participation in Club matters.

SILVERBROOK OUTING REPORT - 25 JANUARY 1997

Thirteen members and two visitors from WPSQ Dalby, met at the Devon Park turnoff three kilometres west of Oakey where we journeyed a further three kilometres north to visit "Silverbrook", the property of Jenny and Peter Ford.

There were many small birds in the garden, including two typical birds of the drier country west of Toowoomba, the Spiny-cheeked and Striped Honeyeaters. Superb Fairy-wrens, a Leaden Flycatcher and a Olive-backed Oriole were also present together with newly-hatched White-throated Gerygone chicks still in the nest and a nest of Crested Pigeon chicks ready to fly. The ample water and absence of cats made this an oasis for birds, and the Ford's love of their feathered friends was obvious.

We then trekked up the hill behind the house. It was largely untouched scrub, mountain coolibah, with wilga, wattle, hollybush and vines forming a thick understorey. As we moved further from water the birds became scarcer, though we were sorry to see that groups of Common Mynas persisted well up the slopes. Weebills, Yellow Thornbills, a Wedge-tailed Eagle and a Pheasant Coucal were spotted, and from the top of the ridge a small flock of pelicans was spotted circling over the plain.

As we descended through the scrub, the damage of a fierce New Year's Eve wind-storm resulting in broken limbs and uprooted trees was even more apparent than around the homestead. From the edge of the scrub we could see the lagoon was very low, without much evidence of waterbirds, so we decided that it wasn't worth the extra walk and returned to the homestead for smoko. We all appreciated Jenny and Peter's kindness in allowing us access to their lovely garden and pointing out the salient features of the property.

After our break, we returned to the highway and took the Brookvale Park road to the Speed's property, "Dalmeny". There we visited a series of three impoundments formed by the banks of an ephemeral watercourse and the damming of a natural lagoon. Levels were dropping fast on the two upper storages as irrigation of the extensive cotton and maize crops was in full swing. Despite this, there were numerous waterfowl, a large number of Grey Teal, with Wood Duck, Black Duck and Hardhead, the three native egrets both local herons, stilts, three Marsh Sandpipers and a Black-fronted Dotterel as well as fifty Masked Lapwings on the mud exposed by the dropping water levels.

We stopped for lunch by the lagoon (which had less birdlife than the other impoundments) and here we saw a small group of Plumed Whistling-Ducks, which we had previously heard, in the shade of a willow tree on the opposite bank. Some of the party had to leave then, but there were still nine of us who crossed the Brookvale Park road to another complex of impoundments, where we added two Great Cormorants, a Silver Gull and a couple of Pink-eared Duck, while on the creek where we parked, we discovered a Rufous Night-Heron. However we probably enjoyed most a very good view of a Chestnut-breasted Mannikin on the powerlines. A small flock of Plum-headed Finches also displayed to advantage there.

Our thanks to Sandy Speed who allowed our visit at very short notice. Sandy also plays host to a regular Murray-Darling Waterbird Survey.

Seventy-five (75) species were seen altogether. Forty-three (43) were recorded at "Silverbrook" and 48 at "Dalmeny" which was not a very surprising result considering the very different habitats on the two properties.

Michael Hirst

Species List: Hoary-headed Grebe, Australasian Grebe, Australian Pelican, Darter, Great Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Little Pied Cormorant, Pacific Heron, White-faced Heron, Great Egret, Little Egret, Intermediate Egret, Rufous Night Heron, Sacred Ibis, Plumed Whistling-Duck, Black Swan, Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck, Hardhead, Australian Wood Duck, Black-shouldered Kite, Whistling Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Falcon, Australian Kestrel, Eurasian Coot, Masked Lapwing, Black-fronted Dotterel, Marsh Sandpiper, Silver Gull, Bar-shouldered Dove, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Cockatiel, Pale-headed Rosella, Red-rumped Parrot, Common Koel, Pheasant Coucal, Laughing Kookaburra, Sacred Kingfisher, Dollarbird, Tree Martin, Richard's Pipit, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Leaden Flycatcher, Willie Wagtail, Eastern Whipbird, Golden Cisticola, Superb Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, Weebill, White-throated Gerygone, Yellow Thornbill, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Striped Honeyeater, Noisy Miner, Mistletoebird, Striated Pardalote, Silveryeye, House Sparrow, Zebra Finch, Double-barred Finch, Plum-headed Finch, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, Common Starling, Common Myna, Olive-backed Oriole, Australian Magpie-lark, Black-faced Woodswallow, Grey Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Torresian Crow.

BIRD BANDING

The next time you see a bird, ask yourself these questions:-

- * How many of that species of bird exists?
- * Where does it live?
- * Does it mate for life?
- * How old is it and how long might it live?
- * If a female, how many eggs will she lay in her lifetime?
- * Does it fly far away from here?
- * Where will it go?
- * Where does it feed?

During the recent holidays at Mitchell, I came across a birder who could answer most of these questions - bird-bander Dr Steve Blaber. Steve, who works with fisheries, started his birding in his native South Africa. He actually started his banding at a QOSI camp-out at Mitchell.

The answers to these questions are important to conserving our native birds and the places they live. Researchers look for those answers and often need to recognise individual birds and groups of birds. One way is to attach bands or tags to the birds.

We discussed many aspects of the **Australian Bird Study Group (ABSA)**. As well, I discovered the existence of the **Australian Bird and Bat Banding Group**. (Thanks to the **Australian Nature Conservation Agency** for material). Issues discussed included:-

- * how to train banders
- * how to collect and use banding information
- * how to store information on what birds have been banded
- * how to inform banders when and where bands have been found
- * the supply of bands and other equipment to banders

In the next newsletter I will report on banders, band design, other marking techniques and what to do if you find a band.

Ken McKeown

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

Crimson Rosella (3)	07.11.96	West Toowoomba	TP
Wandering Whistling-Duck	07.12.96	Apex Lake, Gatton	MH
Cotton Pygmy-Goose	11.12.96	Karrasch's Lagoon, Placid Hills	AS, AW
Great Cormorant	11.12.96	Lowe's Rd Swamp, Placid Hills	AS, AW
Fuscous Honeyeater (20 in yard)	Dec 96	East Toowoomba	TP
Long-billed Corella (300)	06.01.97	Meilor's Flat	K & W McK
Superb Parrot (30)	08.01.97	Deniliquin	K & W McK
Diamond Firetail (3)	08.01.97	Deniliquin	K & W McK
Gilbert's Whistler (1)	08.01.97	Deniliquin	K & W McK
Yellow Rosella (10)	08.01.97	Deniliquin	K & W McK
Australian Bittern (2)	08.01.97	Deniliquin	K & W McK
Little Bittern (7)	08.01.97	Deniliquin	K & W McK
Painted Honeyeater (1)	08.01.97	Deniliquin	K & W McK
Plains Wanderer (6)	08.01.97	Deniliquin	K & W McK
Little Button-quail (3)	08.01.97	Deniliquin	K & W McK
Rufous Bristlebird (2)	11.01.97	Port Campbell N.P.	K McK
Cape Barren Goose (1)	11.01.97	Tower Hill	K McK
Chestnut-rumped Hylacola (2)	19.01.97	Barren Ground N.P.	K McK
Grey Currawong (2)	19.01.97	Barren Ground N.P.	K McK
Ground Parrot (1)	20.01.97	Barren Ground N.P.	K McK
Eastern Bristlebird (1)	20.01.97	Barren Ground N.P.	K McK
Pilotbird (2)	20.01.97	Barren Ground N.P.	K McK
Yellow-tailed Blk Cockatoo (3)	25.01.97	Table Top Estate, Withcott	K & W McK
Little Corella (3 in flight)	30.01.97	Lake Annand, East Toowoomba	TP
Long-billed Corella (300)	06.01.97	Meilor's Flat	K & W McK
Peregrine Falcon	01.02.97	Helidon	PM
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	07.02.97	Highfields Falls	TP, NT
Painted Button-Quail	11.02.97	U.S.Q. campus, Sth Toowoomba	PM

MH M Hirst
TP T Pacey

PM P McConnell
AS A Shore

K & W McK K & W McKeown
NT N Thompson AW A Warburton

UNUSUAL SIGHTING AT SHORELANDS

One early afternoon in mid-January, I noticed something different about the activity at my birdbath. Several small birds were bathing, then flying up to a nearby tree, fluttering and preening themselves continuously. There was so much movement that it was hard to deduce exactly what they were. Juveniles, perhaps of the White-throated or White-naped Honeyeater variety, or a party of Brown-headed Honeyeaters. Most likely the latter, from their markings, although I didn't expect to get them in my yard. The colouring was a soft, brownish-olive above with off-white breasts and underparts, and brownish heads.

The continued chattering and squawking led me to look elsewhere in the eucalypt and find two and three others here and there, sitting snuggled up closely, side by side. Eventually I counted up to seven! I saw them once more the following day.

I have never noticed this huddling behaviour in honeyeaters before and it begs the question that, if they were juveniles, are there "creches" for young honeyeaters?

Ann Shore

COMING EVENTS

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 Vales. Franklinvale is 12 km south.

March Wader Outing:

Location: Manly/Wynnum foreshores
Date: Sunday, 9 March
Contact: John Harris 07 3287 3497
Time: 8.30 a.m.

Info: This outing was arranged at short notice following expressions of interest and a coinciding offer from John, now based in Brisbane, to lead it. It gives the wader-starved the chance to catch up with these happy little wanderers in full breeding plumage before they depart our shores. Allow 2 hours from Toowoomba. Meet John in the car park of the Yacht Club located at the southern end of the Manly Harbour. We'll be visiting the high tide roost at the entrance to the boat harbour, and later will take in the Mangrove Boardwalk at Wynnum, then some sites in the Lytton/Fisherman's Island area where John has done some wader banding.

March Outing:

Location: Flagstone/Stockyard
Date: Sunday, 23 March
Contact: Ann Shore 076 302 307
Time: 7:00 a.m.

Info: From Toowoomba, head down the Flagstone Ck Road and meet at its junction with the Stockyard Ck Road. The junction is clearly signposted and several industrial bins are by the roadside. BYO everything.

March Bus Trip:

Location: Currumbin Bird Sanctuary
Date: Sunday, 23 March
Contact: Barry Kahler 076 979 166 or
 Barb Coyle 076 331 935
Time: 7:00 a.m. from Toowoomba

Info: Des Spittel of Currumbin Bird Sanctuary has invited the Toowoomba Avicultural Society to visit the Sanctuary. Their President, Robert Darr, has in turn extended the invitation to us. Des will be giving a tour of the research facilities. For anyone interested in captive breeding programmes and the efforts being made to conserve some of our rarer birds and animals, the trip will be well worthwhile and a good chance to meet some new people who share a similar passion for birds.

A 50% deposit is required to cover the cost of the bus and at least 35 are needed or the trip will be cancelled. All friends are welcome. The Bus leaves from Peter's Depot, Oakey, at 6.30 a.m. and will pick up Toowoomba people at 7 a.m. at Queen's Park in Margaret St, opposite 4GR. BYO morning tea and afternoon tea. Lunch will be provided. RSVP: 3 March.

COMING EVENTS (continued)

April Slide Presentation: **Location:** Groom Function Room, Toowoomba City Hall
Date: Monday, 14 April
Speaker: Chris Cameron 076 302 411
Subject: "In the bush with a camera"
Time: 7:30 p.m.

Info: Chris Cameron is a professional photographer now based in Toowoomba. He has been a photographer for 26 years and has contributed to the National Photographic Index. Chris is a keen naturalist with a wealth of experience and is a past President of the Chinchilla Field Naturalists. Birds will feature prominently in his presentation, so set the date aside and come along. Visitors are welcome.

April Outing: **Location:** Coal Creek, near Ipswich
Date: Sunday, 27 April
Leader: Ken McKeown 076 303 774

Info: More details next newsletter.

Reminder to Leaders

Leaders should take the Attendance Book and First Aid Kit on all Outings. All attending members and visitors should sign the Attendance book for insurances purposes.

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