



# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS inc.

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

p.o. box 67 - darling heights - 4350

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

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## CLUB OFFICERS :

President -	Michael Atzeni	076 392761	Editor -	Ken McKeown	076 303774
Vice-President.	Jack Lund	076 976390	Records Officer -	Pat McConnell	076 976141
Secretary -	Ann Shore	076 303207	Librarian -	Sharyn Frederiks	076 331169
Treasurer -	Gloria Glass	076 307054	Committee Member -	Michael Hirst	076 325564

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

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**NEWSLETTER No. 256 - June 1997**

## EDITORIAL:

Good reports regarding the large numbers of waterbird recorded at Keong's Lagoon at Oakey last month. On the local scene, let's hope Hood's Lagoon follows Keong's example and starts to attract a few waterbirds. It hasn't had much to boast for a long time. For those of you interested in seeing **Black-chinned Honeyeaters** locally, there's a good chance along Connor's Road at Helidon at present. This species is rarely reported in the area.

It's great to hear of other TBO members' trips both near and further afield. **Margaret Krimmer's** recent **Daintree dalliance** should have you green with envy. Then read about **Ken and Fiona Wells'** wonderful excursion to **Lord Howe Island**.

Closer to home, **Michael Hirst** has two local stories regarding a **heron's** lucky escape from a **Peregrine Falcon** and an update on the **white Black Swan**. We also have the **Pechey/Hampton Outing Report** and **Members' Bird Notes**.

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## PECHEY/HAMPTON OUTING, 25 MAY 1997

Despite the final species list (44) being a little low, the outing was buoyed by a good roll-up of enthusiastic members and some interesting sightings, mostly in two backyards. The first port of call, was Rod and Dianne Smith's property at Pechey. Their 'backyard' was alive with the likes of Rose Robin, Grey Fantail, Speckled Warbler, Yellow Thornbill, Golden Whistler and Superb Fairy-wrens. From the adjoining road everybody had a wonderful look at a group of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, a couple feeding in the Black Wattle, others resting in the trees. Gloria Glass pointed out the distinguishing pink eye-ring of the male birds. It was clearly visible and a feature I was unaware of. You see, you don't have to know everything to lead a bird club outing! An added bonus for Trent Clark - the Yellow-tails were a lifer.

Next we visited the property of Colin Rose on the Esk road near Hampton. It was quite shady and cool along the creek so, unfortunately, things were a bit quiet at the time of our visit. The creek is flanked by remnant rainforest which Colin said managed to escape logging because of the difficult terrain. We picked up a Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Satin Bowerbird, White-naped Honeyeater and Mistletoebird amongst other things. A spring/ summer visit to their property would be well worthwhile, especially if one is prepared to track along the creek. Going by the list of species Colin has recorded for the property, I suspect over time, you would record most of the species found at nearby Ravensbourne N.P. Colin has invited the club to visit there again although the property was for sale at the time. Anyone interested can get Colin's details from me.

A mid-morning stroll through Highfields Falls, although alive with birds, produced mainly White-naped and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. The Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters hex still plagues me, as once again I failed to find them here. I must be about the only one that hasn't seen them at this site. This stop spelt the end of the outing. However those of us with a fetish for mounted birds took the opportunity to examine the display in the Highfields State School's library which we were kindly given access to.

The specimens were collected in the Highfields area in the early 1890's although it is not clear what area this covered exactly. It may have included the areas around Ravensbourne and Cooby Dam which would explain the source of some oddities in the display. But, if collected in the immediate Highfields area, then some marvellous and diverse habitats are now gone, and along with them, the likes of Regent Honeyeater, Spotted Bowerbird, Painted Snipe and Green Catbird. None of these species has been reported from Highfields in modern times to my knowledge.

Michael Atzeni

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### LORD HOWE ISLAND

Lord Howe Island is strikingly beautiful. Its land bird history is a tragic one. Of the fifteen species of land bird common when man first set foot there in 1788, nine are now extinct. The Woodhen, one of the remaining six, numbered only about 30 birds before being pulled back from the brink by a remarkably successful captive breeding and restocking programme during the early 1980s. The population now appears to be stable at something over 200 individuals, according to surveys regularly carried out.

The first land bird we saw was a Blackbird. This introduced species is quite prevalent in the main settlement area in the middle of the island; an unusual pied specimen lives close to where we were staying. The Song Thrush was our next species, then the Emerald Ground Dove and the Lord Howe White Eye and Currawong. Several female Golden Whistlers were seen before sighting the first male bird.

We saw several Woodhens at the base of Mt Lidgbird in the south of the island after an initial fruitless effort of our own. The locals were somewhat blazé about their Woodhen, and a little offhand about directing us. The base of Mt Lidgbird was the most likely place, so we gathered our bicycles and set off at the first opportunity. No Woodhens did we see that day in spite of looking hard and long. The time wasn't wasted, however, as we witnessed thousands of Providence Petrels wheeling and calling endlessly around the summits of Mts Gower and Lidgbird, which are their main breeding venues except for Phillip Island near Norfolk Island.

The very next day, there was a guided bird tour which guaranteed Woodhens. The guide armed himself with handfuls of huge white larvae not unlike witchety grubs, and then proceeded to yell out and make as much noise as he could. Miraculously, Woodhens appeared on all sides from the thick cover of the Kentia Palms and ate the grubs from his hand while we were incredulous and took photographs as fast as we could.

But there was more! Providence Petrels began to plop through the canopy in response, apparently, to the noise. Some stood on heads and shoulders and preened the owner's hair. It was a magic few minutes. All this was a classic example of the wisdom of utilising local knowledge.

The local seabirds were very interesting, even though by early May, when we were there, many had departed on their winter migrations. Many White Terns were still about. They are my favourite. This tern is pure white except for black eyes. In flight, which is most of the time, it is poetry in motion. It has a very elegant shape, and as it wheels and dips in courting pairs and threes, the almost transparent wings add to its magic.

By walking to the headlands on the eastern and northern edges of the island, we were able to see Masked Boobies, Red-tailed Tropicbirds and Common Noddies there and on offshore islands. There were also a few Flesh-footed and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters still about. The nest holes of the former were most conspicuous on the eastern headlands. Indeed one area looked like a bomb site. Flesh-footed Shearwaters were often seen at night on the roads, and even on the verandahs of houses to which they are apparently attracted by the light. They are particularly ungainly on the ground, but beautiful in the air. The same can be said of the Providence Petrel whose courting duets and trios are also delightful to observe. We were very fortunate to happen upon a Red-tailed Tropicbird in a cliff-top nest minding its chick. As it did not budge, I took its picture without upsetting it too much I think.

On the air strip and mainly on the golf course, we saw Whimbrel, Lesser Golden Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Bar-tailed Godwit, Latham's Snipe, Purple Swamphen, Masked Lapwing, White-faced Heron and Pied Oystercatcher. Cattle Egret were common too.

Other landbirds not already mentioned were Australian Magpie-lark, Welcome Swallow, Sacred Kingfisher (quite common) and Australian Kestrels.

Interesting were the Pacific Black Duck and Mallard and their hybrids which frequent the beaches, and even enter the surf in search of food. This has been encouraged no doubt by the practice of visitors and locals regularly feeding the fish in the surf at places like Ned's Beach to see them more easily in their striking numbers, sizes, shapes and colours.

The week spent in this lovely place went all too quickly.

Ken Wells, Warwick.

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### DAHLBERG'S DAINTREE DELIGHT

Birdwatching on the Daintree River at dawn with the mists swirling lazily across the water as the sun rose and only birdcall to break the silence and the odd splash of "old man crocodile" taking a before breakfast swim!

Aided by our capable guide, Chris (Dahlberg), forty-five species were sighted: four species of Kingfisher including the Little Kingfisher (all 12 cm of him), Green Pygmy-Goose, brilliant Yellow-bellied Sunbirds and their nest mixing it with a male Mistletoe Bird, Macleay's Honeyeater and two night birds - Nankeen Night-Heron and the Bush Stone Curlew, male and female Shining Flycatchers and the best of all a Great-billed Heron with a chick. It is interesting to note that the Simpson and Day depiction misses the very evident S bend in the long neck, correctly drawn in Slater.

“Gracious he was, and lofty as a king  
A very gentle water bird”<sup>1</sup>

In all, a memorable experience and if the opportunity presents itself, grab it !!!

N.B. Friends on a trip to Cape Tribulation on the same day sighted a male Cassowary with chicks and a Victoria's Riflebird displaying. We did feel jealous. (Ed. Not as much as the rest of us, Margaret!)

Margaret Krimmer

<sup>1</sup>John Shaw Neilson (from the poem “*A Gentle Water Bird*”)

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## TWO LOCAL BIRD STORIES.

### **A Bad Heron Day**

I was told by Jonathan Beck, who lives at the southern end of Stevenson Street, adjoining the lower entrance to Picnic Point Park, that he thought that he was being attacked by a large bird flapping around his head, as he was watering a freshly laid cement slab.

Eventually he realised that this bird was itself being attacked by a Peregrine Falcon. The victim was White-faced Heron, apparently a juvenile. The falcon flew off when it observed his presence. When Jonathan returned to the house, he subsequently discovered the heron cowering under a table.

### **Ebony and Ivory Swans**

On 03 June, I took Chris Cameron to Lowe's Road Swamp to allow him to photograph the white Black Swan first mentioned in the January TBOI Newsletter No. 251. Originally there were two (their siblings being normally coloured) and they had yellow bills (Outing Report, 24 November 1997).

There is now only a single white swan and it was in the company of a normal black one, feeding among the water lilies by the island. Another Black Swan was concealed in the dense vegetation on the island, probably nesting. The white swan now has a normally coloured bill, dark red with a pale tip. When swimming, its upper thigh appeared to me to be yellow, however when standing on the shore with one foot raised, its lower leg and foot appeared pale pink.

Chris took numerous photos, using telephoto lenses, some showing its raised foot, so I hope that there will be a good record of this unusual bird. I am uncertain of its sex, but it will be interesting if it remains in our area and breeds, to see whether the white strain will continue.

Michael Hirst.

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

Little Corella (2)	14/4/97	Helidon	P.M.
Swamp Harrier	13/4/97	U.S.Q. Campus	P.M.
Plum-headed Finch (6)	5/5/97	Lockyer Ck. Helidon	P.M.&K.W.
Swamp Harrier	26/4/97	Cooby Dam	K.M.,M.T.&N.T.
Cotton Pygmy-goose (7)	27/4/97	Lake Apex	M.T.&N.T.
Hoary-headed Grebe	30/4/97	Keong's Dam	N.T.
Spotted Harrier	30/4/97	Keong's Dam	N.T.
Wandering Whistling Duck (17)	27/4/97	Lowes Rd. Swamp	M.H.,A.S.&A.W.
Peregrine Falcon	7/5/97	Toowoomba Cemetery	N.T.
White-eared Honeyeater	11/5/97	Kooroongarra	N.T.
Spotted Harrier	11/5/97	Millmerran	N.T.
Osprey (1 still present)	from 12/5	Myall Ck, Dalby M.&M.C.W	
Painted Button-quail	13/5/97	Rocky Knob	N.T.
Swamp Harrier (2)	19/5/97	Keong's Dam	A.S.&N.T.
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	28/5/97	Lockyer Ck. Siding	N.T. & G.M.
Western Gerygone	28/5/97	Sutcliffe Rd.	N.T. & G.M.
Australian Pelican (43)	7/6/97	Highfields	P.M.&K.W.
Black-chinned Honeyeater (1)	9/6/97	Connor's Rd, Helidon	L.A.&M.A.
Black-chinned Honeyeater (1)	25/6/97	Connor's Rd, Helidon	K.M.
Grey Goshawk	9/6/97	Redwood Park	M.A.
Yellow Rosella (1 escapee?)	13/6/97	Dalby	M.&M.C.W.
Cotton Pygmy-goose (1)	13/6/97	Lake Broadwater	M.&M.C.W
Australian Pelican (15)	21/6/97	East Toowoomba	T.P.

L.A. L.Atzeni; M.A. M.Atzeni; M.H. M. Hirst; GM G. Maurel, PM. P. McConnell; K.M. K. McKeown; T.P. T. Pacey, AS. A.Shore; M.T. M. Thompson; N.T. N. Thompson; A.W. A.Warbuton; K.W. K.Watson, M.W. Malcolm Wilson, M.C.W Marjorie Wilson.

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## COMING EVENTS

**June Outing:**                      **Location:**    Braemar State Forest No.4  
    **Date:**            Sunday, 29 June  
    **Leader:**        Malcolm Wilson        076 622 353  
    **Time:**            7:30 a.m.

**Info:** This state forest near Kogan is well worth the trip according to Malcolm. Meet Malcolm at the Thomas Jack Park at Dalby. Stop after the second set of traffic lights on the left side of the road. As this state forest is approximately 50 km further on and needs local knowledge, the club will travel in convoy. A good variety of habitat including belah, brigalow, cypress and eucalypts. If time permits, on the way home you can check out Dalby's resident Osprey on Myall Creek. BYO everything.

**July Outing:**                        **Location:**    Helidon  
    **Date:**            Sunday, 27 July  
    **Leader:**        Jack Lund                076 976 390  
    **Time:**            7:30 a.m.

**Info:** Meet at the Helidon Rest Area. The focus will be on bushbirds. Red-capped Robin, Western Gerygone and Black-chinned Honeyeater are possibilities. BYO everything.

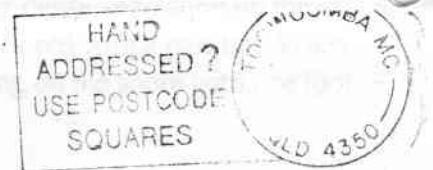
**August Outing**                      **Location:**    Preston  
    **Date:**            31 August  
    **Leader:**        Michael Atzeni 076 392761

**Info:** More in the 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.

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



**SURFACE  
 MAIL**



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