



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS inc.

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

p.o. box 4730 - toowoomba east - 4350

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

CLUB OFFICERS:

President -	Ken McKeown	07 4630 3774	Editor -	Michael Atzeni	07 4639 2761
Vice-president -	Jack Lund	07 4697 6390	Records Officer -	Pat McConnell	07 4697 6141
Secretary -	Michael Hirst	07 4632 5564	Committee Member -	Olive Booth	07 4633 0553
Treasurer -	Gloria Glass	07 4630 7954			

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

NEWSLETTER No. 263 - February 1998

Editorial

The majority of our members would be unfamiliar with the early years of our club which began back in 1975. Therefore, I thought it prudent to include an article recounting the inception of the club and the advent of the local survey area and species list. In doing so, members will see that the aims of the club haven't changed. The club is simply the vehicle for making the most of our collective knowledge and observations in order to achieve some worthwhile aims. The window of opportunity is certainly wide open for anyone who wants to make their bird observations count.

The easiest way to assist the Club's cause is by submitting regular records of the birds you've seen. Traditionally, the focus has been the local survey area which covers the Toowoomba/Helidon region. However, the Executive realises that we are highly likely to remain the only birdwatching club within a much larger region and, therefore, **should take responsibility for other areas as well**, especially areas where active members live, or those we regularly visit ourselves. The areas around Grantham, Gatton, Laidley and Highfields immediately spring to mind. I'm convinced that providing genuine opportunities to build on a species list for an area is the best incentive for members to regularly survey an area and submit their records. It most certainly has been the case for me and others in the past.

I also believe we **should we be collecting more detailed data, at least for some species**. For example, I feel a shortcoming has been that we have not actively sought and collated breeding records. And while a lot can be assumed regarding whether a species breeds in the area or not, we may be way off the mark as I found out recently. A friend from work asked my opinion regarding the steady decline of the resident Grey-crowned Babblers on her Rockmount property. During 19 years of observation, they have apparently never produced offspring, even in good seasons like the present. The original population of around 30 birds has fallen to 6 birds.

I was extremely surprised and concerned, and even more so when I couldn't recall Grey-crowned Babblers successfully breeding either. I've always considered them locally common and in no danger. The possibility that they haven't been breeding has never occurred to me. How about you? This is an example of a species that we can and should devote more attention to. There are a few other species that warrant more attention as well.

In this newsletter, you'll also find a report on the recent **Beginners Outings** to the Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat and Lake Apex. at Gatton, a couple of interesting local articles from Michael Hirst, and more **Members Bird Notes**. Following a suggestion, I have also included details of the **magazines and brochures** received recently which any member can borrow from the library. The library currently resides with the President. Please start using it.

Outing Report - Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat and Lake Apex, Gatton - 24/25 January 1998

There were four separate outings hosted by the club as a promotional exercise. The outings were advertised in the local Toowoomba and Gatton papers and it proved to be a good move as a dozen or so new faces showed up on the Saturday outings. Only one turned up on the Sunday but the poor turn out can be attributed to the inclement weather. As it turned out, there was only an intermittent drizzle in Toowoomba and we recorded 43 species in 2 hours at the Waterbird Habitat. The Toowoomba highlights were the Azure Kingfisher and Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, both seen from the bird-hide. Others really enjoyed watching the Clamorous Reed Warblers; their full-voiced song was a joy to the ears.

The Gatton crew saw a good range of waterfowl. The Baillon's Crake was a bonus for the Sunday group, thanks to a tip-off from new member, Rosalie Ruddock, who saw the crake on the Friday and mentioned it on Saturday's Toowoomba outing.

The "old hands" were able to offer some sound advice on binoculars and the Toowoomba group certainly dispelled the belief that there's not much to be seen at the Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat. Thanks to all those who came along and we hope we see you again. Thanks also to those members who gave a helping hand.

Leaders: Michael Hirst, Michael Atzeni, Pat McConnell, Ken McKeown

Species Lists:

Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat. Australian Wood Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Australasian Grebe, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, White-faced Heron, Straw-necked Ibis, Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Masked Lapwing, Rock Dove, Spotted Turtle-Dove, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Common Koel, Laughing Kookaburra, Sacred Kingfisher, Azure Kingfisher, Superb Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, White-throated Gerygone, Yellow Thornbill, Red Wattlebird, Little Friarbird, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Willie Wagtail, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Figbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, House Sparrow, Red-browed Finch, Mistletoebird, Welcome Swallow, Clamorous Reed-Warbler, Golden-headed Cisticola, Silvereye, Common Myna

Apex Lake, Gatton. Magpie Goose, Plumed Whistling-Duck, Wandering Whistling-Duck, Black Swan, Australian Wood Duck, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Hardhead, Australasian Grebe, Darter, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Great Egret, Intermediate Egret, Cattle Egret, Baillon's Crake, Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Latham's Snipe, Comb-crested Jacana, Black-fronted Dotterel, Masked Lapwing, Crested Pigeon, Pale-headed Rosella, Red-rumped Parrot, Common Koel, Pheasant Coucal, Magpie-lark, Willie Wagtail, Clamorous Reed-Warbler.

Cool, Clear Water

What with the disastrous "controlled" burn-off in Picnic Point Park, and the extremely dry conditions that prevailed until the recent rains, birding on the escarpment had been pretty tough, especially seeking small passerines such as wrens and thornbills. (I guess it had been even tougher for the birds!)

However, in the dry conditions, I found that a visit to the pools below the picnic area at the bottom entrance to Redwood Park can be very productive. I spent half-an-hour sitting quietly there one morning (Sep 17) and was rewarded by a mass of birds.

The word "mass" certainly applied to Silvereyes, which preferred to drink and bathe in a tiny soak among the stones, rather than the bigger rock pools. At times you could cover a dozen or more with one largish hat. The Lewin's and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters were all the time in their ones and twos, and several family parties, including at least one immature, of White-naped Honeyeaters. I was also pleased to see a party of White-throated Honeyeaters, identifiable by their pale blue eye-skin, as well as a more extensive white nape.

Single birds included Brown Cuckoo-dove, a Bar-shouldered Dove, a Pale-headed Rosella and a Spotted Pardalote. I was excited to see a newly-arrived migrant, the lovely Spectacled Monarch. But the visual highlight was the male Regent Bowerbird, leisurely drinking from a stake sloping into the pool, bathing, then drying himself on an overhanging branch. I even had him and the Brown Cuckoo-dove in the lens of my binoculars at the same time.

When conditions are dry, do come and sit quietly if you can spare the time. And bring a plastic bag! I removed an armful of litter as a thank-you for the wonderful show I had witnessed. Perhaps if we keep the gully clean, it will discourage people from throwing their rubbish in from the picnic area above.

Michael Hirst.

Pedestrian Crossing Needed?

On September 29th, I was driving along the New England Highway towards Mt Kynoch when the car in front of me slowed to a stop. I saw a pair of Wood Duck, with about eight ducklings, solemnly marching across the up section of the road in tight formation. A small truck alongside us also stopped, and the family safely reached the concrete barrier that separates the up and down sections.

I decided to get out to help them would be a) dangerous and b) most likely to panic them and lead them to disaster.

They crossed the road within a yard or two of the end of the barrier onto a ledge where they were in some shelter. On return, and later that day, when I again took the same route, there were no signs of casualties on either section of the highway: so I assume that they safely crossed to the scrub on the other side of the road.

A pleasing display of courtesy and consideration for other users of the road.

Michael Hirst

Where do TBO Newsletters Hang Out at the USQ?

The editorial last month regarding access to the newsletter by the general public prompted a response from USQ Librarian, Kaylene Reiken. Kaylene advised that the club's newsletter is located in the Main Library of the USQ Library at 598.299433 P1. The latest newsletter is put on display for 3 weeks and is then shelved. Thanks Kaylene and glad to see you read the newsletter.

Some Club Nostalgia and Thoughts for the Future

Personally, one of the most enjoyable aspects about being involved with the club, has been my involvement in adding new species to the local checklist since the early '80s. Of course, it was much easier to do so back then, when there were still many expected species outstanding, but it was always a big thrill. From the initial tally of 131 species in 1975, the list has more than doubled to 287 confirmed species at the present time. The early years of the club hold countless, fond memories for me and many others. A trip down Memory Lane is well in order and long overdue, not just for those involved at the time, but also for the benefit of newcomers to the club.

The club came into being as the Toowoomba Bird Club following a meeting called by the founder of the club, Bill Jolly, on the 6 October 1975. The aims of the club are expounded in the first news-sheet:

- to build up a good understanding of the bird population of the region
- to encourage others to participate in the activity of watching and enjoying birds
- to jointly grow in collective understandings through a pooling of knowledge and experience, and above all
- to gather, record and publish some serious data on the ornithology of Toowoomba.

Bill had traditionally maintained personal six-mile lists wherever he lived, based on a arbitrary circle within a 6 mile radius of his home. Toowoomba was no exception and his list of 131 species, compiled over the previous two years, was adopted as a starting list in October 1975. For uniformity, the sixteen founding members agreed to set the boundary to the area within a 10 km radius of the Post Office. They then set out to build on it.

In 1977 the Club initiated a routine monthly recording system to be taken on by interested members. These records were to be consolidated and reported quarterly in the newsletter. The advent of the RAOU Atlas scheme led to a redefinition of the survey area. From January 1978, we adopted the two adjacent 10 minute grid blocks located on either side of the line of 152 degrees longitude which runs down the eastern boundary of Redwood park. The reporting system then also entailed collating the monthly records onto the separate recording system required for the Atlas scheme and, by

agreement of the dozen or so contributors, submitting the collective data under the Club's name. Several of the club's more notable records are evident in the Atlas which was published in 1996. It was rather unfortunate for those who contributed that the Club was not included in the list of contributors.

By the time, Bill Jolly and his family moved to Tasmania in 1980, the number of species identified in the local area had grown to 204, and all of the original 131 species had been separately confirmed by other members. I joined the Club in 1979, after procrastinating for nearly 4 years - why, I waited so long I'll never know. While I was very green, I was young and single, and hopelessly hooked ever since I attended my first outing with the club, which happened to be Redwood Park. I quickly became very familiar with the survey area. Redwood Park and Hood's Lagoon became favourite haunts and you could expect to find me at one or the other most weekends. Many of the new species I have been involved in were seen at Redwood or Hood's but more about that another time.

New areas, base lists and more fun for the future

There is an ulterior motive behind all this reminiscing. You may recall a while ago, I called for members to nominate new areas they would like to survey. It was prompted by my feeling that we cannot expect to sustain the same level of interest in our current survey area because it is so well documented and new species are few and far between. Despite the poor response, the executive is still strongly in favour of covering additional areas and, with the impending second Atlas, view this as a perfect reason to bite the bullet and do so in the near future.

I have no doubts a lot of positive things will follow. It will essentially enable us to recreate "the good old days" in other areas. We would kick off with base lists for completely new areas, mostly proximate to Toowoomba, say Grantham, Gatton, Highfields-Cabarlah, Gowrie Junction-Oakey, but perhaps satellite areas too, like Warwick and Dalby. We already have members either living or regularly observing birds in these areas so why not take full advantage of the situation and make it interesting for everyone by maintaining separate lists for these areas too.

I'm sure it will make life a lot more interesting for the Records Officer too, not to mention the Editor! Furthermore, this may just be the ticket to attracting more members from the country centres such as Dalby and Warwick, where the birdlife is sufficiently different and certainly worthy of monitoring. Members might want to volunteer their personal list for an area as the base list. Areas should be delineated by coordinates to remove any ambiguity.

In no way am I expecting these new areas would be covered as thoroughly as the current survey area, but I would expect that the species recorded in those areas are documented in the newsletter for future reference.

Meeting for interested parties

We propose to meet informally to discuss the areas and base lists to be adopted. If you would like to be involved in the discussions please contact me, Pat McConnell or Ken McKeown by the end of the month so a date can be arranged.

Michael Atzeni

Members' Bird Notes

All sightings are submitted by members of the Toowoomba Bird Observers. Accuracy not vouched for by TBO. Please check with observer(s) before citing.

Chestnut Teal	17/08/97	Murphy's Ck Rd, via Postman's Ridge	NT
Eastern Rosella	25/08/97	Black Gully, Toowoomba	NT, MT
Squatter Pigeon	28/08/97	"Nyora" via Karara	NT
Black-necked Stork	29/12/97	Karrasch's Lagoon, via Grantham	KM
Great Crested Grebe (nesting)	01/01/98	dam near Forestry Rd, Gatton	KM
Southern Boobook	11/01/98	Highfields Falls	KM
Musk Duck	11/01/98	Cooby Dam	KM
Noisy Pitta	11/01/98	Ravensbourne NP	KM
Black-faced Monarch	11/01/98	Ravensbourne NP	KM
Ground Cuckoo-shrike	13/01/98	Oakey	NT
Baillon's Crake (3)	23/01/98	Apex Lake, Gatton	PM

Azure Kingfisher	24/01/98	Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat	Various
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	24/01/98	Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat	Various
Albert's Lyrebird	25/01/98	nr Carr's Lookout, Queen Mary Falls	KM, NT
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo ^a	25/01/98	QWRI, Rockville	OB
Black Falcon	27/01/98	E. of Keong's Lagoon, Oakey	GM, NT, HW
Barred Cuckoo-shrike	11/02/98	Prince Henry Dr, Toowoomba	NT
Regent Bowerbird	11/02/98	Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat	NT
Eastern Whipbird	11/02/98	Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat	NT

MA	M.Atzeni	O&JB	O&J Booth	JG	J.Grant	JH	J.Hadley
MH	M.Hirst	PM	P.McConnell	KM	K.McKeown	GM	G.Maurel
MT	M.Thompson	NT	N.Thompson	HW	H.Wilson	MW	Malcolm Wilson

^a 5 birds seen 25-27 & 29 January. Heard during the preceding week. 31 Jan & 2 Feb, 7 birds seen, but none seen or heard since then.

Library Additions

The club receives various newsletters and brochures and all members are welcome to borrow them. In addition we have acquired numerous bird books over the years. Contact Ken McKeown for any of the following (including any back issues) you would like to borrow.

- **The Bird Observer (BOCA's N/L)** - Feb '98 (Nankeen Kestrels, Blue-breasted Wrens, Stone-curlews, Black-tailed Gull, Blue Rock-Thrush, Coate's W.A., Christmas and Cocos Is. Wildlife Tours brochure)
- **Destination Management** brochure re Greek Birdwatching Expedition in May 1998. Ph 07 3359 6651
- **Fassifern Field Naturalists N/L** - Nov/Dec '97
- **Galah (In-house N/L of Birds Australia)** - 25 Jan'98 (incl. article on Bird names, Feb-Apr'98 activities)
- **IBOC News (Circular of the Illawarra Bird Observers' Club Inc)** - Feb'98.
- **Kimberley Birdwatching Wildlife & Natural History Tours N/L**, July-Dec'97 (Mouth-watering reports!)
- **Queensland Ornithological Society N/L** - Feb 98
- **Ramsar Watch Bulletin** - Nov '97 (incl. Jabiluka Mine, Towra Point articles)
- **Suncoast Bird Observers Group N/L** - Nov/Dec'97
- **Urimbirra (Chinchilla Field Nats N/L)** - Jan'98
- **The Web (N/L of the Threatened Species Network)** - Vol.2(1), 1997 (Coxen's Fig Parrot Search)

New Members

The club warmly welcomes the following new members:

- **The Ruddock Family**, "Grevillea robusta", Derrymore, MS 2131, Toowoomba 4350
- **Mac Stevenson**, 3 Evonrise St, Toowoomba 4350
- **Beryl Thomas**, 139 Perth St, Toowoomba 4350

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and the return of

- **Nancy Gooding**, MSF 508, Warwick, 4370

"May many fine birding moments come your way."

COMING EVENTS

February Outing**Location:**

Gatton area

Date:

Sunday, 22 February

Leader:

Ken McKeown

07 4630 3774

Time:

7.30 am

Info: Meet at the Apex Lake kiosk, Gatton. Expect to see a mixture of waterbirds and bush birds around the Gatton area. BYO everything.

March Outing**Location:**

Moreton Bay

Date:

Sunday, 29 March

Leader:

Michael Atzeni

07 4639 2761

Time:

8.00 am

Info: Allow a 2 hr drive from Toowoomba. Meet in the carpark of the Manly Yacht Club. Bring a telescope if you have one. We will be visiting the mangroves and foreshores around Lota, Manly, Wynnum and Lytton. Expect to see a wide variety of waders in breeding plumage, as they prepare to depart our shores.

April Outing**Location:**

Bowenville

Date:

Sunday, 26 April

Leader:

Michael Hirst

07 4632 5564

May Outing**Location:**

Peach Trees State Forest Park (nr Jimna)

Date:

Saturday, 30 May

Leader:

Wes & Norma Sturdee

07 4632 6328

Info: Camping facilities area available if you wish to stay overnight. Wes & Norma have camped there often.

June Outing**Location:**

Helidon/Grantham

Date:

Saturday, 27 June

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 insurance purposes.

If undeliverable return to
Toowoomba Bird Observers Inc
PO Box 4730
TOOWOOMBA EAST Q 4350

**SURFACE
 MAIL**



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