



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

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

NEWSLETTER No. 267 - June 1998

Editorial

It is with regret that I report that our Secretary, Michael Hirst, has had to resign due to his wife's recent illness. Michael joined the Executive in 1996 and has been a tremendous ambassador for TBO, particularly through his involvement with the U3A "Birding for Beginners" course, and his wide network of friends and contacts. On behalf of the club, I express our sincere thanks, Michael, and we hope Margaret makes a good recovery. Fortunately, we have Nicci Thompson back on the Executive as Michael's replacement and we thank her for her willingness at short notice.

Four members attended the recent Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Workshop (16/17 May) presented by B.I.R.O. representatives. I poked my head in for the Saturday morning introductory session, and was glad to score some information brochures for anyone interested. I intend writing a related article in a future newsletter.

This month we have the Peach Trees outing report and a report from Nicci Thompson on the Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot Surveys she and others undertook in the Coolmunda Dam, Cement Mills and Gore region. It is the intention of Nicci and others to make a concerted effort this year to locate both species in SE Qld. I hope other members are inspired to help seek out these two threatened species as well. David Geering, the Regent HE Project Co-ordinator has provided me with details of the Regent Honeyeater banding scheme. It is imperative that anyone who sees any birds, also notes the banding pattern, if any, on the legs and reports it to David ASAP. This will help David in piecing together their movements and whereabouts.

The Grey-crowned Babbler recording sheets promised for this newsletter have been postponed while I collate some data from published research containing known locations and group sizes in SE Qld. However, there's no reason you can't start monitoring now. This project is a long term one and not difficult. Basically, for each group of babblers you decide to monitor, simply note the locality, group size and land tenure, and try to define the extent of their territory. Keep a count of birds in the group say once or twice a year, bearing in mind the breeding season is about July-January. An idea of the age structure of the group can be gathered by noting the eye colour, which is yellow in adults, dark-brown in juveniles and intermediate in birds 2-2.5 years old. Any evidence of successful breeding should be documented accordingly. Hopefully, you can establish that the GCBs in your patch are secure.

Some interesting Helidon sightings have recently filtered in, including White-plumed Honeyeaters and a female Flame Robin in the garden of former member, Bill Jolly, and Grey-fronted Honeyeaters at the Helidon Dip, seen by John Hadley and Pat Solomon. Hopefully we'll get the latter on our June outing. For the twitchers, there was a Franklin's Gull along the river around Brisbane's Southbank, first seen 20/4/98 and last seen on Monday, before the big freeze set in!

Outing Report – Peach Trees State Forest, 30 May 1998

Although this outing was scheduled for the Saturday, my husband, Wes, and I, and Nicci and Graham Thompson were fortunate enough to be able to camp from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, which enabled us to observe more birds over an extended period.

Because of its location and pleasant surroundings, this park has grown in popularity. Most weekends see the park swarming with weekend and day visitors which tends to scare off some of the shy birds, but nevertheless our group of eleven was rewarded with the sights and calls of nearly 60 species.

In the solitude of Friday afternoon, I'd found a delightful retreat down by Yabba Creek where I was able to observe a beautiful Azure Kingfisher perching on an overhanging branch, then diving into the water to catch an unsuspecting prey.

Whilst there, I also saw a White-throated Treecreeper, Variegated Fairy-wrens, White-browed Scrubwrens, a Brown Gerygone, Eastern Yellow Robin and the gregarious Red-browed Finches.

However, most satisfying to me personally was being able to see a Varied Sitella, clinging to the bark of a tree head-up, head-down and sideways. Apparently the bird is not uncommon, but to date he'd eluded me.

Saturday was one of those perfect Autumn days with clear blue skies and just a slight crispness to the air which made bush-walking so enjoyable, so at 9 a.m. our enthusiastic group set off on our first circuitous track which took us through a variety of forest, including sclerophyll and a rainforest characterised by ancient hoop and bunya pines.

Our president, Ken McKeown, advised us that an internet contact had informed him that he had seen Black-breasted Button Quail in this area, so all eyes were peeled for this elusive species. However, even though their presence was confirmed by the numerous plates they'd excavated in the forest litter, none were seen, much to our disappointment.

Further along the track, we noticed a large group of smaller birds feeding in some flowering eucalypts high in the canopy, and close observation by some of our group identified Spotted and Striated Pardalotes, Silvereyes, Weebills, Brown and Striated Thornbills, White-throated and White-naped Honeyeaters and an Eastern Spinebill. It was here that the expertise of the long established birders came in handy, as some of the species are difficult for relative newcomers, such as ourselves, to identify, particularly with one's head at an angle of almost 90 degrees to one's body.

After a walk of nearly three hours - almost double the time it takes normal bushwalkers - we returned across the creek to the picnic and camping area for a welcome lunch break and a plan of attack for the afternoon. Refreshed and strengthened, we set off for a shorter walk to explore downstream Yabba Creek where Bell Miners proliferated, almost to the exclusion of everything else. Their aggressive behaviour was particularly evident as we observed a large group of them seemingly attacking a determined couple of Blue-faced Honeyeaters which had apparently invaded their territory and which were being given the big brush-off in no uncertain terms.

Emerging from the creek, we noticed an excited group of walkers who called our attention to a green tree snake which had been sunning itself on the road and which had taken umbrage at being disturbed by a passing car, and had reared its head in a threatening manner. Obviously it posed no threat as it was non-poisonous, but it was interesting to see its reaction when cornered.

As it was nearing dusk, our day-trippers prepared to leave after a short drive to the Jimna Fire Tower, the tallest in Queensland. A few of our more athletic members climbed the 241 steps to the viewing platform and were rewarded with a 360-degree panoramic view, well worth the effort.

After dark, Nicci, Graham, Wes and I set off by car for some birdwatching by spotlight, but most of the night birds seemed to have retired early, and we only saw a Barn Owl and a Dusky Moorhen, and heard the distinctive hooting of the Southern Boobook, as we drifted off to sleep. A great weekend.

Norma Sturdee

Species List:

Little Pied Cormorant, White-faced Heron, Brown Goshawk, Dusky Moorhen, Masked Lapwing, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Little Lorikeet, Australian King-Parrot, Crimson Rosella, Pale-headed Rosella, Southern Boobook, Barn Owl, Azure Kingfisher, Laughing Kookaburra, White-throated Treecreeper, Variegated Fairy-wren, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Yellow-throated Scrubwren, Weebill, Brown Gerygone, Brown Thornbill, Striated Thornbill, Noisy Friarbird, Little Friarbird, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Bell Miner, Noisy Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, White-throated Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Scarlet Honeyeater, Eastern Yellow Robin, Eastern Whipbird, Varied Sitella, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Magpie-lark, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, Figbird, Dusky Woodswallow, Grey Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, Regent Bowerbird, Satin Bowerbird, Paradise Riflebird, Red-browed Finch, Mistletoebird, Silvereye, Common Myna,

Queensland search for Regent Honeyeaters and Swift Parrots

Twice yearly the Co-ordinators of the Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot Recovery Efforts call for volunteers to make a special search over two days throughout south-eastern Australia for these two threatened species. The 9-10 May weekend was the first of these searches for 1998.

Early on Saturday morning Ken McKeown, Derek and Helen Wilson, and I left Toowoomba armed with numerous maps, Ken's newly acquired GPS, a list of historical sightings and lots of enthusiasm. We knew our chances of seeing either species were fairly slim but birdos are supreme optimists. The Co-ordinators also emphasised the importance of zero reports in the big picture. It was a beautiful crisp morning as we headed south-west to Karara to join up with Lorraine Welsh, a lady with a wealth of local knowledge.

We spent most of the morning at two locations. The first on the banks of the McIntyre Brook on "Glenelg" where the Regent Honeyeater had nested in 1996 and where Swift Parrots had been recorded in the same year. We stood beneath the Yellow Box in which the Regents had nested but by that time there had been little blossom and we weren't in luck. The second site near "Cooינו" homestead was another location where they had been seen but it was even drier and there were few birds of any kind.

We didn't see either of our target species but with Lorraine's help we acquired a good understanding of the terrain. After a long dry period, the area recently had rain and many of the Forest Red Gum and some Yellow Box were carrying good bud. The Mugga Ironbark stands in the area also flower in early winter, so we feel a visit later in the year may be appropriate.

Having decided to return later in the season, we moved on to Coolmunda for a latish lunch and some birding. Once again local knowledge proved invaluable when Lorraine took us to a camping area that provided excellent views of the shallower water and the birds that inhabited it. It is also home to a thriving colony of White-winged Fairy-wrens. As well as the more common species on the water, we observed Wandering Whistling-Duck, a beautiful russet Black-tailed Godwit in full breeding plumage, Red-necked Avocet and Gull-billed Tern. Lorraine left us after lunch and we spent some time around Coolmunda before driving north-east up the Mosquito Creek Rd.

It was late afternoon when we left and the day closed in quickly, but not before we found a pair of Blue Bonnets feeding on the road verge. As the sun went down through layers of crimson clouds in a salmon sky we drove further into the Box-Ironbark woodlands along a narrow dirt road. When we stopped at "Nyora" to take a reading Helen and Derek were relieved to know that we were doing so for our information, and not because we were hopelessly lost in the darkening maze of country roads, where reassuring homestead lights are few and far between and road signage is scanty at the best.

Over steaming mugs of coffee in Millmerran, Derek commented that it had been a twelve-hour day but enjoyable nonetheless. That summed it up for all of us. The next official survey is 8-9 August. Note it in your diary now and join us. It is a fun day and in the words of Simon Kennedy, the Swift Parrot Project Officer Co-ordinator, **WE KNOW THEY'RE OUT THERE SOMEWHERE, ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS FIND THEM.**

Nicci Thompson

Colour-banding Scheme for Regent Honeyeaters

The spate of Regent Honeyeater sightings in the Sydney area has created much interest with deep paths being worn to several of the sites. Of considerable interest was the sighting of two colour-banded Regents in the Castlereigh Nature Reserve, near Richmond, in May.

I was first alerted to the presence of a colour-banded bird by Edwin Vella who found the birds on the national Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot survey weekend, 9-10 May. Although the details were incomplete, sufficient information was available to determine that this bird came from the Capertee Valley. Since then details of two colour-banded birds were obtained from the Sydney "Birdline". Unfortunately, the details are, at this time, also not complete but this time the missing information was critical.

It is hoped that the following information will assist observers of Regent Honeyeaters in recording the appropriate information when colour-banded birds are encountered.

In most cases banded Regent Honeyeaters will carry a metal band (silver) and a colour band on one leg and two colour bands on the other leg. If all bands are recorded correctly it is possible to positively identify the individual bird. It can take some time to get all colours and be sure of their position if the birds are actively foraging in the canopy but it can be, and regularly is, achieved. It is important to record which colours are on which leg. This is best written down immediately, as it is easy to become confused. Please record colours thus: Left leg: x over metal Right leg y over z. These are the BIRD'S right and left. Note that the metal band can be on either of the legs. The leg carrying the metal band and the colour with it identifies the location of banding, and combined with the other two colours the birds exact identity.

The Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team is seeking as much information as possible to build up a more complete picture of the movements of these birds. It is not necessarily enough to say that a Regent Honeyeater moved from the Capertee Valley to Castlereigh Nature Reserve. By getting the full identity of the bird we are able to put together complete life histories of individuals. Will these birds return to the Capertee Valley or turn up elsewhere to breed in 1998? This question, and many more, has the potential to be answered if we can identify individuals.

Colour-banding has already provided good information about pre- and post-breeding movements within the Capertee Valley, some evidence for fidelity in breeding sites as well as some quite dramatic changes in breeding sites between years. In addition to the Capertee Valley, Regent Honeyeaters are being individually colour-banded in northern NSW, Chiltern in Victoria and, in 1995, at Canberra.

If anyone has any information about the location of colour-banded Regents could they please contact David Geering, Regent Honeyeater Recovery Coordinator, P.O. Box 500, East Melbourne, Vic. 3002. Phone: (03) 9412 4297 or Freecall 1800 621 056.

What's Your Vote?

In the Collier's Standard Dictionary, for the definition of "Politician", the following were given: -

1. One engaged in politics, especially professionally.
2. USA One who engages in politics for personal or partisan aims rather than for reasons of principle; also, a political schemer or opportunist.
3. UK One skilled in the science of government or politics; a statesman.
4. The White-eyed Vireo; so called because it feathers its nest with bits of newspaper or whatever comes easily.

Being a birder, I like number four.

[Taken from a Birding-Aus posting from David Siems, Sydney. Ed]

Suspended Bathing Beauties

On 18 March we had an amazing spectacle outside our Rockville home. Following a shower of rain and a storm, the Galahs were on the power lines upside down and having a bath. I counted 50 but there may have been further down the road. I'd never seen them having a bath like that before, but I had heard that some birds do that in the rain. Someone told me they had seen Cockatiels taking a bath the same way.

Olive Booth

Rare Bird Report

Species: Grey Falcon *Falco hypoleucos*

Location: Hood's Lagoon, Helidon

Date: 11 April 1998 (not the 12th as mistakenly reported in the Member's Bird Notes, April'98 N/L)

Time: 11.00 am

Optics: 8x30 Zeiss Binoculars.

Conditions: Visibility was good and the bird was approximately at a height of about 200 metres. It was observed for several seconds flying rapidly overhead.

Description: The dark primaries and otherwise pale grey/white underparts, and pointed wings distinguish this from any other species. When the bird stooped, the darker grey upperwings could be seen.

Pat McConnell.

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.

Grey-crowned Babbler	01/04/98	Preston	KK
Pale-headed Rosella (group of 36)	10/04/98	Gowrie Junction	DB, GG
Whistling Kite	17/04/98	Coolmunda Dam	KM
Restless Flycatcher	17/04/98	Coolmunda Dam	KM
Black-fronted Plover (14)	17/04/98	Greenup	KM
Red-kneed Dotterel (16)	17/04/98	Greenup	KM
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	18/04/98	17 Mile Rd, Helidon	KM
Freckled Duck (2)	04/05/98	Hood's Lagoon, Helidon	MA, PM
Freckled Duck (4)	19/05/98	Atkinson's Dam	JH
Peregrine Falcon (1)	23/05/98	Mt Lofty, Toowoomba	MA
White-breasted Sea Eagle (2 adults)	30/05/98	Hood's Lagoon, Helidon	MA
Diamond Firetail (1 male)	04/06/98	Goondiwindi	DB, GG
Red-capped Robin (1 male)	06/06/98	Gowrie Junction	DB, GG
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (6)	21/06/98	flying NW over Gowrie Junction	DB, GG
Red-necked Avocet (1)	21/06/98	Helidon Spa, Helidon	MA, KM
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (3)	21/06/98	Iredale	MA, KM
MA M. Atzeni	JH	H. Hadley	PM P. McConnell
GG G. Glass	DB	D. Beal	KM K. McKeown

New Members

The club warmly welcomes the following new member:

- Jennifer Redding, PO Box 49, Darling Heights 4350

COMING EVENTS

June Outing

Location: Helidon/Grantham
Date: Saturday, 27 June
Contact: Michael Atzeni 07 4639 2761
Time: 7.30 am

Info: Meet at the Helidon Picnic Area. Expect a good assortment of waterbirds and bushbirds. BYO telescope and lunch.

July Outing

Location: Upper Flagstone Ck/Preston
Date: Saturday, 25 July
Leader: Keith Kerr 07 4635 6978
Time: 7.30 am

Info: Drive south along Ruthven Street (New England Highway) and meet at the power sub-station, just before the turnoff to the Upper Flagstone Ck Road, approx 1 km south of the Nelson St intersection with Ruthven St.

August Outing

Location: Sundown National Park
Date: Saturday, 29 August
Leader: Peter Haselgrove 02 6737 5235

Info: Peter is the Ranger stationed at the park and is very conversant with the wildlife of the region.

September Outing

Location: Coolmunda Dam
Date: Saturday, 26 September
Leader: Nicci Thompson 02 6737 5235

Info: For an idea of what to expect, see Nicci's report in this newsletter. This will also be another opportunity to locate the Regent Honeyeaters if they return to the area.

Guided Field Tour of
Downs' Vegetation

Coach departs: USQ Education Centre
Date: 10 October (8.30am -5:30pm)
Leader: Ian Menkins 07 4632 1505

Info: The tour aims to bring together people interested in the native vegetation of the Darling Downs, to raise community awareness of remnant vegetation, and to produce a publication for future reference. Trip \$25, incl. lunch.

Annual Species Census

Date: 24/25 October

Reminder: 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
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