



# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS inc.

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

**P.O. Box 4730, Toowoomba East 4350**

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

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## 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 -	Nicci Thompson	07 4634 3074	Committee Member -	Olive Booth	07 4633 0553
Treasurer -	Gloria Glass	07 4630 7054			

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

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## NEWSLETTER No. 270 - September 1998

### Editorial

There were some interesting sightings reported this month. They include sightings of **Swift Parrots** at Rockville and Withcott, an adult **Brahminy Kite** at **Apex Lake, Gatton**, and **Turquoise Parrots** seen for the first time in the Glencairn area near Forest Hill. **Blue-winged Kookaburras** have been seen regularly at Lake Clarendon, lately. This species, although resident in the Lockyer, is not usually easy to find.

Nine people enjoyed the **Sundown National Park** outing. Thanks to Peter Haselgrove, the resident ranger, for leading the outing. I'm yet to receive an outing report from one of the lucky attendees, but I did hear Richard Thomis scored six lifers! Following the outing, the TBO decided to write to the Stanthorpe Shire Council requesting that signs to Sundown National Park and the Ranger's Headquarters be placed next to the Texas sign on the New England Highway.

The **Annual General Meeting** will be held at Toowoomba East State School on Monday evening, **12<sup>th</sup> October**. Please note the date in your diary and come along. The guest speakers will be **Rachel McFadyen** and **Judy McCaughley** from **Department of Natural Resources**. They will be promoting the establishment of nest boxes for **Barn Owls** on **Darling Downs** farms for controlling mice numbers.

Nicci Thompson now has some **Atlas kits and registration forms**. The kits are self-explanatory. Completed record sheets should be returned to Nicci. This will allow her to closely monitor the coverage given to our area. To ensure our patch is surveyed thoroughly, we will be planning outings to cover different grids in our area. I envisage periodic updates of our local efforts will be reported in this newsletter.

A nomination form for Executive positions as well as your Annual Membership renewal form accompanies this newsletter. Included in the newsletter is the first in a series of articles on a **trip to Botswana** by Gloria Glass and Diana Beal, **Member's Bird Notes**, and details of a proposed survey on **David Fleay's impact on the community**. Due to a shortage of space, the promised 1997 October species census report will be held over till next month.

Good birding and don't forget to **note the arrival dates of the Spring/Summer migrants** and advise Pat McConnell, our Records Officer. Many are already back.

## Botswana Birdwatching, 26 June to 14 July 1998 (Part 1).

(This is a shortened version of the article. Paragraphs about animals have generally been shortened to, e.g., "... elephants ...". Please e-mail us (g.glass@bigpond.com) if you would like the full version of 10 pages. If you would prefer the 21-page version, say so. Also if you would like the full bird list.)

After our long haul across the Indian Ocean to Johannesburg and the short flight to Victoria Falls, our safari guide met us and off we went south. We had booked a 12-day participation camping safari with *Wilderness Dawning*. Brodie Pool was our guide, driver, leader, caterer and cook extraordinaire.

On our way south from Vic Falls, through wooded country in Zimbabwe, we saw a few giraffe, several herds of elephants, some as many as 25 individuals, mothers and calves obviously, two families of baboons and a party of Ground Hornbills. These latter are endearing birds, standing about 40 cm tall, totally black feathers, with red wattles around their faces. As they flew away from us, white wing feathers were revealed, much like Australian choughs, though larger. (During our last dawn awakening in Botswana ... listening to the dawn call of these lovely birds.)

We entered Botswana and the first few days were across the sand plains. ...description of Botswana ... Each early morning and late afternoon we went on a game drive. ...explanation. We stayed the first few nights at parks at Nata and in the Nxai park, and spent the days travelling around the various pans. These are waterless at this time of the year. However, in a few places, underground water is piped into pools for the animals. ... giraffes.

Brodie had started identifying birds for us along the way. The Ostriches were easy! but we needed help with the Crowned Plover and Red-crested Korhaan. We guessed at the horn-bills, of which we saw a lot of Red-billed and Yellow-billed throughout our journey. These insect-eaters are plentiful and sit on the ground, rather the way magpies do in Australia, but not so upright.

Although we used the tarred road from Vic Falls to Nata and on to Maun, much of our travel through the pans was on bumpy sand tracks, usually at unregistrable speed, but sometimes we went as fast as 20 miles per hour! This gave us plenty of time to look out for animals and birds. Brodie (as well as all the local guides we were with later) was very knowledgeable about birds, as well as animals.

We saw many species of birds, notably a Crimson-breasted Shrike, which dodged around the lower branches of the shrubby trees. Its wings are black, with white flashes, but when we all saw the rich crimson of its breast and belly, there were gasps of delight. We also saw our first (and only, it turned out) Secretarybird. This bird was striding away from us, so our view was not that marvellous. They stand about 50 or 60 cm high and kill snakes by stamping on them. We also watched a pair of Black Korhaans, the male resplendent with a lovely large white spot on each side of his black head and neck. He postured and displayed to his apparently uninterested hen, moving his neck into an S-bend and with his head feathers fluffed out. We saw a couple of other korhaan species in this area, as well as many of the largest member of their tribe, the Kori Bustard.

The next day we saw more Ostriches, our first Bataleur, an unusual-looking bird of prey with a very short tail which we learnt to recognise in flight by its wings held in a shallow V, somewhat like a bat, and more of the really beautiful African starlings which we had been seeing every day. We saw three species, all of which had iridescent blue plumage, sometimes in mixed flocks where one species looked shiningly black and another a beautiful rich, shining blue.

Diana and I flew further into the Okavango delta for a few days, staying at Semetsi (A Place of Water). For one of our ventures at Semetsi, we went in a mokoro (flat-bottomed local canoe) poled by guide. We travelled down-stream to the hippo pool. We identified some birds around our tent as Heuglin's Robin and Kurrichane Thrush; both were birds the size of a plump (Australian) Grey Shrike-thrush, the robin with a brilliantly coloured rufous belly while the thrush had rufous flanks. There was also a mob of Arrow-marked Babblers chattering around the place.

(To be continued)

Gloria Glass & Diana Beal

## Atlas of Australian Birds Project

This is an invitation to join us on the Atlas Project. It is fun and it will help our birds.

Since the completion of the original Atlas Project (conducted between 1977 and 1981) in which some of you were involved there have been many changes to habitats across the country. At least 10 million hectares of native vegetation have been cleared throughout Australia. The changes brought about by this, together with the effectiveness of re-vegetation projects, need to be monitored and so we have the new Atlas Project and an opportunity for us to be involved as volunteers.

The New Atlas project, which has been funded by Environment Australia's Bushcare and Wetlands Programs, will run for four years (1998 to 2002). It aims to:

- Collect information on the distribution and abundance of Australia's bird species.
- Involve the community in the conservation and monitoring of birds.
- Identify important bird areas.

The data will be used to:

- Compare the current distribution and abundance of birds to the previous Atlas.
- Assess the value of tree planting and re-vegetation programs to birds.
- Monitor long-term changes in habitat and the effect of these changes on birds.
- Help to establish sustainable land-use systems.

### As a TBO member how do you get involved?

You can contact Birds Australia directly or your local Regional Organizer (I am doing that job for this area with the support of the TBO executive). A Network of Regional Organizers has been set up to provide Atlas kits, blank data sheets and advice on how to Atlas, and should be your first point of contact if you have a question regarding the project.

### What Skills and Equipment will you need?

Anyone with a pair of binoculars, a field guide and an interest in birds can take part in the Atlas. All you need to do is make a list of the birds you see when you're out birdwatching and then fill out an Atlas Record Form.

You can make a bird list for your garden, favourite wetland or local park. You can do Atlas surveys while on holidays or when travelling. When you decide to register as an Atlasser you will receive a kit that explains in detail the different types of surveys that you can choose to do. It is very flexible.

### Keeping in touch

Birds Australia will produce a quarterly Atlas newsletter which will keep you informed of the progress of the project, give you preliminary results, and identify areas of Australia that are under-visited. If you send in a *Record Form* in the preceding 12 months you will automatically receive the newsletter. In this region, the TBO will keep you informed of what is happening with the project and alert you to areas that need to be surveyed. It is also proposed to plan some club outings to areas that need surveying so that it can be a joint effort.

**If you are interested, at whatever level, please get in touch with me.**

Nicci Thompson

Address: 21 Welcombe Ave., Ph: 07 4634 3074  
Toowoomba 4350 Email: [artamus@ozemail.com.au](mailto:artamus@ozemail.com.au)

## Renewal of Membership

Yes, it's that time of the year again. We hope you've enjoyed the past year as a member of the club and look forward to your continued membership. If applicable, please complete and return the attached form with your subscription.

## 1998 Annual General Meeting, 12<sup>th</sup> October

The Annual General Meeting is on Monday evening, 12<sup>th</sup> October. The venue is in the staff facility at the Toowoomba East State School in the Administration building on the corner of Arthur and Mary Streets.

### Guest Speakers

The guest speakers will be **Rachel McFadyen and Judy McCaughley** from Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Rachel and Judy are promoting the **establishment of nest boxes for Barn Owls on Darling Downs farms to help control mice.**

Rachel is a Principal Scientist in charge of Pest Management Research in DNR. Her background is in weed biocontrol (using insects to control weeds), but she has an interest in birds from way back. Rachel is involved in an ACIAR project for the biocontrol of siam weed in Indonesia, and visited oil palm research labs in Sumatra as part of this.

The oil palm people have a big rat problem and use Barn Owls to control the rats. They provide nesting boxes, the owl numbers increase, and there is no more rat problem. Rachel has discussed this with Malaysian scientists who use perches in rice fields for the same reason. Hence, her interest in a possible "biocontrol" of mice. Judy is based in Toowoomba and will have the responsibility of promoting and implementing the project.

Some readers may be aware that well-known Australian naturalist, John Young, has already begun implementing this strategy in the northern cane-growing areas, with some good results.

### Nominations

Included with the newsletter is a nomination form for any of the Executive positions.

If you are very busy, have various other interests and commitments, but believe in the value of the club and want to see it prosper, then congratulations, you share the exact same credentials as the current members of the Executive. **So please take this opportunity to become more involved with club affairs and nominate for a position.** It's really not that hard in a small club such as ours.

Needless to say, it's neither ideal, nor fair, to rely on the same people every time to carry the club. **New blood and new ideas are essential** for the club's ongoing growth, success and more importantly, survival.

## Accommodation Wanted

A good friend and regular club correspondent, Jim Buckley, has requested my help in finding a well-ventilated fully furnished flat for rent, in a quiet part of Toowoomba and close to amenities, for \$80-\$100 per week.

Jim, a retired pensioner and keen birder, finally realised the error of his ways and left Victoria recently for warmer weather and better birding. He will arrive in Toowoomba by early October. Please contact me directly ASAP if you are able to help, or can put me in touch with someone else that can.

Michael Atzeni

(07 4639 2761 A/H or at work on 07 4688 1318)

## Coxen's Fig Parrot Survey, 17-24 October

This year's community survey will be held at three great locations: the Big Scrub and Booyong Nature Reserves, and Tooloom National Park. Keen birdwatchers are required for survey work, as well as cooks and camphands to help out. Ring the Threatened Species Network on 07 3221 0573 to register your interest.

## Survey on David Fleay

I am a postgraduate student in the Applied History Centre at the University of Queensland, and am writing a thesis on the life, work and legacy of David Fleay, the Australian naturalist. One element of my thesis involves a determination of the extent of his influence on public attitudes to native fauna and conservation issues.

In an attempt to ensure a representative survey, I would be grateful if everyone who believes their awareness of native fauna, or awareness of conservation issues, was influenced to some degree by David Fleay (whether through personal contact or reading his books or articles) would contact me, either

a) by post, directed to:

Linda Laker, 28 Elizabeth St, Rosalie Q 4064, OR

b) by email, directed to: <lindalaker@ozemail.com.au>

Upon receipt of contact details, a survey form will be forwarded, together with a self-addressed envelope for return of their completed form. Any personal comments or anecdotes will also be welcomed.

For this survey to be reasonably representative, a large number of responses is required. Your response to this survey will help to ensure that the influences exerted by David Fleay throughout his life receives the acknowledgement I believe it warrants.

[Source: GALAH (the in-house newsletter of Birds Australia) No. 28 25 August 1998]

### A Personal Comment on David Fleay

I certainly have vivid childhood memories of visiting Fleay's Reserve on our family holidays and not wanting to leave the place. There is a classic photo of me as a toddler at the front of Fleay's Reserve, beaming radiantly, that says it all and leaves absolutely no doubts about David Fleay's influence on me from a very tender age. And what's more, I never even met the man.

My most vivid recollections are of the owl exhibits. And of course I've read Nightwatchmen of Bush and Plain from cover to cover. Who hasn't? (Ed.)

### Erratum

The outing last month was to the Preston area on 25 July, not Helidon, as stated in last month's newsletter.

### Members' Bird Notes

Members of the Toowoomba Bird Observers have submitted all sightings. Accuracy not vouched for by TBO. Please check with observer(s) before citing.

Long-billed Corella (with Galahs)	02/08/98	Hood's Lagoon, Helidon	NT
Red-collared Lorikeet (with Rainbows)	02/08/98	Airforce Rd, Helidon	NT
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (3)	12/08/98	Rockville	J&OB
Apostlebird*	14/08/98	Cranley (w. of Hendy St)	NT
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (11)	22/08/98	Gowrie Junction	D&EB
Turquoise Parrot (5)**	09/09/98	Glencairn, via Forest Hill	JH
Brahminy Kite***	02/09/98	Apex Lake, Gatton	JH
	06/09/98	Apex Lake, Gatton	PM
Leaden Flycatcher	09/09/98	DPI, Rockville	MA

\* Probably resident but rarely recorded in the TBO survey area.

\*\* Three males and 2 females. First record in the Forest Hill area

\*\*\* An adult bird has been resident. Rod Hobson and another observer saw an immature bird at Lake Clarendon last year (23/3/97). Inland sightings of this species are very rare Australia-wide.

MA	M. Atzeni	JH	J. Hadley	KM	K. McKeown	PM	P. McConnell
D&EB	D& E Beal	J&OB	J & O. Bocth	NT	N. Thompson		

## COMING EVENTS

September Outing

Location: Coolmunda Dam (near Inglewood)  
Date: Saturday, 26 September  
Leader: Ken McKeown 07 4630 3774  
Time: 8.00 am

**Info:** For a nice change in bird composition, this outing is well worth attending. Possibilities include White-winged Fairy-wren, Blue Bonnet, and Red-winged Parrot. There is always the possibility of a Regent Honeyeater too. Allow 2 hours drive from Toowoomba and notify Ken in advance. Meet in the picnic area. BYO everything.

Guided Field Tour of Darling Downs' Vegetation

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

Annual General Meeting

Date: 7.30 pm, Monday, 12 October  
Venue: Staff Meeting Room, Toowoomba East State School

**Info:** For full details, refer to the article in this newsletter. Meeting will start at 7.30 pm sharp. Members are asked to bring a plate. Use the Arthur St entrance to access the Toowoomba East State School's Administration block.

Annual Species Census

Dates: 24/25 October  
Coordinator: Michael Atzeni 07 4639 2761

**Info:** A hectic but thoroughly enjoyable experience. It is essentially a local twitchathon, achieving a snapshot of the species in the region. It's a great way to see lots of species and to get to know the local sites for many of them. You can join in either day or both. Ring me if you're interested and I'll allocate you to a team. The more eyes, the better.

QOS Twitchathon

Date: 7/8 November

**Info:** Interested parties should organise a team and acquire the details and entry form from Fred Armbrust, 5/9 Huddart St, ALDERLEY 4051, or by ringing him on 07 3352 6450. Money raised this year will again go towards research on endangered and threatened bird species.

November Outing

Location: Bribie Island  
Date: Saturday, 28 November  
Leader: Nicci Thompson 07 4634 3074

December Outing

Location: Cooby Dam  
Date: Sunday, 20 December

**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  
 Toowoomba Bird Observers Inc  
 PO Box 4730  
 TOOWOOMBA EAST Q 4350



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