

encourage the observation and study
of the birds of the Toowoomba area."

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NEWS-SHEET No. 27 - MARCH, 1978.

With apologies for last month's non-appearance of an offset reproduction, we present, this month, the new style club news-sheet. Once again we can say that the change brings us an even better looking vehicle for club news. And once again we express the hope that the change meets with your approval.

February saw the first club camp-out at Bunya Mountains National Park. The members who participated voted the venture a club success. So hopes are high for a repeat at the North coast in April. Further details in next month's issue.

Member Marilyn Jacobs reports a definite sighting of Plum-headed Finch at Lion's Park (Warwick Road). Regrettably Marilyn was not accompanied by another club member at the time so the bird has not been admitted to the club list. So if you are visiting the area take another member with you and watch out for Plum-headed Finches.

Of particular interest this month is John Coman's feature regarding Black-shouldered Kites. This would be a really worthwhile project for this club and we commend it to all members as the sort of activity which adds more point to birding. If you are prepared to help in any way in this first ever local study of the Black-shouldered Kite please notify any club officer or Project Co-ordinator John Coman so we may begin by setting up a team.

We must announce in this issue two changes in the club executive. Robert Shaw has found it necessary to step down as Secretary/Treasurer, to further his studies in his career. The office will be taken over by Alison McCallum.

Under the terms of the Club's constitution such vacancies, if they occur between elections, shall be filled by the executive.

The second change is that of Editor/Records Officer. I regret that I need to take a rest from the office for a while. Members will recall from news-sheets of April and May last year that I spent some time on the sick list, and this stepping down is part of a belated recuperative measure. But I am happy to say that the office has been accepted by Susan Elmes, who I hope will receive the same support from members which has been given to me.

This March issue marks the cut-off point for 1978 subscriptions. Elsewhere in this issue is a form to be returned to the Treasurer together with your sub. Keep the club strong - renew your membership.

Ron Hopkinson,
Editor.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES.

- Little Grebe. 1.2.78. "Ringmere", Withcott. WJ. EJ. (12 birds. One individual resident throughout February).
- Nankeen Night-heron. 12.2.78. "Ringmere", Withcott. WJ. EJ.
- Brown Goshawk. 22.2.78. Ocean Street. JEC.
25.2.78. Ocean Street. JEC. GC.
- Spotted Harrier. 27.2.78. Zimms Corner. JC.
- Black-fronted Dotterel. 2.1.78. Flagstone Creek. MJ. SP.
- Silver Gull. 24.1.78. Atkinsons Dam. MJ.
22.2.78. Lake Annand. RW. VW. (Appeared "windblown" and arrived flying from S.E. to N.W. direction. Still there when we had to leave after about 5 minutes observation).
- Caspian Tern. 24.1.78. Atkinsons Dam. MJ.
- Clamorous Reed Warbler. 2.1.78. Lions Park, Warwick Rd. MJ. SP. (4 birds).
- Plum-headed Finch. 2.1.78. Lions Park, Warwick Rd. MJ.
- Spangled Drongo. 2.1.78. Flagstone Creek. MJ. SP. (2 adults feeding 3 young).

JC: John Coman. GC: Graham Corbin. JEC: Jim Corbin. MJ: Marilyn Jacobs.
EJ: Eileen Jolly. WJ: Bill Jolly. SP: Sandy Pottinger. RW: Ron Wilson.
VW: Viv Wilson.

APEX LAKE, GATTON.

The following article and bird list are based on the personal observations of myself and my husband in the lake area, both before and after filling, from January, 1975 to January, 1978.

APEX LAKE at Gatton was created in mid-1975 in an area which originally contained a swamp and a small dam. The lake and the park area around it is bounded by the Toowoomba-Brisbane Highway, open forest and grazing land and the outer edges of the township.

Living on a hill overlooking the lake, we have watched the changes that have occurred since work first began on the lake. Several species that frequented the dam and swamp area are far less frequent visitors since the lake was built. Dusky Moorhen and Eastern Swamphen have been seen only once since the lake was flooded, but were in permanent residence before then. Work on the lake also disturbed a pair of Nankeen Night-heron who have not returned.

As the lake filled and water weed etc. began to grow, water birds began to gradually appear until by 1976-1977, a large proportion of the bird list given below could be observed on almost every visit to the lake. Changing weather conditions and work carried out on the area around the lake have had differing effects on the bird life. The area behind the lake became swampy with good rain and attracted many birds which were not attracted to the lake proper. For example, Spoonbills, Ibis, Egrets, Dotterels and more recently Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and Japanese Snipe have been seen there. One lone snipe had been recorded in late 1975 but they were not seen again until late 1977.

The removal by the Apex Club of large trees around the lake, which had died as a result of the rising water levels, destroyed the nesting places of Common Myna, Pale-headed Rosella, Peewee and Willie Wagtail. A little Falcon which had been in residence is now observed only occasionally.

In 1977, we have noted ~~increases~~ increases in several species at the lake. Cattle Egret have increased markedly, a trend which appears to cover the whole Gatton area. Indian Myna also seem to have increased considerably. White-eyed duck, which were rare visitors in the early days of the lake, are now the most common duck observed.

(cont/d.)

APEX LAKE, GATTON (cont/d.)

Other species increased temporarily or were observed on a regular basis for a short time, but then declined or left the area. Magpie Larks and Willie Wagtails became extremely common close by the lake and in the parkland and houses above the lake in the first twelve months after the lake was filled. Now they have declined to pre-lake levels. A pair of Jabiru were observed as regular early morning visitors in the spring of 1975, but have not been seen since. They also appear to be absent from other areas in the Lockyer Valley at which they were previously observed.

With the growth of small areas of reeds and long grass on the banks of the eastern side of the lake, we were delighted to observe three Marsh Crake. Once disturbed one bird instantly flew a short distance to cover. We moved about in the long grass to within a 1/2 metre of it before it flew again. The other bird moved out onto the water and moved across the weeds, parallel to the bank, less than 2 metres from us. The third bird was seen in weeds growing in and around the swampy area behind the lake. On the same day, a Glossy Ibis was seen for the first time, feeding in this same area.

Susan Elms.

Bird List - Apex Lake, Gatton - January 1975-March 1978.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Hoary-headed Grebe | Japanese Snipe |
| Little Grebe | Sharp-tailed Sandpiper |
| Australian Pelican | Domestic Pigeon |
| Darter | Crested Pigeon |
| Little Pied Cormorant | Galah |
| Black Cormorant | Rainbow Lorikeet |
| Little Black Cormorant | Scaly-breasted Lorikeet |
| White-necked Heron | Cockatiel |
| White-faced Heron | Pale-headed Rosella |
| Cattle Egret | Pallid Cuckoo |
| Large Egret | Indian Koel |
| Little Egret | Channel-billed Cuckoo |
| Plumed Egret | Pheasant Coucal |
| Nankeen Night-heron | Spine-tailed Swift |
| Jabiru | Kookaburra |
| Glossy Ibis | Sacred Kingfisher |
| White Ibis | Rainbow Bee-eater |
| Straw-necked Ibis | White-backed Swallow |
| Royal Spoonbill | Welcome Swallow |
| Yellow-billed Spoonbill | Fairy Martin |
| Black Swan | Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike |
| Plumed Tree Duck | Willie Wagtail |
| Black Duck | Golden-headed Cisticola |
| Grey Teal | Red-backed Wren |
| White-eyed Duck | Noisy Friarbird |
| Wood Duck | Little Friarbird |
| White Figmy Goose | Noisy Miner |
| Black-shouldered | White-throated Honeyeater |
| Whistling Kite | Striated Pardalote |
| Little Falcon | House Sparrow |
| Nankeen Kestrel | Common Starling |
| Marsh Crake | Common Myna |
| Dusky Moorhen | Spangled Drongo |
| Swamphen | Australian Magpie Lark |
| Coot | Dusky Woodswallow |
| Lotusbird | Pied Butcherbird |
| Masked Plover | Australian Magpie |
| Black-fronted Dotterel | Torresian Crow. |
| Pied Stilt | |

BLACK FALCON AT PITTSWORTH.

On 29.1.78. a Black Falcon (*Falco subniger*) was observed by myself and family from our back verandah. We had excellent views over a period of about 5 minutes so close at times binoculars were not needed. Our attention was drawn to him when he flashed past our kitchen windows at speed, every Myna and Sparrow going for their lives. He cruised up and down over an area of three or four house allotments sometimes flapping lazily by in crow fashion and at others in a highly distinctive glide with wings half folded in a turn of speed in level flight that has to be seen to be believed.

A few weeks earlier we were alerted to a bird of prey by the Noisy Miners and saw what we then thought to be a Black Falcon but owing to the distance in height it was hard to be sure. This bird had the same half folded wing action which was used more in a stoop as well as level flight on this occasion.

On 2.2.78. when driving home from work I again observed the distinctive flight pattern of half closed wings of an obvious black, long tailed falcon when he split a flock of starlings in a power dive, again with this peculiar half folded wing action. It seemed to be more in fun than in a serious attempt to catch a starling.

We had seen Black Falcon previously at Morven in western Queensland and near Dickey waterhole on the Birdsville Track and also one we suspected of being a Black Falcon between Hawker and Orroroo in S.A. but two of these were sitting birds and the other so high not much detail could be observed.

John & Ruth Walter.

THE BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE (*Elanus notatus*).

Since 1960 very few articles have been published in Australian literature on the Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus notatus*). Most of these articles are of the nature of little pieces of information such as rare sightings in Tasmania (Angel 1972, Lane 1976) or hunting over the sea (Septon 1967) or Marsh Crake as prey for these birds.

Pedler has produced a paper on observations of a population of kites near Koolunga, S.A. The paper deals with breeding, mortality, nocturnal hunting, calls, nests and iris and plumage changes with growth. The population studied was not colour tagged.

It seems then that our club emblem, a very common bird, has not been studied in detail and I propose that we, as a club, take on the task of investigating the biology of the Black-shouldered Kite. While the literature before 1960 has not been searched yet, I don't think a program such as the one I will outline below has been undertaken. I propose that we attempt to find answers to the following questions.

1. Are Black-shouldered Kites territorial?

There is conflict in the literature on this point. Macdonald in his authoritative book states that Black-shouldered Kites are nomadic. Pedler says the birds are territorial except under conditions of food scarcity. The only way to resolve this question is to colour tag individual birds. Such a tagging program would also give us more information on basic breeding and feeding patterns as well as their family life.

2. If they are territorial what are the characteristics of their territory?

After tagging, careful observation will answer this question.

3. Are man's activities of benefit to Black-shouldered Kites?

Since they are birds of woodland and open forest you might expect that clearing

THE BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE (cont/d.)

of land would benefit them especially since they nest in solitary trees or trees at the edge of an area of forest (Pedler 1976).

There are several preliminary problems which would require solving first:

1. How do we catch the birds?

I think mist netting is out of the question here. Since the birds don't use tree hollows we can't block off the hollow while it is occupied. All that remains is some form of "cannon" net. We may be able to use a device similar to the one used by Veronica Parry in her study of Kookaburras (*Dacelo gigas*).

2. How do we age and sex the birds?

Pedler has described plumage and iris changes sufficiently well for us to be able to place birds in their correct age classes especially when they are "in the hand". Sex determination by plumage has not been described and I do not know if there are any cloacal differences which will allow sexing.

3. What form of colour banding will be used?

I think wing tagged birds will be more easily identified in the air while flying, gliding or hovering and when perching than leg tagged birds. Probably a smaller version of the tags Rowley described for Brooker's study of the Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Aquila audax*). A strip of laminated, coloured, non-fading, synthetic material is wrapped around the base of the wing and stapled to the patagium. The colour along with a code etched into the strip on top and bottom of the wing allows individual identification.

How can you help?

You can help by assisting with all stages of planning and execution of the study. If you are prepared to assist please inform the club officers. You might be able to return a monthly report on "your kites" with your gold checklists. So that our work remains completely objective it would be necessary to test each helper for his/her ability to accurately read the colour and code of wing tags up to a certain minimum distance.

I know that many of you will want to help and I thank you for your co-operation in this venture which should occupy our spare(!) time for a few years.

Once you have demonstrated sufficient interest for the project to become a reality we can go ahead with the obtaining of the necessary permits and licences. Then we can tackle our first major obstacle - how do we catch them?

John Coman.

Bibliography.

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- Rowley, I., Bird Life.
- Sefton, A.R., Unusual Kite Behaviour, Emu, 66(4), p.372, June 1967.
- Reader's Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds.
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Aust. Bird Watcher, 7(2), p.68, 1977.

After a previous abortive start due to unfavourable weather conditions we at last achieved the first official Toowoomba Bird Club camp-out at Bunya Mountains National Park on the weekend of 25th/26th February, 1978. And of course members were soon asking "Why haven't we done this before?" and "When are we going to do this again?" Old members, new members, and (perhaps) prospective members set up camp on Saturday morning while Wedge-tailed Eagles soared high above, Fan-tailed Cuckoos trilled continually from within the forest and Satin Bowerbirds squawked close alongside the campsite, maybe in anticipation of the pickings which they have learned to associate with human habitation.

The brilliance of King Parrots and Crimson Rosellas was always on hand around the campsite throughout the weekend, but of course if one hopes to enjoy views of some of Bunya's more elusive avian specialities one needs to explore the magnificent Bunya rain-forest. This pursuit did gain members glimpses of many birds including Catbirds and Paradise Rifle-birds from the rain-forest tracks, but in the event our most successful session of bird-watching was that of Sunday morning when we followed the bitumen roads along the forest fringes and found in the process most of the birds which appear on the weekend's list.

On the other hand some might suggest that our most successful session of bird-watching was not pre-meditated at all, but was represented by the 10 minutes or so after tea on Saturday evening when a White-throated Nightjar obliged us with a fine display of hawking and general aeronautic ability.

We were most happy on this outing to be joined for a while by Peter Mallar who teaches at the State School at Bell and who was scouting in the area with a view to organising a trip for his students. Peter has since joined our club and we can perhaps hope to hear more of the birds of the Bunyas through him.

I am sure that none of those present will dispute that our first camp was a success in every way. It was convivial. We saw some birds. And even if Australia did beat the Rest of the World in the first cricket test at the Bunyas there are those who are confident that that matter will be corrected at our next camp.

Bill Jolly.

Species List - Bunya Mtns. National Park - 25/26.2.78.

Wedge-tailed Eagle	Eastern Whipbird
Masked Plover	Superby Blue Wren
White-headed Pigeon	Red-backed Wren
Brown Pigeon	White-br. Scrub-wren
Bar-shouldered Dove	Brown Thornbill
King Parrot	White-thr. Tree-creeper
Crimson Rosella	Lewin Honeyeater
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Spotted Pardalote
White-thr. Nightjar	Silvereye
Spine-tailed Swift	Red-browed Firetail
Kookaburra	Satin Bowerbird
Tree Martin	Green Catbird
E. Yellow Robin	Paradise Riflebird
Golden Whistler	Aust. Magpie Lark
Black-faced Monarch	Fied Currawong
Satin Flycatcher	Torresian Crow
Grey Fantail	Aust. Magpie.
Willie Wagtail	

FIELD DAY FOR MARCH.

Date: Sunday, 19th March, 1978. Place: Helidon Area.

Leader: Bill Jolly. Assembly Point: Pigott's car park. Time: 8.30 a.m.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

The Bird Observer, February, 1978.

Urimbirra, February, 1978.

Darling Downs Naturalist, March, 1978.

NEW MEMBERS.

The Club is pleased to welcome the following new members:

Peter Malar, c/- State School Bell.

Dan Webster, 170, Geddes Street.

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LAST CALL FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1978.

Any members who have not yet remitted their subscription for 1978 are requested to complete the slip below and forward it with their subscription to the Secretary/Treasurer at the earliest opportunity.

To: The Secretary,
Toowoomba Bird Club,
P.O. Darling Heights,
TOOWOOMBA, 4350.

I am enclosing herewith the sum of \$3 being my membership subscription to the Toowoomba Bird Club for the calendar year 1978.

Signed _____