



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	Treasurer -	Gloria Glass	07 4630 7054
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'To encourage the observation and study of the birds of the Toowoomba area'

NEWSLETTER No. 280 – August 1999

Editorial

Suburbia is alive with Scarlet Honeyeaters! They have invaded Toowoomba (the eastern side, at least) so keep your eyes peeled. It has been a few years since I've seen them in such numbers. Last Saturday, they seemed to be calling from every yard in the neighbourhood. Thanks to our young newcomer, Regan Scheuber for alerting me to their presence after seeing one in his yard last week. It was only last month on the outing, that he saw one for the first time so I can imagine his excitement at seeing one at home! In the May Editorial I mentioned it sometimes takes an exuberant beginner to jolt us out of our nonchalance. I think we've found one!

I followed up an **unconfirmed report** of a **Blackbird** at the Drayton Cemetery without success, but it's a big place and further searches are encouraged. I've even got the staff there on the lookout. The issue of feral bird distributions, both native and exotic, has been discussed recently on Birding-Aus. There is a golden opportunity to obtain a far more accurate picture of the current status and distribution of feral populations through the Atlas project. I will be expanding on this topic in a future newsletter. In the meantime, I encourage everybody to start noting numbers and breeding details of out-of-range species such as the **Long-billed Corellas** at Highfields and Lowood. Documenting the spread of any exotic species, such as Gloria's note on the **first record of Spotted Turtledove** at their **Gowrie Junction** property, is also important for future reference.

With Spring well and truly early this year, be vigilant and you'll be rewarded. Don't forget to **record** the date you first see/hear the **spring arrivals** such as Koel, Channel-billed Cuckoo, Rufous Fantail, and the monarchs.

This month we include the June and July **outing reports**, an interesting account of the **hassles of being an Osprey**, and a reminder call for **contributions to "Boobook"**. Nicci Thompson reports in from Innisfail, and we have a stack of **Members Bird Notes**.

Please note the Endangered Species Week at Yarraman 4th –11th September. There are various interesting activities whatever day(s) you decide to attend. If you want to see a **Black-breasted Button-Quail**, then this is a great chance. Also note the (early) **September joint outing** (Sunday, 19th) with the **Stanthorpe Field Nats**. They're counting on our birding skills so please make an effort to attend. No doubt they will be reciprocating in other facets of natural history. The Granite Belt is a great area, offering a nice change of habitat and wildlife, so why not make a weekend trip out of it? For full details and contacts, see the Coming Events.

Next month, a tribute from Trent Clark to the late **Dawn Allen** (President Ken's mother-in-law and well-known birder from Mitchell). Trent has regularly stayed with Dawn on her Mitchell property during his school holidays.

Finally, if you're not very good on your ducks then you'd better practice - maggie season is here!

Outing Report – Helidon/Gatton/Lake Clarendon, 27 June 1999

In what must have been one of our biggest turn outs in many years (21 people), the long convoy plus the hope of many to see the Freckled Ducks at Lake Clarendon was sufficient reason to forget about the Helidon Hills, and concentrate on a more manageable waterbird agenda. The early arrivals earned a bonus, picking up the **Platypus** in the creek at the Helidon rest area while waiting for everyone to arrive.

Despite the change in plans, we did indulge in some fruitful bush birding along Connor's Rd, Helidon. A flock of **White-winged Choughs** brought the convoy to its first standstill. As we observed the choughs, an **Australian Hobby** belted across the treetops. Meanwhile, our multi-talented President, Ken McKeown, was expertly directing late arrivals from Brisbane by mobile phone from the rest area to our location. Further along we sauntered through some acacia scrub literally alive with birds, including **Golden** and **Rufous Whistlers**, **White-naped** and **White-throated Honeyeaters**, **Rose Robin**, **Speckled Warblers**, and **Buff-rumped Thornbills** to name but a few. Unfortunately, no Red-capped Robins, Black-chinned Honeyeaters or Western Gerygones were to be seen.

Next stop was Lowe's Rd Swamp. Plenty of the usual waterfowl species were present, but not much variety, and unfortunately, no Cotton Pygmy-geese. Best was **White-backed Swallow** which I hadn't seen there before.

A quick look at Karrasch's Lagoon yielded nothing of note, bar a **Yellow-billed Spoonbill**, then onto Apex Lake at Gatton for morning tea where many were happy to "scope" **Australasian Shoveler**, **Wandering Whistling-Duck**, **Comb-crested Jacana**, and overhead, a **Little Eagle**. At Jahnke's Lagoon on the way to Lake Clarendon, some caught up with the now well-known (reported on Birding-Aus recently) white **Black Swan** for the first time.

At Lake Clarendon itself, the special treat of seeing an unusually large number (36+) of the rare **Freckled Duck** in the Lockyer Valley, plus good looks at **Pink-eared Ducks** and a **Gull-billed Tern** put the icing on the cake.

Michael Atzeni

Outing Report – "Whistler Gully", Gorman's Gap, 25 July 1999

Another good roll up, including some new faces (Rod and Barbara Collyer), despite the inclement weather the day before. While waiting for arrivals at the Stockyard/Flagstone Ck Rd junction we had the list already ticking over nicely with **Grey-crowned Babbler**, **Chestnut-breasted Mannikin**, **Australian Pelican**, **Yellow Thornbill**, and **Brown Quail** of note. Graham White, our host then led us to his property, "Whistler Gully", along Rossells Rd at the base of Gorman's Gap. There, we enjoyed a pleasant stroll along cleared tracks through the bush. The highlights undoubtedly were the **Scarlet Honeyeaters**, absolutely radiant in the morning sun. I bet there's no artist capable of capturing that vibrant vermilion plumage on canvas!

Other highlights included **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, **Rose Robin**, **Superb**, **Variegated** and **Red-backed Fairy-wrens**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Eastern Spinebill** and **Speckled Warbler**. At the entrance in a flowering gum, a mystery honeyeater(?) call had us baffled, and despite a long search of the canopy, we couldn't track the source down. Perhaps a Black-chinned? Whilst nothing out of the ordinary was seen on the day, the property has plenty of potential as evidenced by Graham's winter list for the property of 70 odd species, which by his own admission, is by no means exhaustive, particularly for raptors.

In the course of the outing, we learnt from Graham that this marvellous patch has been sold. Let's hope the new owners are as gracious, accommodating, and mindful of the birds as Graham. Thanks, Graham, for having us along and please put in a good word for us to the new owners.

Michael Atzeni

Species list:

Brown Quail, Pacific Black Duck, Australasian Grebe, Australian Pelican, White-faced Heron, Australian White Ibis, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Masked Lapwing, Spotted Turtle-Dove, Crested Pigeon, Peaceful Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove, Wonga Pigeon, Galah, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Laughing Kookaburra, White-throated Treecreeper, Superb Fairy-wren, Variegated Fairy-wren, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Speckled Warbler, Weebill, White-throated Gerygone, Brown Thornbill, Yellow Thornbill, Striped Honeyeater, Noisy Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Scarlet Honeyeater, Rose Robin, Grey-crowned Babbler, Eastern Yellow Robin, Eastern Whipbird, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Magpie Lark, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, Figbird, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, House Sparrow, Red-browed Finch, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, Silvereeye, Common Starling, Common Myna

Thompsons on Tour – Email from Innisfail, 10th May 1999

Before leaving Finch Hatton, we visited the lovely Finch Hatton Gorge - much nicer than the Eungella National Park. We really enjoyed the scenery provided by the various combinations of rushing water, water-worn rock, sheer cliffs and overhanging rainforest. Tackling the 200 odd steps to the Wheel of Fire was well worth the effort as was the walk to Araluen Falls. We heard only five species of birds in the two hours we were there. Earlier in the day the proprietor of the Caravan Park took me to see two roosting **Tawny Frogmouths** she had discovered at the back of a building. We also visited Teemburra Dam, where I was surprised to find **Brahminy Kites** as it is over 60 kms from the coast and quite high up in the mountains.

We only moved a short distance, after leaving Finch Hatton to spend a few days at Airlie Beach. It is a lovely part of the coast, but the developers are moving in. However, it isn't too bad yet and you can still enjoy some of the beaches in splendid solitude if you are prepared to walk. We walked through Conway NP. From Mt Rooper lookout there are spectacular views of the Whitsundays. Birding highlights were a **Collared Sparrowhawk**, that hunted each day in the bushland behind the park; **Dusky, Scarlet** and **White-throated Honeyeaters** and **Yellow-bellied Sunbirds** in largish numbers and a few **Helmeted Friarbirds** through the open bushland of Conway; splendid views of **Noisy Pitta** in the vine-scrub along the Swamp Bay walk; and in the late afternoon, **Rufous Fantail, Spectacled Monarch, Black Butcherbird** and **Orange-footed Scrubfowl** along a circular walk that encompassed a tidal mangrove creek which had fairly dense riverine scrub along its banks.

Since then we have spent a week based in Townsville, where on our arrival in the caravan park we saw three **Pied Imperial Pigeons**. I imagine they were late leavers as we didn't see them again. Townsville has huge numbers of **Peaceful Doves**, which feed in large flocks often 30 or 40. In the van park they feed on the lawns with the **House Sparrows**. We visited the Common and adjacent Environmental Parks on a number of occasions and last Sunday I joined the Townsville BOCA group for their monthly Sunday walk on the Town Common lead by Alex Appleman. **Great Bowerbirds, Brolga, Magpie Geese, Brown-backed Honeyeater, Little Shrike-thrush** and **Bush Stone-Curlew** were the highlights of the walk. The following day we visited the Palmetum, a wonderful collection of palms and other tropical plants where there are a lot of birds including **White-gaped Honeyeaters**. All the ducks, except a very few Black Ducks were conspicuous by their absence. Great sheets of water decorated with water-lilies and only the odd **Jacana** or **Magpie Goose** to make a ripple.

From Townsville we made a few day trips. We spent a fairly long day driving to Charters Towers, back to Ravenswood and then on to the Burdekin Falls Dam. It was a sight-seeing day and we didn't see many birds except the inevitable raptors, which included a few **Spotted Harriers** for a change. Late in the afternoon we came across a party of **Ground Cuckoo-shrikes**. Magnetic Island wasn't special for birds either, except for one small gallery closed scrub on Gustav Creek that was busy with both **Grey** and **Rufous Fantails** and **Spectacled** and **White-eared Monarchs** and the Golf Course and its environs where we saw numerous **Bush Stone-Curlews**.

However the day trip to Paluma was a different kettle of fish. Apart from the 19 kms of very steep, winding road up to the top of the range, the rain and the closure by the Forestry Department of the Dam road, so we couldn't go looking for the Golden Bowerbird it was an excellent day. It is a fabulous place for an inland birder from more southerly latitudes, as many of the birds we saw are simply not seen in our part of the state. We visited only the Grandis Forest and a small road in Paluma but saw such nice birds as **Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Pale-yellow Robin, Victoria's Riflebird** (male and female) **Macleay's Honeyeater, White-headed Pigeon, Chowchilla, Bridled Honeyeater, Little Shrike-thrush, Glossy Black-Cockatoo** (which have recently been discovered nesting in the Paluma Range) **Grey-headed Robin, Bower's Shrike-thrush** (We also saw **Grey Shrike-thrush**, making it 3 Shrike-thrush in the one day), **Topknot Pigeon** and **Grey Whistler**. Imagine what it would be like on a fine day with open roads.

On leaving Townsville, we decided to stay overnight in Ingham, so we could visit the Wallaman Falls, the longest single drop of water in Australia at 305metres we are told. It is another winding mountain road to reach the crest of the range - not as much as Paluma but a lot of it is unsealed. When we reached the crest there was a sign saying - "Caution! Cassowaries cross this road." I laughed about the odds, BUT..... about 9 kms along it we found a male **Cassowary** with two brown chicks sunning themselves at the edge of the road. Twenty minutes later, and many photos later, having been eye to eye with him through my window, we moved on to admire the falls. They are quite spectacular. On the return journey about an hour later the cassowary was still foraging along the road with his chicks. A few kilometres further and we found a second one - a lone male this time - preening himself in a sunny spot at the side of the road. And to think we almost didn't make the trip to Falls. Apart from the Cassowary we saw few birds.

Since then, we have travelled north through variable rain - variable in intensity that is. It did lift for a while when we were in Cardwell and I did some birding along Meunga Creek where the best birds were **Yellow Oriole**,

Spectacled Monarch, Little Shrike-Thrush and Dusky Honeyeater. In the Van Park at Tully Heads this morning there were some very wet **Black Butcherbirds** and **Yellow Orioles** and the lovely northern **Figbirds**. Tully has had 3057 mm of rain so far this year! It is soggy in a big way. In a brief lull in the rain I went to see the Licula Palm Forest in the Tam O'Shanter SF west of Mission Beach which is lovely. While there weren't many birds there, I did see **Pied Monarch, Spectacled Monarch and Macleay's Honeyeater**. The common birds of the overhead wires here are **Forest Kingfishers** and **White-breasted Woodswallows**.

Nicci Thompson

The Luck of the Fisherman

On 1st August 1999, my wife and I were fishing from the bank of Cudgen Creek at Kingscliffe (far north of coastal NSW). An **Osprey** had been patrolling the creek for some time but appeared to be having no more luck than we were having.

A number of what I thought were alarm calls made me look up. The Osprey was flying over the creek towards the mouth. Held tightly in its talons was a large fish. This fish appeared to be a large mullet around 40 cm long. In close pursuit, making a great deal of noise, was a **Torresian Crow**. The crow was soon joined by a motley crew of **Silver Gulls** (20+), **Crested Terns** (10+) and **Australian Pelicans** (6).

A great display followed. The Osprey headed out to sea with all the others, including the crow, in hot pursuit. The Osprey climbed, dived and swerved but the pursuing group stayed close behind. Back over the land they came, then along the creek back to the open sea followed by a quick flight back along the creek. This was repeated for about five minutes while I stood transfixed. At one stage, the Osprey attempted to land in a large pine tree to eat his meal away from the gulls, etc., but did not count on the crow which attacked immediately.

As the Osprey (the rest still in hot pursuit with two more crows joining in) flew at a height of about five or six metres over the creek, heading upstream, it all became too much and the fish was dropped. One of the pelicans dropped down and scooped up the prize while the Osprey resumed its patrol, the crows headed for the school grounds (good pickings), the gulls and terns settled back on the sand banks and the pelicans resumed their stately cruising up and down the creek.

And we caught nothing!

Terry Pacey

The Clock Ticketh for "Boobook" Raptor Articles

Interesting snippets/articles about raptors, such as Terry Pacey's Osprey article, are also of interest to the various raptor specialty groups both here and overseas. We send a copy of our newsletter to Birds Australia and it was a pleasant surprise to discover that, in the last issue of Boobook, the **Australian Raptor Association's** (ARA) newsletter, they had reproduced TBO newsletter articles from Nicci Thompson (two on Sea-Eagles) and Keith Kerr (one on Osprey). No doubt, raptor sightings reported in the Members' Bird Notes come under notice too, so please record and submit all sightings of the less common species to Pat McConnell, our Records Officer.

Hugo Phillipps of Birds Australia informs me that the next issue of Boobook is due out in October this year, and that they would like to have all **contributions** received by **mid-September** at the latest. Material for Boobook (and enquiries regarding membership of the ARA) can be sent to the address and contact details below.

Hugo Phillipps,
Birds Australia,
415 Riversdale Road,
Hawthorn East, VIC 3123, Australia.
Tel: (03) 9882 2622. Fax: (03) 9882 2677.

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.

Ground Cuckoo-shrike (4)	03/05/99	Gowrie Junction	GG, DB
Letter-winged Kite	19/05/99	Highland Plains	GG, HW, AW
Grey-crowned Babbler (3)	13/06/99	Connors Rd, Helidon	JL
Freckled Duck (36)	27/06/99	Lake Clarendon, via Gatton	MA et. al (on June outing)
Little Eagle (flying along creek)	18/06/99	Trosts Rd, Helidon	JL
Glossy Black Cockatoo	28/06/99	Echo Valley	PM
Little Eagle (flying along creek)	03/07/99	Trosts Rd, Helidon	JL
Grey-crowned Babbler (3)	05/07/99	Connors Rd, Helidon	JL
Singing Honeyeater	07/07/99	Erringibba NP, 6km S. of Glenmorgan	HW, GG
Black-shouldered Kite ^a	07/07/99	Redwood Park, Toowoomba escarpment	MH
Australian Bustard ^b	08/07/99	"Charwondah", 12km S. of Wandoan	HW, GG
White-necked Heron	18/07/99	Jubilee Pk, Toowoomba escarpment	RS
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	20/07/99	Allora	BW, HW, GG
Port Lincoln Parrot ^c	22/07/99	External Studies Centre, E. Toowoomba	DM
Black Kite (1)	22/07/99	Mt Kynoch	PM, KW
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater ^d	24/07/99	"Abberton", Helidon	WJ
Australian Pelican (1) ^e	26/07/99	Over DPI, Toowoomba	MA
Olive-backed Oriole	30/07/99	Leslie St, E. Toowoomba	HW
Grey Goshawk	30/07/99	Redwood Park, Toowoomba	GG
Double-banded Plover (1 imm.) ^f	01/08/99 & 02/08/99	Bill Gunn Dam, near Laidley	JH
Crimson Rosella (1)	05/08/99	Bill Gunn Dam, near Laidley	WJ
Square-tailed Kite	06/08/99	Perth St, E. Toowoomba	MA
White-breasted Woodswallow ^g	08/08/99	"Abberton", Helidon	WJ
Collared Sparrowhawk ^h	08/08/99	"Abberton", Helidon	WJ
Pacific Baza (5 in flight)	08/08/99	Hagan's Tank, Helidon	WJ
Australasian Shoveler (4)	10/08/99	near Cotswold Hills, Toowoomba	MA
Rose Robin	11/08/99	Hagan's Tank, Helidon	WJ
Spotted Turtle-Dove ⁱ	12/08/99	"Abberton", Helidon	WJ
Barn Owl	16/08/99	Gowrie Junction	GG
Cotton Pygmy-Goose (3)	16/08/99	BP Service Stn, Tor St, Toowoomba	MA
Brahminy Kite (adult)	16/08/99	Lowe's rd Swamp, Placid Hills	WJ
Scarlet Honeyeater	17/08/99	Apex Lake, Gatton	WJ
Black Swan (1 flying over)	18/08/99	East Toowoomba	RS
Red-necked Avocet (3)	18/08/99	Newtown, Toowoomba	PM
		Helidon Spa	WJ

^a Seen from Bridle Trail, flying SW. Not listed in Birds of Redwood Park (McConnell, 1997)

^b Common in area. Up to 40 in a paddock at times. We saw 7 crossing 5cm sown wheat. Stopped to watch 3 on roadside beside car before they flew across in front of us.

^c One bird with 3 pale-headed Rosellas.

^d First record for the property. Resident up until 18/8/99.

^e New work tick!

^f Other records for the Lockyer Valley, include a single bird sighted at Atkinson's Dam in April 1987 (see D.I. Redhead 1990 "The Queensland Ornithological Society Bird Report, 1987" Sunbird Volume 20, Number 1: pp. 1-15), & another bird reported from the same location in May 1998. (Source: Craig Eddie, QPWS, Roma).

^g Party of about 10, heading SE. The 184th species for "Abberton". [Seldom seen in the TBO survey area. Ed.]

^h Chasing Zebra Finches, and possibly Welcome Swallows, alongside the ring tank.

ⁱ First time recorded at Gowrie Junction.

MA	M. Atzeni	JC	J. Caughley	GG	G. Glass	RS	R. Scheuber
PM	P. McConnell	TP	T. Pacey	KW	K. Watson	JH	J. Hadley
WJ	W. Jolly	DM	D. Mears	BW	B. Weier	MH	M. Hirst
AW	A. Warburton	HW	H. Wilson	DB	D. Beal	JL	J. Lund

New Members

The club warmly welcomes the following new members:

R. Bell, Kenmore Hills

R. Scheuber, Toowoomba

COMING EVENTS

August Outing

Location: White Rock Conservation Park, Ipswich
Date: Saturday, 28 August
Leader: Pat Solomon 07 3814 4870
Contact: Ken McKeown 07 4630 3774

Info: Refidex 235. J 16. Meet at 7.30am. Follow Redbank Plains School Road 4km south from Redbank to its end where there is a carpark. The park, which boasts impressive flora and fauna, requires a 50 min walk from the carpark. There are no facilities so BYO everything. Further details in "Wild Places of Greater Brisbane" (pg 127).

Endangered Species Week

Home base: Heritage House Convention Centre, 26 Millar St, Yarraman
Date: 4-11 September (Main Day: Wed. 8th September)
Theme: Seeking out the Black-breasted Button-Quail (during a week of bird watching and bushwalking).

Hosts: Yarraman & District Historical Society (ph 07 41638111)

Info: Registration \$10/day, \$50/week. Proceeds to Yarraman and District Historical Society. Ring for accommodation guidance.

SAT	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI
District tour (100 km)	Heritage Centre open day, Yarraman Creek walks	Cooyar; Palms NP; Pidna State Forest	Harland Park, Kooralgin, Yarraman Upper	State forest tourist drive	Power station & coal mine inspection, Community Park & Y'man State Forest	Coomba Falls and Presentation of awards

September Outing

Location: "Upson Downs", via Stanthorpe
Date: Sunday, 19 September (third Sunday of the month)
Leader: Desley McDonagh 07 4681 3074

Info: Leave at 8.00 am from Weeroona Park in Marsh St, Stanthorpe. We will travel on Texas Road then turn left into Nundubbermere Rd for approx. 12km. "Upson Downs" is the first property on the right after the end of the bitumen and is owned by Geoff (Desley's brother) and Rose McDonagh. Bring lunch. The walk will be a fairly easy grade along a creek, then out to a rocky bluff with good views. Back to the cars by 3.00pm although people may leave at any time. Refer to the map of Stanthorpe in the Telstra phone book, and Map84 in Downs and Lockyer Roads and Streets (2nd Edition) for relevant directions.

Annual General Meeting

Date: 7.30 pm, Tuesday, 19 October

October Species Census

Location: TBOI Survey Area
Date: 30-31 October

QOS Twitchathon

Dates: 6/7 November (noon to noon)

November Outing

Location/Date: Ravensbourne NP / Saturday, 27 November

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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**SURFACE
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