



# 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:

|                  |                |              |                    |               |              |
|------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------|
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| Vice-President - | Jack Lund      | 07 4697 6390 | Records Officer -  | Pat McConnell | 07 4697 6141 |
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| Editor -         | Michael Atzeni | 07 4639 2761 |                    | Helen Wilson  | 07 4636 4362 |

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

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## NEWSLETTER No. 281 – September 1999

### Editorial

The exciting news this month, once again from John Hadley, is the female **Green Pygmy-Goose** keeping company with a few Cotton Pygmy-Geese in the Spring Creek area **north of Lake Clarendon**. We believe this southerly record is the first for the Lockyer Valley. For those interested in a wild pygmy-goose chase, why not join John's special **Lockyer Valley outing this Thursday (16/9/99)**. (See the Coming Events).

On the subject of **new species and local rarities**, we wish to improve our "**hotline**" service so that those members keen to see a particular species are notified as quickly as possible, either by e-mail or phone, if it turns up locally. However, since everyone's wish list differs, we need more specific information. We've decided the **onus is on you** to indicate your interest by **submitting your wish list**. I suggest highlighting the ones you want on a monthly checklist and sending them to the Secretary or the Records Officer. Help us help you.

Which brings me to the **club's own wish list**. Number one on the list is the need for **some new species on the Executive at the next AGM**. All positions are open. You'll find nomination forms (and a renewal notice) attached. As many well know, most of us on the Executive have been there for many years. I would hope some of you are now feel comfortable to chip in and carry on the good work, and give others a well-earned break. The time is nigh and I for one will not be standing again for Editor. Please feel free to discuss any position with any of us.

Number two on the wish list is any species of **Atlasser** (other than the **Red-faced Atlasser**, which has been seen often enough roosting or engaging in some sort of displacement behaviour during the past year). Separating the many species of Atlasser is best done in the hand by examining the markings on their offspring. This should be done at the home of the regional Atlas co-ordinator, who will ensure their well being and successful relocation for further research and analysis. Of local concern is the small numbers of records of the well-known **Toowoomba** race of the **Eastern Atlasser**, despite good conditions, and a strong birder presence in the area. Fortunately, a handful of **Superb Atlassers** have settled in well and been extremely productive ensuring at least some Atlasser records were received from the Darling Downs/Toowoomba/Lockyer Valley region during the first year of the 4-year survey. Some reports of the rare **Wandering Atlasser** have also been received throughout the year.

In all seriousness, folks, let's at least work on our **local Atlassing effort**, so that one of the richest and rewarding birding areas in Australia is not understated in the final wash up. I'm quietly confident **Gloria's informative article**, which addresses many of the perceived problems, will spur many more of us into action.

We also have a touching tribute to the **late Dawn Allen** (President Ken's mother-in-law and well-known birder) from Trent Clark, a regular guest on her Mitchell property, and a report on the **White Rock outing**.

Finally, **don't forget the AGM**. This year we will have **Mark Weaver** from EPA as **guest speaker** talking about his work with **Golden-shouldered Parrots**, complete with slides.

## Outing Report – White Rock Conservation Park, 28 August 1999

Thirteen keen participants turned up on a very foggy morning following storms and constant rain overnight. The young people impressed the rest of the group with their fast and sound sightings.

The curse of the trail bikes has decreased recently with action groups being productive. A probable sighting of a **Common Bronzewing** gave room for banter and the young participants again gave precise distinguishing features to confirm it.

A call like a young bird soliciting for food from its parents was heard, as we checked out honeyeaters and whistlers in tall eucalypts. On recognising the alarm call of the **Peregrine Falcon** a few questions arose in my mind. How did the Peregrine Falcon know that danger was approaching when our group was still quite some distance away, and below, and on the opposite side of the rocky ridge where they roost? How large is the safety area for a breeding pair? Isn't it a sad fact that humans are recognised as a threat?

The Spotted Quail-thrush remained elusive even though we chose a walk out along the rocky ridge. In all, 49 species were seen or heard and an enjoyable social outing was had by all.

**Patricia Solomon**

### Species list:

Brown Quail, Cattle Egret, Peregrine Falcon, Nankeen Kestrel, Masked Lapwing, Common Bronzewing, Crested Pigeon, Peaceful Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove, Rainbow Lorikeet, Little Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Laughing Kookaburra, Rainbow Bee-eater, White-throated Treecreeper, Superb Fairy-wren, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Striated Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Speckled Warbler, Brown gerygone, White-throated Gerygone, Brown Thornbill, Noisy Friarbird, Little Friarbird, Noisy Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-throated Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, Eastern Yellow Robin, Eastern Whipbird, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Magpie Lark, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Olive-backed Oriole, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, Double-barred Finch, Red-browed Finch, Welcome Swallow, Fairy Martin, Silveryeye.

## Tribute to Dawn Allen (18/4/24-24/7/99)

You could fill a page with words to describe well-known Mitchell birding identity, Dawn Allen, and that still wouldn't be enough. People say first impressions are lasting impressions, and the impression left on me by her will never be forgotten.

The moment I met her I knew this was someone who loves birds more than just about anything. She was a mentor to many a new birder like Hughie and myself, and it was impossible to be with her and not learn something about birds or plants or any number of other things. One thing you could depend on was a birding tale every time you saw her. She would jump at the opportunity to take someone birding, especially if she thought she could get them a new bird. A goal of every birders' would be to see at least as many as she has seen.

She had an impact on me quite unlike anyone else, and one that I doubt I will ever feel again.

**Trent Clark**

## I've had to make a lot of changes in my thinking ...

That is, when I decided to start Atlassing! I imagined it would all be pretty easy as I already kept a monthly bird list for our farm, and I thought I'd just send that each month. And I had always kept a list of birds seen when I went for trips.

However, Atlassing needed a few adjustments. As most readers will know, there are three **areas** you can use: two hectares, 500 metre radius, and 5 km radius. Further, you **must** use 20 minutes for the two hectare surveys, but you may use any time for the other surveys.

What I have settled at now are:

- (a) I do weekly surveys for the farm, using the 500 metre radius. I drew up a table with the birds shown down the left and a column for each week. I just mark off the particular week's column when I see or hear a bird on the farm, then at the end of the week I can fill in the Atlas form. I guess this is the sort of thing everyone could do, for the 500 metres around their home, even in suburbia.

- (b) I am lucky enough to be able to go birding about one day a week with a friend. We do quite a few 2 hectare 20 minute surveys. And when we stop for morning tea and lunch we do a 500 metre survey, because the time will be longer than 20 minutes. During winter we have completed 14 surveys, but once it becomes hot I suppose we will have to stop about 11 am. We allocate half the surveys for each of us to complete the Atlas forms.
- (c) I have one block of 2 hectares in our planted eucalypt forest for which I have completed a survey form, and I do about two 20-minute surveys each month there. Sometimes there are only 4 species! Maybe more birds will come when the trees grow more.

When we go for a trip, I see if we can fit an extra hour into our travelling time, so that we can stop for 20 minutes surveys three times along the way. That works all right, provided you don't dilly-dally getting out of the car and back into it! Twenty minutes seems just about right for walking up the road from the car about 100 metres, then back to the car and on another 100 metres the other way, and back to the car again, noting birds seen and heard within 50 metres of the road each side. Sometimes there are few birds and you are tempted to stop early, but then you often find extra species in the last couple of minutes!

When we camp or holiday somewhere, I have done several 2 hectare and 500 metre surveys, trying of course to list all the 'good' birds on one survey or another! Sometimes you can't, though. On a long walk at Girraween, there were only 5 to 9 birds for each survey (with a non-survey walk between), but each had one or two birds not seen elsewhere. I guess 'they', the Atlas chiefs, can make some sense out of it all, since they particularly want 2-hectare surveys.

What I had to **change was my way of recording** birds. I used to 'remember' what I'd seen or heard and tick them off on the Toowoomba list at the end of the day. I've had to get a notebook, noting the place, the time and the birds in each survey. You'd be surprised the number of times I have to look at the notebook to see if say 'Magpie' is in a survey already. But then, I don't have a good memory. However, at the end of the day, I still use the Toowoomba list, transferring the surveys one by one onto the list (and filling in the Atlas form at that time too), and I can still count up the number of birds for the day, which is something I seem to need to know!

**Gloria Glass**

### **Thompsons on Tour – Email from Atherton, 24 May 1999**

Our last day in Innisfail was fine, though everything underfoot was extremely wet and it seemed advisable to keep to bitumen or well-graveled roads. We visited the Johnson River Crocodile Farm, and arrived just as a tour was beginning, which I didn't enjoy at all as they really harassed all the animals to make them agro for the tourists, including a captive-bred Cassowary. I did enjoy the **Kingfishers** though – all four of them **Sacred, Forest, Azure and Little**. There were a couple of Littles there, including an immature which I thought was very pretty. Behind the farm there were a lot of **Finches** – **Red-browed, Nutmeg, Crimson and Chestnut-breasted Mannikins** in the long grass and sugar cane, which were coming down to drink in a little creek. In the cool of the afternoon we decided to visit the Innisfail Botanic Gardens and I was very surprised to see a colony of **Metallic Starlings** including a number of immatures, feeding in a palm – I thought they would have left by now.

After leaving Innisfail we drove north through the tourist belt to a quiet little caravan park just north of Mossman at Newell Beach where we caught up with the fine weather again. From there we visited Cape Tribulation. We had planned to drive to Cooktown along the coast road but due to cyclone damage and the wet season it is not recommended. We enjoyed our day up to Cape Tribulation but it wasn't flush with birds - too many other tourists.

**Large-billed Gerygone, Graceful Honeyeater, Satin Flycatcher, Spotted Catbird, Masked Booby, White-bellied Sea-eagle and Osprey** were the best birds. We spent one morning exploring the Mossman Gorge along with many other people – most of whom seemed to be engaged in some sort of competition to see who could make the most noise on the walking tracks. However, the Gorge is very nice, though the cyclone damage to the canopy in the rainforest is obvious. Despite the background clamour, we did see **Pied and Spectacled Monarchs, Grey Whistler and Fairy Gerygone** along with a few other rainforest species.

From there we moved inland and up a few kilometres to Kingfisher Park at Julatten – our base for a few days. On our first afternoon we explored Mt Lewis, driving about 15 kms along the narrow winding road. The highlights included **Atherton Scrubwren, Bridled Honeyeater, Mountain Thornbill, Grey Goshawk and Chowchilla**. The following day we drove up to Cooktown through Lakeland – 225 kms, of which, all is now sealed except about

70 kms around Lakeland. At the Black Mountain NP we were approached by a tall, thin bearded gentleman who thought the binoculars might indicate we were "serious birders". It was Glen Holmes, who particularly enquired after Michael and Pat. As he does a lot of guiding up here he was interested to know what we had seen on the day, but it wasn't much – just the typical birds of the drier side of the Mountains – **Red-winged Parrot, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, Great Bowerbirds, Blue-winged Kookaburras, Bustards, Squatter Pigeon** (northern form) and the northern form of the **Pale-headed Rosella**, which is very different to ours.

Very early the next morning we headed back up Mt Lewis into the mist and wind – not a good birding day. However, when we reached the clearing we were headed for about 10 kms up, as I got out of the car a movement in some bushes caught my eye. As I trained the binoculars in the direction, an adult **Blue-faced Parrot-finch** hopped up onto the next branch to reach the seeds of the long grass. It was soon joined by another and we had superb views of them as they rolled the white seeds around in their very dark beaks. It was the coldest morning we had experienced since leaving home, but for a while I forgot how cold my ears and nose were. A few minutes later as we walked down the path to the creek I disturbed 8-10 more birds feeding in the long grass. We spent a couple of hours up there, but didn't see much except a female **Superb Fruit-Dove** – too windy, I suspect.

At Kingfisher Park itself it has been very quiet as the tourist season hasn't started. Ian Fraser from Canberra was there with one of his tours when we arrived but left the next day. The only other birders were a young couple from Nambucca Heads who were great company. David had us out looking for Lesser Sooty Owls at midnight one night – well after we had all retired – as he had heard it calling again from near the "famous trees". The birding highlights were **Shining Flycatcher, Macleay's Honeyeater, Pale-yellow Robin, Lemon-bellied Flycatcher, Red-necked Crake, Emerald Dove, Papuan Frogmouth, and Noisy Pitta**

We moved down to Atherton to do some birding and see some of the better known attractions. We had a couple of hours at Kuranda – very touristy now and then the Mareeba wetlands. It is not difficult to get Graham to drive through Mareeba, especially near lunchtime as Nastasie's Takeaways have the best pies we have ever tasted and their mugs of coffee are pretty good too. We visited the Mareeba Wetlands which are being developed by the Mareeba Wetlands Foundation using irrigation water from Tinaroo Dam that previously was allowed to run through woodlands at the end of the canal system. It is now channeled back to create a chain of dams and lagoons, linked by a channel system. There has also been a lot of tree planting and now they are working on infra structure – bird-hides, interpretation, picnic and camping facilities etc. It should be very good when complete. The target official opening is in August of this year.

We also visited Chillagoe to see their strange sandstone structures and visit the limestone caves. I was even talked in to doing a tour of the Royal Arch Cave. I can't say I enjoyed it, but I did find it interesting. They don't take tours into the area where the White-rumped Swiftlets breed. There weren't a lot of birds along the way or in and around Chillagoe or the caves. **Great Bowerbird, Squatter Pigeon, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Brolga and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos** were the most interesting of the few we did see.

Since we arrived here it has been cool and either raining or very misty. The weather paid dividends today. While driving along the Kennedy Highway about 10 kms south of here we spotted a **Bush-hen** on the edge of the road beside the long grass. I suppose the damp, overcast conditions were similar to dusk. We also visited the Mt Hypipamee Crater, which I still think gives off very bad vibes and makes me feel uncomfortable. The birds were fairly quiet, the best being **Wompoo Pigeon, Victoria's Riflebird, Yellow-throated Scrubwren, Bridled Honeyeater and Mountain Thornbill**. On the way home we called in at the Botanical walk in Wongabel State Forest, which I found good last time we were here, but they have covered the entire walking track with crunchy gravel that alerts everything for miles that someone is on the way. You just cannot walk quietly on it and we only saw a few birds. **Spotted Catbird and Victoria's Riflebird** were the best – no Tree Kangaroos this time.

**Nicci Thompson**

## 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.

|                                   |          |  |            |
|-----------------------------------|----------|--|------------|
| Varied Triller <sup>a</sup>       | 18/07/99 | "Grevillea Robusta", Derrymore           | RR         |
| Eastern Rosella (1) <sup>b</sup>  | 08/08/99 | Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat              | RS         |
| Grey Fantail <sup>c</sup>         | 08/08/99 | Toowoomba Waterbird habitat              | RS         |
| Restless Flycatcher <sup>d</sup>  | 14/08/99 | "Grevillea Robusta", Derrymore           | RR, JR     |
| Eastern Rosella <sup>e</sup>      | 19/08/99 | Prince Henry Heights, Toowoomba          | HW, KK, NK |
| Mistletoebird <sup>f</sup>        | 19/08/99 | Gowrie Junction                          | HW, GG     |
| Grey-crowned Babbler <sup>g</sup> | 21/08/99 | "Grevillea Robusta", Derrymore           | RR, JR     |
| Major Mitchell Cockatoo (1)       | 22/08/99 | Old Goombungee Rd (W of Wetalla STP)     | GG         |
| Australian Pelican                | 25/08/99 | Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat              | HW, BW     |
| Australian Hobby                  | 27/08/99 | Christian Outreach College, Toowoomba    | RS         |
| Australian King Parrot            | 21/08/99 | East Creek, E. Toowoomba                 | RS         |
| Grey Shrike-thrush (backyard)     | 28/08/99 | Perth St, East Toowoomba                 | MA         |
| Blue-billed Duck                  | 26/08/99 | Lake Clarendon, via Gatton               | JH         |
| Brown Goshawk                     | 31/08/99 | over DPI, Rockville                      | MA         |
| Long-billed Corella (14)          | 31/08/99 | Sunray Drive, Highfields                 | MW         |
| Topknot Pigeon (~ 45)             | 01/09/99 | Esk-Hampton Rd (5 km E. of Hampton)      | GG, HW     |
| Barn Owl (backyard)               | 03/09/99 | Perth St, East Toowoomba                 | MA         |
| Black-fronted Dotterel            | 07/09/99 | Gilla (in ploughed paddock)              | HW, GG     |
| Spotted Harrier                   | 11/09/99 | "Abberton", Helidon                      | WJ         |
| Green Pygmy-Goose <sup>h</sup>    | 12/09/99 | Kelly Rd, Spring Creek, via L. Clarendon | JH         |
| Magpie Goose (800+)               | 12/09/99 | Jahnke's Lagoon, via Gatton              | WJ, KM     |
| Pink-eared Duck (70)              | 12/09/99 | Jahnke's Lagoon, via Gatton              | WJ, KM     |
| Black-necked Stork                | 12/09/99 | Green Swamp Rd, Lake Clarendon           | WJ, KM     |

### Spring arrivals

|                            |          |                            |            |
|----------------------------|----------|----------------------------|------------|
| Latham's Snipe             | 26/08/99 | Bill Gunn Dam, via Laidley | JH         |
| Sacred Kingfisher          | 27/08/98 | "Abberton", Helidon        | WJ         |
| Indian Koel                | 02/09/99 | Gowrie Junction            | GG         |
| Leaden Flycatcher          | 07/09/99 | Cooyar                     | HW         |
| Leaden Flycatcher (female) | 12/09/99 | Gowrie Junction            | GG, DB     |
| Leaden Flycatcher (male)   | 12/09/99 | Upper Flagstone Ck         | HW         |
| Rainbow Bee-eater (4)      | 12/09/99 | Gowrie Junction            | JC, GG, DB |

<sup>a</sup>First time identified on property.

<sup>b</sup>Rarely reported in survey area and a new record for the waterbird habitat. Possibly an escapee or releasee.

<sup>c</sup>Not listed on the TWH list.

<sup>d</sup>First sighting on property. Catching spiders/insects on verandah of our house

<sup>e</sup>With Pale-headed Rosellas. Our first personal record of this species in Toowoomba

<sup>f</sup>Eating *Carissa ovata* and spitting out the skin.

<sup>g</sup>Group of five near our house. Report of neighbour further down valley, who says they have a family who come in spring but numbers are dwindling—down to about a dozen last year, not around yet this year.

<sup>h</sup>New bird for the Lockyer Valley list. A very tame female in company with male and female Cotton Pygmy-Geese for nice comparison. For directions see map 34 Downs\*Lockyer Roads and Streets, Edition 2, or contact John Hadley. John may well visit the site on the outing on Thursday. See Coming Events.

|    |           |    |             |    |            |    |             |
|----|-----------|----|-------------|----|------------|----|-------------|
| MA | M. Atzeni | JC | J. Caughley | GG | G. Glass   | RS | R. Scheuber |
| DB | D. Beal   | JR | J. Rudduck  | RR | R. Rudduck | JH | J. Hadley   |
| WJ | W. Jolly  | KM | K. McKeown  | KK | K. Kerr    | NK | N. Kerr     |
| BW | B. Weier  | HW | H. Wilson   |    |            |    |             |

## New Members

Hugh Bryant, Wyreema  
Oliver Rowley, Toowoomba

Welcome to the club, lads. May the birds be with you!!

## COMING EVENTS

**Additional September Outing**    **Location:**    Lockyer Valley  
    **Date:**                Thursday, 16 September  
    **Leader:**                John Hadley                                07 5465 4445

**Info:** Sorry for the short notice. John's kindly offered to lead this one in response to a special request. Meet at Gatton Apex Lake at 7.00 am. It will cover water and bush birds. All welcome. Finish around lunch. Perhaps the only chance you'll get of seeing a Green Pygmy-Goose this close to home. Don't miss it!

**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 (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) for relevant directions.

**Annual General Meeting**                **Date:**                    7.30 pm, Tuesday, 19 October  
    **Venue**                    East Toowoomba State School

**Info:** Guest speaker will be Mark Weaver from QPWS. Mark will present a slide show on research he was involved in on the Golden-shouldered Parrot. Visitors welcome. Please bring a plate.

**October Species Census**                **Location:**                TBOI Survey Area  
    **Date:**                    30-31 October  
    **Coordinator:**                Michael Atzeni                                07 4639 2761

**Info:** Always a great weekend, despite the hectic pace. Help make this year's tally the best so far. More about this next month.

**OOS Twitchathon**                        **Dates:**                    7/8 November (noon to noon)  
    **Registrations:**                Fred Armbrust                                07 3239 0010

**November Outing**                        **Location:**                Ravensbourne NP  
    **Date:**                    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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TOOWOOMBA  
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