

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

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It's always enjoyable to bring good news and the good news this month is the number of new members joining our club this month and over the last few months. New members add strength and variety to a club and help to keep our outlook fresh and energetic. We always look forward to seeing new (and old) members at club outings and one of the club's aims is to communicate as much information as possible to members. At outings experienced members always endeavour to help others with identifications and share their knowledge.

The July field trip to Woodland State Forest and Apex Lake should be a fun family day. Woodlands Forest is fairly open with a variety of habitats and it is planned to lunch by the Lake, where facilities are good and the surroundings extremely pleasant.

June's trip to the Museum proved rather disappointing with many members unable to attend for various reasons. It is hoped that a similar trip can be arranged in the future. Perhaps members would find it easier to attend on a Sunday rather than a Saturday.

The Executive are keen to provide members with the kind of outings and information which they want. To this end, we hope to attach a questionnaire to the August news-sheet to try and determine your needs and preferences. This information can then be discussed at the Annual General Meeting.

The A.G.M. is to be held on 20th October, 1978 at which the final details of the Bird Count will be arranged. The count will be on Sunday, 22nd October, 1978 and we hope that members will keep these dates free. The Bird Count provides valued and useful scientific data and it is a day on which all members can participate either as watchers, record keepers, drivers or merely as supporters.

Sue Elmes,  
Editor.

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRDS.

198. Red-crowned Pigeon (*Ptilinopus regina*). 8.7.78. 81, Campbell St., T'mba.

This rather exotic bird flew into Mrs. H. Kennedy's laundry at the above address at 9.30 p.m. and after recovering from the sudden confusion of captivity, the bird found security by perching under the laundry tubs. Miss Louise Rumsey was contacted and eventually, via Mr. Leslie Boyce, the T.B.C. Louise transported the pigeon in a cage down to Ringmere, Withcott, for identification and release on 9.7.78.

Many members were fortunate enough to see this reputedly nomadic pigeon for the first time and in perfect plumage viz: generally green above, purplish-red crown with yellow edging, bright orange abdomen, yellowish/orange undertail-coverts, tail tipped yellow. Concluded it was a male bird because of orange abdomen, lacking in the female, and overall brighter plumage. After release at 3.30 pm. it flew up and perched happily in a spotted gum.

## SCOTTING THEM OUT - DUCKS.

Within our local study area we have recorded just five species of duck, these being the Plumed Tree-duck (*Dendrocygna eytoni*), Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*), Grey Teal (*Anas gibberifrons*), White-eyed Duck (*Aythya australis*) and Wood Duck (*Chenonetta jubata*). But we should perhaps be fairly content with this figure if we consider the sad lack of large bodies of water and swampy habitat in our area. However, we've only to go as far as Gatton Apex Lake, Lake Clarendon, Dyer's Lagoon or Cooby Dam, for example, to find a wealth of variety of wildfowl. So we'll take a look at the ducks one might hope to encounter in the Lockyer Valley, Brisbane coastal areas and up as far as Caloundra.

A common misconception among non-birdwatchers and beginners is to assume, quite understandably, that the Little Grebe is a small duck of some kind because of superficial likenesses and habits, but it does in fact belong to a completely different order (Podicipediformes) to ducks (Anseriformes) and it would be preferable to think that the public in general were sufficiently aware of this fact to give the subject on our beautiful new 20c stamp full credit for being a Little Grebe (*Podiceps novaehollandiae*).

The smallest duck we are likely to see in the above areas is the White Plover Goose (*Nettapus coromandelianus*) measuring 35cm (the Little Grebe being just 23cm) and is easily identified by its all white face and neck, dark crown, dark back and pale flanks. Male has black collar and female a prominent eye stripe. Although considered fairly uncommon we have on numerous occasions been fortunate enough to see this lovely bird at Gatton Apex Lake and Dyer's Lagoon.

Another fairly small duck is the Grey Teal (*Anas gibberifrons*) at 40cm, which is dainty with rather non-descript, brownish plumage and a bright red eye, and is likely to turn up on any piece of water. It should in fact be possible, with a little effort, to see most members of this largest genus (*Anas*) in the areas mentioned, namely Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) 50cm, which is by far our most abundant duck with its bold white and black facial streaks and green wing speculum; Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) 56cm, an introduced species and a close relative of the Black Duck with which it's known to interbreed, the male bird having a striking green head, white collar, yellow bill and blue wing speculum, the female is rather like the Black Duck in size and colour but without facial streaks; Chestnut Teal (*Anas castanea*) 43cm, a bird which one can only reasonably expect to see mainly at saltwater estuaries and has a green head, rich chestnut breast and underparts, female has no chestnut but mottled shades of brown similar to Grey Teal but darker; Blue-winged Shoveler (*Anas rhynchotis*) 51cm - bill 7.5cm, which has a large spatulate bill, general dark brown colouration with pale blue shoulder patch. A pair were seen recently at a lagoon near Grantham.

There are only two members in our next genus *Dendrocygna*; the Whistling Tree-duck (*Dendrocygna arcuata*) 46cm, which has blackish upperparts, chestnut belly and shoulders and upturned buff flank feathers. As a rule it prefers deep, tropical lagoons but has been seen on the coast near Brisbane; and the Plumed Tree-duck (*Dendrocygna eytoni*) 43cm, with its very distinctive upright posture and elongated upturned flank feathers. Commonly seen at lagoons hereabouts in large, noisy flocks.

The Pink-eared Duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*) 40cm - bill 6.5cm, has also been seen recently at a lagoon near Grantham, and has strange zebra-like markings on its underparts and sides and keeps its large spatulate bill almost immersed as it glides in a flotilla across the water, feeding. Although superficially like the Shoveler it is not thought to be closely related and probably belongs to a section of a sub-family of dabbling ducks. Its affinities have not as yet been thoroughly determined.

The White-eyed Duck (*Aythya australis*) 51cm, is the only Australian representative of the genus *Aythya* (diving ducks). Its plumage is uniformly dark, reddish brown, with white wing bar and male only has the white eye. It prefers deep water and dives frequently for its food. We have until recently been enjoying the company of a solitary White-eyed Duck on our dam here at Ringmere.

SORTING THEM OUT - DUCKS (cont/d.)

Often called maned goose, the Wood Duck (*Chenonetta jubata*) 48cm, is the only member of the genus *Chenonetta* and is unique to Australia. It needs only the smallest amount of water and is a fairly common bird in our local study area. The male has a dark brown head, neck and 'mane', generally grey with brown mottling on breast and flanks, small bill. Female has lighter brown head with two white face bands separated by dark band through eye. Its call is a distinctive mournful mew and cluck.

We were very excited on a club outing to Cooby Dam last January, to come across Musk Duck (*Biziura lobata*). An extraordinary and very large duck, approximately 65cm, with overall black-brown plumage, broad dark bill with large pendulous lobe hanging under it - lacking in the female. It dives for food.

We can perhaps hope, with the prospect of the large dam/lagoon which is in the process of construction on Hood's property at Helidon (the club had an outing there back in March, T.B.C. News-sheet No. 28), to add to our local study area a new dimension regarding wildfowl and wader records.

Eileen Jolly.

References.

- FRITH H. (Cons. ed.), Reader's Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds,  
Reader's Digest, Sydney, 1976.  
MACDONALD J.D., Birds of Australia, A.H. & A.W. Reed, Sydney, 1973.  
SLATER P.J., A Field Guide to Australian Birds: Non-passerines, Oliver & Boyd,  
Edinburgh, 1971.

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BOOK REVIEW: NEW ZEALAND BIRDS by W.R.B. Oliver,  
published by A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1930.

Hey now, don't panic - I realise a book review for a text that is forty-eight years old is somewhat extraordinary, but so is the book. Actually, a second edition in 1955 appeared and my copy (not complementary) is a facsimile edition for libraries which does not include the colour plates of earlier editions. Oliver described his book in 1930 as a "handy reference work" on New Zealand birds and indeed it is "handy" in the sense of comprehensive, systematic and clear. It is not handy in terms of bulk, bring a large book of 661 pages. Almost every page includes a photograph (monochrome) or sketch. These illustrations are perhaps not the best pictures of birds around these days for colour photography and telephoto techniques have been perfected, but look at the text - clear precise prose written authoritatively by a person with professional zoological standing (D.Sc., F.R.S.N.Z.) and the experience of an enthusiastic naturalist (Director of the Dominion Museum, Wellington, 1928-47 and Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, 1947-48). An earlier publication by Oliver was titled The Moas of New Zealand and Australia.

The book in style and format is not unlike Macdonald. There are fifty-one pages of introduction covering in some detail the history of ornithological discovery in New Zealand, changes in fauna, economic value of birds and classificatory points. The text is then an order by order account of the birds starting with O.Apterygiformes ("Kiwis" for the uninitiated). There is also an index.

So much for the book itself, now what does it say that makes it worth reviewing today. A few brief stories.

Oliver tells us that ornithology began in New Zealand four days after racial strife. For three days, from October 8th, 1769, Captain James Cook's men from the "Endeavour" shot Maoris but on the fourth day they shot birds at Tolga Bay. Cook noted that the woods abounded with a great variety of beautiful birds. Later it is recorded they shot shags (cormorants) and gannets for the pot. At Queen Charlotte Sound on 6th

(cont/d.)

BOOK REVIEW: NEW ZEALAND BIRDS (cont/d.)

January, 1770, a three weeks collection of plants and birds was undertaken. The bodies or the skins of the birds were salted. Dr. Daniel Charles Solande made careful descriptions of the species but his manuscript was never published and a portion of it is now in the British Museum. It records twelve petrels, the gannet and the skua. Oliver, being oriented towards European history and culture neglects the Maoris' discovery of birds, but the fact is that they named all the species and had a considerable knowledge of ethology.

Actually, Dr. Oliver was an Australian(?). He was born in Launceston, Tasmania, and migrated to New Zealand at the age of twelve. He died in 1957 after receiving many awards and holding a number of very senior positions including the Presidency of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union in 1943-44.

BACK TO THE HISTORY. It was Cook's second visit, with the "Resolution" and "Adventure" in 1773, which enabled three naturalists to make extensive notes on the birds and a substantial collection. Two of the naturalists, John and George Forster were father and son. They collected 38 species and George made drawings of 35. The Forsters' material, along with the earlier collections were used by Latham when writing his General Synopsis of Birds but it was J.F. Gmelin who reaped a rich harvest by merely converting Latham's work into Latin diagnoses and bestowing on the birds binomial names. Hence, Gmelin became thought of as the authority!

Well, the book is full of interesting stories of a factual kind as well as a plea (in 1930 mind), for conservation. Dr. Oliver was very concerned that the Maori people had been responsible for reducing the variety of the huge wingless birds, moas. The destruction of swamp, the introduction of mammals and the burning of scrub were also lamented.

Australians may be interested that the Laughing Kookaburra (Dacelo gigas), was released in New Zealand between 1866 and 1880. They survived nowhere at first except on Kawau Island and then those increased and some eventually crossed to the mainland. That was all a long time ago. What their status is today I do not know, however, I have never seen or heard one in New Zealand, although I've spent some time in the bush in the areas Oliver mentions.

In short, today this book remains relevant, interesting and above all, readable.

Robert Shaw.

SOME UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS NEAR TOOWOOMBA.

Alison Herbertson who teaches with me at Mt. Lofty, has seen Turquoise Parrots (Neophema pulchella) on several occasions at her property near Cabarlah in the last month. A small group of birds was frequently seen feeding and calling in low foliage and on the ground. The birds are small, about Budgerigar size, the males having a brilliant turquoise face and forehead with a blue wing and a red shoulder patch. The birds are basically green above and yellow below. Females are paler without the red shoulder patch.

Jeff Nolan reports the sighting of Southern Whitefaces (Aphelocephala nigricincta) at Leyburn last month. I found this sighting very interesting as when I was just beginning birdwatching in 1975 I thought I saw a group of these birds at the Middle Ridge Water and Gravel Reserves (beside the power station).

These are two birds we should keep a look out for, particularly uprange as they are not coastal birds.

John Coman.

EXOTIC NEW BIRD FOR LOCKYER VALLEY -  
PEACH-FACED LOVEBIRD (Agapornis roseicollis).

A large flock of what we presume to be escaped aviary birds has been noted in the Lockyer Valley and especially in the Gatton area. Approximately 35+ of these birds was sighted in the grounds and surroundings of the Gatton Kindergarten. The birds were seen on wires and in trees and were easily approached up to a few feet. Two photographs were taken from close range and they were easily identified as Peach-faced Lovebirds.

Other sightings from the Gatton area have been reported from students at the Lockyer District High School, who feel they are sure of their identification as they are familiar with aviary specimens.

It will be interesting to see if other sightings are reported and if they become a breeding population, their normal habitat being Africa.

Sue Elmes.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES.

- Australian Pelican. 3.6.78. Apex Lake, Gatton. MJ. SP.  
(Resident, month of June) Apex Lake, Gatton. SE. PE.  
24.6.78. Westbrook Creek. ER. MR.
- Large Egret. 18.6.78. "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ. WJ.
- Yellow-billed Spoonbill. 11.6.78. Southbrook. DN.
- White-eyed Duck. 5.6.78. "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ. WJ.
- White Pygmy-goose. 16.6.78. Townsville Common. RGH.
- Black Kite. 24.3.78. (16) Picnic Point. MD. CD.  
2.6.78. (1) Gatton. SE.  
3.6.78. (1) Gatton area. MJ. SP.  
7.6.78. (1) Wilsonton. PG.  
8.6.78. (20) Gatton. PE.  
12.6.78. (1) North St., T'mba. MW.  
13.6.78. (1) Gatton. PE.  
16.6.78. (1) Gatton. PE.  
18.6.78. (1) East Ck. Park. RW. VW.  
19.6.78. (2) Withcott. WJ.  
19.6.78. (1) Gatton. PE.  
22.6.78. (1) "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ.  
29.6.78. (1) Helidon. SE.  
(1) Grantham. SE.  
(1) Gatton. SE.  
30.6.78. (2) Gatton. SE.
- Square-tailed Kite. 10.6.78. Anzac Av., T'mba. PG.
- Wedge-tailed Eagle. 5.6.78. "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ. WJ.  
21.5.78. Tabletop. AD. CD.  
29.5.78. Tabletop. AD. CD.
- Scrubfowl. 2.7.78. Esk Island. RGH.
- Bush Stone-curlew. 2.7.78. Esk Island. RGH.
- Australian Pratincole. 20.6.78. Townsville Airport. RGH.
- White-headed Pigeon. 21.6.78. Palm Island. RGH.
- Fan-tailed Cuckoo. 25.6.78. Oakey. JMC.
- Barn Owl. 1.6.78. Rangeview. JEC.  
4.6.78. Ocean St. GC. JEC.
- Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike. 21/23.6.78. (100plus) Oakey. JMC.
- Rose Robin. 4.6.78. Redwood Park. DN.
- Plum-headed Finches. 4.6.78. (100plus) "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ. WJ.

JMC: John Coman. GC: Graham Corbin. JEC: Jim Corbin. PE: Phillip Elmes.  
SE: Sue Elmes. CD: Coranne Dolley. MD: Mick Dolley. PG: Paul Gredig.  
RGH: Rod Hobson. MJ: Marilyn Jacobs. EJ: Eileen Jolly. WJ: Bill Jolly.  
DN: David Newlands. SP: Sandra Pottinger. ER: Elizabeth Russell. MR:  
Mike Russell. RW: Ron Wilson. VW: Viv Wilson. MW: Max Wood.

FIELD TRIP FOR JULY.

Date: Sunday, 23rd July.

Locality: Gatton Area - Apex Lake and Woodlands State Forest.

Leaders: Sue and Phillip Elmes.

Meeting arrangements: Withcott Hotel, 8.30 a.m. Sunday, 23rd July.

FIELD TRIP FOR AUGUST.

Date: Sunday, 27th August.

Locality: Flagstone Creek Area.

Leader: Ron Hopkinson.

NEW MEMBERS.

The Club is pleased to welcome the following new members:

Mary Coman, 16, Gray St., Toowoomba.

Louise Rumsey, 11, Wyndham St., Toowoomba.

Margaret & Brough Warren, c/- Toowoomba Grammar School.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

Urimburra, Vol.12, No. 5, May, 1978.

Q.O.S. Newsletter, Vol. 9, No. 5, May, 1978.  
Vol. 9, No. 6, June, 1978.

The Bird Observer, May, 1978.  
June, 1978.

The Darling Downs Naturalist, June, 1978.

Toowoomba Field Nat. Club Newsletter, July, 1978.

New Subscription: ECOS. No. 16, May, 1978.

This magazine contains findings by the CSIRO division on Environmental Research and is extremely interesting, not only for articles on bird and animal life but on all aspects of our environment.

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