

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

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NEWS-SHEET No. 32 - AUGUST, 1978.

The club's executive is very keen to see that the club and news-sheets provide outings and information which is of value and interest to club members. As a club we have no formal avenues for finding out members' views and our informal outings rarely touch on this. To overcome this problem and to try and plan the club's future so that it continues to be an active and enthusiastic group, we have included a Questionnaire with this month's news-sheets. The questionnaire is fairly comprehensive, but we would ask you to think carefully about it and answer as fully as possible. These may be returned to any member of the executive or with August gold checklists, in time to allow collation of results for our next news-sheet.

On reading this news-sheet and when you fill out your gold checklist, some changes will be noted. Members will be aware that we follow the R.A.O.U, in using the Recommended English Names for Australian Birds. As published in Emu, Vol. 77, Supplement, May 1978, this list has been updated. Following club policy our gold checklists have been updated using the new nomenclature, with names used by Slater in brackets, where these are different. This will take some time to adjust to, but it is important to maintain uniformity throughout birdwatching organisations in Australia and the world. Please refer to the article on the new nomenclature for further information.

Our July outing to the Gatton area proved successful despite very windy weather. Our August outing is to the Flagstone Creek area and I look forward to seeing you then.

Sue Elmes,
Editor.

FROM MY WINDOW.

My staffroom at school overlooks a row of Grevilleas which was planted about 3 years ago. Grevilleas are remarkably quick-growing plants and these shrubs flowered while quite small in their first spring. By next spring the bushes were well established and were incorporated into the daily feeding rounds of our resident Brown Honeyeaters. It was a rare treat to observe the Noisy Friarbirds from a range of 5 or 6 metres, feeding from the flowers.

Last year the area was graced with the presence of a lone Blue-faced Honeyeater for a few weeks in spring. Even more spectacular was the daily appearance of a pair of Eastern Spinebills from mid-July to mid-September. The Spinebills were only observed feeding at times when the Brown Honeyeaters were not around.

(cont/d.)

FROM MY WINDOW (cont/d.)

This year the Spinebills appeared in mid-July again. On their second appearance a Brown Honeyeater arrived and a skirmish broke out immediately. One of the Spinebills flew off and the other continued a running (or is it flying) battle from bush to bush with the Brown Honeyeater. For the following week classes in the Biology Laboratory were often interrupted by loud calls and violent dive-bombing and wing-clipping of the honeyeaters.

The larger Brown Honeyeater seems to have finally won the day. If the spinebill is in the area and the honeyeater arrives, heralding his approach by a few loud calls, the spinebill moves out of the bush that the Brown Honeyeater lands in.

Whether either of them will be seen there much longer probably depends on the remarkable learning capacity of the House Sparrows. The resident flocks at the school have learnt to supplement their diet of playground scraps, seeds and insects with nectar. They obtain it by biting off the flower, squeezing it in their beaks and sucking the juice. So far only the large flowers of the Grevillea Robin Gordon have been destroyed in this way. The other Grevilleas have smaller flowers but have not been used by the sparrows. The honeyeaters seem to be spending more time in these now. I'm looking forward to more birding in this bit of the school garden and hope the honeyeaters are a permanent part of its food web.

John Coman.

A FEW NOTES ON THE SUB-FAMILY TINALLINAE,
WHICH MAY WELL BE UNDER-REPRESENTED ON THE CHECKLIST.

Order: Passeriformes (perching birds)
Sub-order: Oscines (song-birds)
Family: Muscicapidae (primitive insect eaters)
Sub-family: Tinaliinae Babblers.

The babblers have been the subject of various reclassifications by systematicists. In Australia there appear to be four distinct groups:

- (a) Rail babblers - groundliving, distinct calls,
- (b) Scimitar babblers - long down curved bills and white eyebrows,
- (c) Whipbirds - long tail, crest, groundliving, distinct call,
- (d) Mud nest builders.

On our T.B.C. checklist appears Eastern Whipbird and Grey-crowned Babbler. A cursory examination of distribution maps which are notorious for their inaccuracy reveals that we should be on the lookout for Southern Log-runners, Spotted Quail-thrush and White-browed Babbler. Here I wish to pursue the White-browed Babbler.

Following a good principle of teaching we will begin with the known and proceed to the unknown. The known, in this case, is the Grey-crowned Babbler. Three of them were recorded in the 'Downrange' list from the Annual Bird Census 23.10.77. These birds are very easily identified by their unmusical call (a cat-like "meow", churring soft "tak") and gregarious habit. They occur in groups or perhaps pairs (they mate for life) and actively flit from tree to tree.

In physical appearance you will notice the broadly white tipped blade tail and the white throat and the white striped head, first off. More careful examination will reveal the pale cinnamon-brown patch concealed under the wing, and the grey centre crown which shades into a white forehead and eyebrow.

These birds protect a territory and often find themselves involved in standoffs with intruders such as Noisy Miners. They would be a good group to study should you want to break into the field of ethology (study of animal behaviour).

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Now to the White-browed Babbler, which is very similar in appearance to the Grey-crowned as described above. It is, however, distinguished from the Grey-crowned by its darker crown and the lack of the cinnamon-brown wing patch (which is only distinguishable in flight anyway). Hence we could easily make a mistake here. So look carefully and it could be you and a friend who put the White-browed Babbler on the T.B.C. checklist,

Robert Shaw.

VERNACULAR NAMES.

For nearly three years the Toowoomba Bird Club has accepted the nomenclature of the R.A.O.U. 1975 Checklist (Part One) and Interim List of Australian Songbirds as the model for both scientific and vernacular usage. We were perhaps a little premature when in News-sheet No. 4 (January 1976) we allowed ourselves to express the hope that our newly adopted model might hold good for at least the next twenty years!

In the event a committee of the Council of the R.A.O.U. has this year finalised a list of official R.A.O.U. English Names for Australian Birds which has been published in a supplement to the Emu (May 1978) and which the R.A.O.U. has now accepted as its standard.

Our Editor has already made reference to the value of maintaining uniformity in the matter of vernacular usage, a value which is implicit in the statement of the Council of the R.A.O.U. to the effect that they will now practice what they preach by using this new vernacular in their own publications.

While the new list confirms many of the changes which were suggested in the 1975 Checklist there have been a number of reversions to pre-'75 usage and also a small number of still newer adoptions. The principles underlying the decisions made do not differ in any substantial regard from those established in 1975 (refer T.B.C. News-sheet No. 5 - February 1976) and are clearly set out in the May 1978 Supplement which will be available for members' inspection at our August 27th field trip.

While members may look forward to exploring the full list of recommended names on that occasion it is my aim at this time to present a brief outline of some of the changes which have taken place, with particular regard to those species which are represented on our Local Study Area Checklist. I have specified all changes which affect local species on a newly revised Checklist which accompanies this news-sheet so I will not now attempt to discuss all those changes here, but merely to draw the reader's attention to a selection of the more significant or dramatic alterations.

Partly in deference to the well-established use of the name "White-necked Heron" for a South American species, and partly in order to do away with the sometimes confusion between references to White-necked Herons and White-faced Herons, the former bird is now referred to as Pacific Heron. A more cumbersome name-change to a closely related bird is the substitution of Intermediate Egret for Plumed Egret, but then all egrets do have plumes when breeding, the Great Egret is clearly greater, and the Little Egret is clearly 'littler'! The rest of the world knows the White Ibis as the Sacred Ibis and now we shall too.

Australia's only pochard, familiarly known to many as the White-eyed Duck, is found on the new list as Hardhead, while the battle between those who prefer one or other of Wood Duck or Maned Goose as a label for that individual has led to the compromise of Maned Duck.

Close relations of the Crested Hawk are known elsewhere by a variety of names including 'Baza' leading to our sole representative now being re-christened Pacific Baza. Affinities between two other Australian birds of prey and their overseas brethren have also been recognised with the adoption of Australian Hobby for Little Falcon and Marsh Harrier for Swamp Harrier.

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VERNACULAR NAMES (cont/d.)

Similarly, our large plovers the Spur-winged or Masked and the Banded now take the descriptive noun of others of their genus, i.e. Masked Lapwing and Banded Lapwing, whereas their smaller relatives of the genus Charadrius, hitherto referred to as dotterels in Australia, become the plovers others in the world have always held them to be, e.g. Black-fronted Plover.

Rufous-tailed Bronze-Cuckoo was a short-lived appellation for the now restored Horsefield's Bronze-Cuckoo, while the Boobook Owl also regains something of his old identity with Spotted Owl losing favour to Southern Boobook.

Although there is only one species of Spine-tailed Swift in Australia there are several others known as Needletails throughout Asia leading to a not unreasonable view of our bird as White-throated Needletail.

Among the Passerines many of the changes recognised in the Interim List have been confirmed, there are again some innovations and just a few reversions to former usage.

Changes dating from 1975 which are maintained include those concerning the Cuckoo-shrikes, Monarchs, Thornbills and Firetails. Among the innovations are the introduction of White's Thrush in lieu of Scaly Thrush or Australian Ground Thrush; the use of Gerygone for species of that genus, e.g. White-throated Gerygone rather than White-throated Warbler; and the distinguishing of our Australian Fairy-wrens from the troglodytid wrens with Superb Fairy-wren for Superb Blue Wren, and with Variiegated Fairy-wren and Red-backed Fairy-wren.

One re-acceptance of former usage which will be welcomed by many is that of Regent Bowerbird in preference to Australian Regentbird.

With effect from this issue of our News-sheet the Toowoomba Bird Club has adopted this standardised vernacular which will no doubt soon become familiar to members through their use of the revised checklist to which I have already referred. I should point out that there has been no change to classification or sequence or to scientific names, all of which continue to follow the 1975 Checklist and Interim List.

Bill Jolly.

LONG-BILLED CORELLAS.

How long does an escapee live in freedom before he can be classified as a resident? This important question has been asked several times lately.

For the past 2 years an odd galah has been seen at the Bedford Street dump but it has only just been found not to be a galah but is a Long-billed Corella. The only trouble is that the Long-billed Corella is only found in Victoria or Western Australia. This means this bird must be an escapee and not a resident so cannot be counted as a Toowoomba bird.

However, for all those who wish to see the bird it can be seen at the dump any afternoon from about 4 p.m. dining on the town's leftovers. A quick look around the dump or in the field just below the dump should reveal a white bird the size of a galah, resembling a galah but with a short tail, with a red flash around his eyes and across his breast. He also can be found by his continual screech in flight and occasional screech on the ground.

Graham Corbin.

(Editor's note).

There appear to be three Long-billed Corellas in the Toowoomba and Withcott areas. There is also a flock of Little Corellas in this vicinity which are believed to have escaped some years ago. However, it is impossible to say these are the same birds, and yet one continues to wonder if some new wild birds may not have joined the group. Perhaps members could give their own views to the Editor.

JULY OUTING - GATTON AREA.

After an extremely windy and somewhat inauspicious start to the morning with very few birds being seen on the choppy water of a lagoon on Grantham Scrub Road, members were rewarded with a successful outing with a total of 63 species being recorded.

A sheltered dam just north of Gatton was visited, with members having good views of many waterbirds, including a Great Cormorant, Hardhead, Australian Hobby and Comb-crested Jacana. We then moved on to a swamp near Redbank Creek, where Whistling Kite flew over several times. After much discussion, members confirmed numbers of Cattle Egret and some Intermediate Egrets. One of the highlights of the day was the sighting of a Marsh Harrier cruising low over the water of the swamp.

Our next stop was the Woodland State Forest, just south of Gatton, where members braved rather rough roads to find a very pleasant picnic spot. During lunch we were visited by a Wedge-tailed Eagle, Rainbow Bee-eaters, Golden and Rufous Whistlers and Fuscous Honeyeaters. After a short walk in the forest, members moved to Apex Lake in Gatton before heading home.

Sue & Phillip Elmes.

Species List - Gatton Area - 23.7.78.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Hoary-headed Grebe | Black-fronted Plover |
| Australasian Grebe | Black-winged Stilt |
| Australian Pelican | Feral Pigeon |
| Darter | Galah |
| Great Cormorant | Scaly-breasted Lorikeet |
| Little Black Cormorant | Little Lorikeet |
| Little Pied Cormorant | Cockatiel |
| Pacific Heron | Pale-headed Rosella |
| White-faced Heron | Laughing Kookaburra |
| Cattle Egret | Rainbow Bee-eater |
| Great Egret | White-backed Swallow |
| Intermediate Egret | Welcome Swallow |
| Straw-necked Ibis | Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike |
| Royal Spoonbill | Jacky Winter |
| Black Swan | Golden Whistler |
| Pacific Black Duck | Rufous Whistler |
| Grey Teal | Grey Fantail |
| Hardhead | Willie Wagtail |
| Maned Duck | Red-backed Fairy-wren |
| Black-shouldered Kite | Yellow Thornbill |
| Black Kite | Noisy Miner |
| Whistling Kite | Fuscous Honeyeater |
| Wedge-tailed Eagle | Striated Pardalote |
| Spotted Harrier(en route) | House Sparrow |
| Marsh Harrier | Common Starling |
| Australian Hobby | Common Mynah |
| Australian Kestrel | Australian Magpie-lark |
| Dusky Moorhen | Dusky Woodswallow |
| Purple Swamphen | Pied Butcherbird |
| Eurasian Coot | Australian Magpie |
| Comb-crested Jacana | Torresian Crow. |
| Masked Lapwing | |

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES.

- Australasian Shoveler. 8.7.78. Gatton. PE. SE.
9.7.78. Gatton. PE. SE.
Pink-eared Duck. 8.7.78. Gatton. PE. SE.
9.7.78. Gatton. PE. SE. REH. EJ. WJ.
21.7.78. Schulz's Lagoon. JMC.

(cont/d.)

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES (cont/d.)

- Black Kite. 4.7.78. Toowoomba State High School. MS.
5.7.78. (30 plus) Toowoomba Airport. MS.
11.7.78. Ocean St. JEC.
11.7.78. North Toowoomba. PG.
12.7.78. Gatton. PG.
19.7.78. (7) Gatton. PG.
21.7.78. (45 plus) Bridge St. & Tor St. PG.
25.7.78. (5) " " " " PG.
25.7.78. West Oakey. PG.
30.7.78. Warwick. MJ. SP.
- Square-tailed Kite. 22.7.78. Eymard St. MW.
12.7.78. Helidon. PG.
- Brown Goshawk. 29.7.78. Ocean St. JEC.
- Wedge-tailed Eagle. 8.7.78. Ma Ma Creek. SE. PE.
8.7.78. Upper Pilton. SE. PE.
11.7.78. Spa Park. REH.
- Emerald Dove. 3.7.78. Rangeview (Mt. Kynoch) GC.
4.7.78. " " " " JEC.
- Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo. 18.7.78. (4) Rangeview. JEC.
- Long-billed Corella. 24.7.78. Dolley's property, Withcott. CD. EJ.
24.7.78. "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ.
- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. 31.7.78. "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ.
- Musk Lorikeet. 13.7.78. (1 or more flocks) Tobruk Drive. MW.
20.7.78. (c18) Range Street. LAB.
- Red-rumped Parrot. 30.7.78. "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ. WJ. HMCK. NMCK.
- Southern Boobook. 3.7.78. Rangeview. GC.
21.7.78. (heard) Eymard St. MW.
- Ground Cuckoo-shrike. 20.7.78. (3) "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ.
- Varied Triller. 3.7.78. (2) Rangeview. GC.
- Rose Robin. 8.7.78. Ravensbourne. MW. BW.
9.7.78. "Ringmere", Withcott. REH. WJ.
- Grey Shrike-thrush. 8.7.78. Kearney St. EJ. WJ.
- Eastern Spinebill. 13.7.78. Bass St. REH.
- Scarlet Honeyeater. 21.7.78. Eymard St. MW.
- Regent Bowerbird. 3.7.78. Rangeview. GC.
- Green Catbird. 8.7.78. Ravensbourne. BW.

LAB: Leslie Boyce. GC: Graham Corbin. JEC: Jim Corbin. JMC: John Coman.
CD: Coranne Dolley. PG: Paul Gredig. PE: Phillip Elmes. SE: Sue Elmes.
REH: Ron Hopkinson. EJ: Eileen Jolly. MJ: Marilyn Jacobs. WJ: Bill Jolly.
HMCK: Helen McKilligan. NMCK: Neil McKilligan. SP: Sandra Pottinger.
MS: Mark Stewart. BW: Brough Warren. MW (Rose Robin): Margaret Warren.
MW (other): Max Wood.

FIELD TRIP FOR AUGUST.

Date: Sunday, 27th August. Locality: Flagstone Creek & Helidon.
Leader: Ron Hopkinson. Time: 8.30 a.m. Cnr. Stenner & Mackenzie Sts.
(Opposite Gabbinbar School).

NEW MEMBERS.

The Club is pleased to welcome the following new members:

- Brian & Kath Fowler, "Ravenswood", Felton Rd., Southbrook, 4352.
Keith & Alison Herbertson, 31, Kate St., Toowoomba.
Neil & Helen McKilligan, 4, Stockwell St., Toowoomba.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED:- Q.O.S. Newsletter, July, 1978.
Urimburra, Vol.12/6, June, 1978, Vol.12/7, July, 1978.
The Bird Observer, July/August, 1978.

QUESTIONNAIRE.

In an effort to ensure that all members have the club and news-sheet which meets their needs and interests, it would be appreciated if you expressed your views on the following.

Please circle the appropriate reply.

1. What is the best day for you to attend a club outing?
 - a) Saturday
 - b) Sunday

2. What is the best time for you to attend an outing?
 - a) morning - please specify a time a.m.
 - b) afternoon - please specify a time p.m.

3. What type of outing do you prefer?
 - a) field trips
 - b) museum outings
 - c) other - please specify

4. Please suggest places you would like to go to for:
 - a) field trips
 - b) museum outings
 - c) other

5. What is the maximum distance you would be prepared to travel for an outing?
 - a) $\frac{1}{2}$ hr. drive
 - b) 1 hr. drive
 - c) $1\frac{1}{2}$ hr. drive
 - d) 2 hr. drive
 - e) other - please specify

6. Would you prefer to help select outing locations?
 - a) yes
 - b) no

7. If yes, how could this best be done:
 - a) include a list of places in the news-sheet and have people return their preferences on a tear-off sheet to be returned with the gold checklist.
 - b) other ways - please specify

8. Do you think week-end camp-outs are worthwhile?

a) yes - please explain why

b) no - please explain why not

9. If you have been unable to attend a camp-out to date, what was the reason?

a) the date was not convenient - please explain

b) the travelling required - please explain

c) all members of the family are not interested in birdwatching.

d) some of the children are too young.

e) any other reasons - please specify.

10. What suggestions would you like to make, to improve camp-outs?

a) more suitable times of the year - please list convenient times

b) more suitable locations - please list

c) alternative activities which the location offers so those not interested in birds can enjoy themselves

d) alternative ways of organising the week-end so all members of the family are catered for

e) if you feel the week-end should not be an organised one, please make suggestions as to how it would be better run

11. Apart from outings and camp-outs, are there any other activities which you think would be of interest?

a) film or slide nights - any suggestions for sorts of films, or where they could be obtained

b) guest speakers - any suggestions for topics, or people who could be invited

c) any other suggestions

12. We have an annual meeting to elect the executive and discuss club business and projects - do you think it would be useful to have other meetings?

a) yes

b) no

13. If yes, what could be the purpose of the meetings? Please suggest worthwhile points for discussion or matters which could be organised (e.g. projects).

14. If no, why not?

15. If meetings were held, how often would be most convenient for you?
 - a) monthly
 - b) quarterly
 - c) six monthly.

16. Do you think the club should be more actively involved in projects, such as the Black-shouldered Kite study, or smaller projects?
 - a) yes
 - b) no.

17. If yes, please make suggestions

18. Are there any features of the news-sheet which you think could be improved?
 - a) Layout - please suggest improvements

 - b) Articles - please suggest changes, or types of articles you would like included

 - c) Notification of outings - please make suggestions

 - d) Any other suggestions

19. Are there any comments or suggestions you would like to make on a point not already covered? General remarks about anything related to the club?