

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

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NEWS-SHEET No. 34 - OCTOBER, 1978.

The September Campout to the Bunyas was very successful with many members observing species new to them. Unfortunately the Sooty Owl we had all come to see, was having a weekend holiday away from the Bunyas!!

October is the month in which the Club's A.G.M. and Annual Bird Count are held and in some ways this makes October the most important month in the Club's calendar. All members of our club are important and their participation at both the A.G.M. and the Bird Count is valued. Dates for these events are:

Annual General Meeting - Friday, 20th October, 7.30 p.m.  
Annual Bird Count - Sunday, 22nd October.

Offers of help for the bird count may be phoned to Bill Jolly at 30.3206 (home) or work at D.D.I.A.E. 30.1300.

Nominations for the club executive must be lodged with the secretary by 7.30 pm. on 20/10/78. Nominations presently to hand include President - Bill Jolly; Secretary/Treasurer - Mike Russell and Editor/Records Officer - Sue Elmes.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the A.G.M.

Sue Elmes,  
Editor.

QUESTIONNAIRE.

I would like to thank those members who returned completed questionnaires. Clear cut results are difficult to outline when dealing with small numbers; but some overall impressions can be obtained. The majority of members who returned the questionnaire appear to be satisfied with most of the club's activities. Some ideas such as suggested locations for outings and distances to travel have been noted for the future.

Members were overwhelmingly in favour of campouts which is encouraging and some informal club meetings, perhaps quarterly. General satisfaction with the club news-sheet was expressed.

Sue Elmes.

### MAGPIE LARKS.

We have observed for some years at Brodie Street on the eastern edge of the Range, and now at Baringa on the edge of the Downs, that Magpie Larks flock in August, often thirty to forty. Once the flocks disperse after about a week or less, a pair remains and nests.

At Brodie Street the nest was a perennial one to which they added until the branch broke (probably due to fungal infection beneath the mud as much as weight). They then continued to nest in the same brush box. Now at Baringa we think, but can't be sure, that this is a new nest (in a Blakely's blue gum).

What is the significance of the flocking in this non-migratory bird? Is this a dispersal phase in which the site owners, triggered by seeing their territory and nest, become territorial and separate off from the group? If so what of the immatures? Do they keep going until a pair finds a suitable site and they then repel the ever-depleting flock to further, and presumably less suitable, sites?

Mike and Elizabeth Russell.

### HERON ISLAND BIRD SCHOOL: 3RD-10TH DECEMBER.

The programme for this school consists of lectures/discussions/projects and field excursions. Topics covered include seabirds and their origins, talks on specific birds, bird photography, nesting behaviour; to name only a few.

Lecturers for the school are Dr. Sandy Bruce, Peter Ogilvie, Peter Slater and Vincent Serventy. Price for the school: \$341, including all flights (from Brisbane), meals and accommodation. This school is highly recommended by club member Marilyn Jacobs.

Sue Elmes.

### MYSTERIOUS NESTS.

While taking some scouts on a camp at Pilton, I discovered two rather mysterious nests. I refer to these nests as mysterious due to the fact that after one and a half days of observation no bird had made an attempt to approach them.

Both nests were found on a small island, in a large dam on a farm at Pilton. One of these nests was about 13 centimetres in diameter. It contained four eggs, greenish in colour and had greeny-grey blotches. These eggs were about 6cm in length and at the widest point about 3cm. This nest was constructed of twigs about the width of a matchstick, neatly and tightly packed, located about 5 feet from a gum tree.

The other nest was constructed out of thin twigs and dry grasses. It was in an unordered array and was fairly loosely packed. In this nest there was 1 large white egg, which strongly resembled a domestic duck's egg. The egg was slightly larger than the green eggs being about 6.5cm long and 4cm wide.

Had the parents fallen prey to a hunter? or birds of prey? Had the nests been abandoned? What birds had constructed the nests and laid the eggs?

Perhaps you could help answer some of my puzzling questions about these nests?

Bill McKenzie.

FIELD TRIP REPORT - BUNYA CAMPOUT (cont/d.)

It was widely held among those present that a very successful weekend's bird-watching could well have been enjoyed by merely sitting in the shade of our tents and watching the movement of birds through, over and around that swampy clearing. Its backdrop of fig trees was adorned by scores, perhaps hundreds, of Topknot Pigeons showing their russet crests to perfection in the rays of sunlight striking the tops of the trees.

Arrangements were made with Mr. Wally Thamm for us to visit the reputed haunt of the Sooty Owl after lunch on Saturday when with great anticipation 16 adults and 7 children embarked upon the trek to the area known as Rocky Falls Caves.

There are connotations attached to the use of the work trek. The Boers crossed Southern Africa, the Chinese had their Long March, and the Toowoomba Bird Club had its trek to Rocky Falls Caves. It may fairly be said to have been a somewhat strenuous stroll and I do not think that it will destroy anyone's anticipation if I say now that we did not find the Sooty Owl. But we have come to value the process as much as the product and a great deal of pleasure was gained from tackling the gullies and other obstacles of the beautiful virgin bush. The cave in question was located and displayed some evidence of its occupation although the owl itself was not in residence. But there was much else to see and enjoy as we retraced our steps, including three high flying Wedge-tailed Eagles, a solitary Spectacled Monarch and a range of the usual forest dwellers such as thornbills and scrubwrens. The pacemakers among the party had earlier met with a mating pair of Swamp Snakes (*Drepanodontis signata*) who chose to beat their joint retreat before binoculars or cameras could either explore or record their actions.

Early on Sunday morning some members were fortunate enough to encounter a male Paradise Riflebird in full display and later in the day were able to lead a group back to the same spot where he soon announced his location with a series of raucous calls which enabled most members to locate him and to jointly admire his glossy resplendence.

As on our previous camp at the Bunyas much of Sunday morning was given over to a walk along the bitumen around the edge of the forest which rewarded us with good views of a considerable variety of birds. On several occasions during this expedition we were to see Grey Goshawks speeding over the canopy, their huge yellow legs advertising as it were the threat they carry with them - ever-ready for the exercising at the expense of any careless or unwary inhabitant of the tree-tops.

Meanwhile, close to the forest floor, whipbirds scuttled, robins flitted, scrubwrens clambered and one Brush Turkey sauntered, out of the path of a band of weary bird-watchers returning to break camp after meeting a total of 51 species of birds in the course of two very satisfying and convivial days.

Bill Jolly.

Species List - Bunya Mts. National Park - 30th Sept./1st Oct.

Grey Goshawk	Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Laughing Kookaburra
Australian Kestrel	Noisy Pitta
Australian Brush-turkey	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Masked Lapwing	Varied Triller
Topknot Pigeon	Rose Robin
Bar-shouldered Dove	Eastern Yellow Robin
Peaceful Dove	Jacky Winter
Common Bronzewing	Crested Shrike-tit
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	Golden Whistler
Australian King Parrot	Grey Shrike-thrush
Crimson Rosella	Spectacled Monarch
Pale-headed Rosella	Rufous Fantail

(cont/d.)

## WHAT DID WE SEE?

10, Ocean Street, September 11th at 1.45 p.m. we heard a shrill 'cheep cheep'. We scanned the neighbours' roof tops, power lines, the wattle tree, there was a strange bird somewhere - then we saw it on the footpath.

A dull brownish, green-grey drab colour that blended well with frosted grass. Wings and tail tinged blue, some long wing feathers appeared pinky and behind eye and down side of neck, finely mottled. A small slim parrot with a rather long tail and quite short, turned down beak.

While Jim used binoculars, I used the field guide. It crossed to our footpath and fed on grass seed where we easily approached to within 20ft. It was unusually quiet, blended well into the short grass and flew very low - a typical 'grass parrot'.

The only parrot like him appears to be Bourke's Parrot, escapee or otherwise. Has anyone a better idea?

Jane Corbin.

(Editor's Note: Peach-faced Lovebirds??)

## FIELD TRIP REPORT - FLAGSTONE CK./HELIDON AREA - 27.8.78.

Our August outing proved an excellent "getting acquainted" day for members. As well as visiting some of the "hot spots" of the Toowoomba area many of the birds indicative of the city and its surrounding environs presented themselves to watchers. Unfortunately, Irrigation and Water Supply and Hood's dam were both in a forlorn state following winter and the expected water fowl were not in residence. However, all well remember the magnificent flock of Plumed Whistle Duck, numbering several hundred plus, on the smaller dam on Hood's Helidon property.

The sighting of the day must have been the Black Falcon members watched being harried by a kestrel near Helidon. Other notable birds on the day were Rose Robin and a singular Brown Cuckoo-Dove at Flagstone Creek. A new bird for our area, the Fuscous Honeyeater, was sighted near Turner's property at Flagstone Creek. Unfortunately, the honeyeater took wing before another member could confirm identification. This then is another bird for members to be on the alert for.

These areas are truly productive as far as bird numbers and varieties go and further excursions, especially after good rain, will probably prove even more rewarding than our August field day.

Rod Hobson.

(N.B. See September News-sheet No. 33 for Species List.)

## FIELD TRIP REPORT - BUNYA CAMPOUT - 30TH SEPT./1ST OCT.

Along with a substantial contingent from Ohio State University, several parties from local schools and an assortment of weekending families and day-trippers, members of the Toowoomba Bird Club found themselves setting up camp at the Bunya Mountains on the morning of Saturday, 30th September. A less resilient group might have wavered a little when confronted by so many look-alike lines of brown and green canvas, but in what is fast becoming a club tradition our own curving line of tents was soon established in a corner of the camping ground in such a manner as to both metaphorically and literally turn our backs on the camp behind us while the open end of our own "horse-shoe" allowed us views of a forest fringed clearing.

(cont/d.)

Species List - Bunya Mts. National Park (cont/d.)

Grey Fantail	Silvereye
Willie Wagtail	Red-browed Firetail
Eastern Whipbird	Common Starling
Superb Fairy-wren	Satin Bowerbird
Large-billed Scrubwren	Regent Bowerbird
White-browed Scrubwren	Green Catbird
Brown Thornbill	Paradise Riflebird
Striated Thornbill	Australian Magpie-lark
Noisy Miner	Pied Butcherbird
Lewin's Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
Eastern Spinebill	Pied Currawong
Mistletoebird	Torresian Crow.
Spotted Pardalote	

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES.

Black-necked Stork. (Jabiru) 27.8.78. Haigslea. RGH.  
25.9.78. Between Marburg & Haigslea. MJ. SP.

Maned Duck. 29.9.78. Lake Annand. GC. JEC. JCC.

Pacific Baza. 1.8.78. Dunk Is. RGH.  
24.9.78. (2) "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ. WJ.

Whistling Kite. 10.9.78. Redbank Ck., Gatton. SE. PE.

Little Eagle. 10.9.78. Redbank Ck., Gatton. SE. PE.  
20.9.78. Ocean St., T'mba. JEC. JCC.

\*Black Falcon. 30.7.78. Nr. Cecil Plains. REH.

Brown Falcon. 2.9.78. (2) Eymard St., T'mba. MGW.  
3.9.78. Apex Lake, Gatton. SE. PE.

Orange-footed Scrubfowl. 2.8.78. Dunk Is. RGH.

Beach Thick-knee. 5.8.78. Goold Is. RGH

Superb Fruit-dove. 6.8.78. Mt. Bellenden Ker. RGH.

White-headed Pigeon. 7.9.78. Ocean St., T'mba. GC. JEC. JCC.

Southern Boobook. 2.9.78. Eymard St., T'mba. MGW.

Barn Owl. 25.9.78. Carpendale Rd., Helidon. SE. PE.

Noisy Pitta. 1.8.78. Dunk Is. RGH.

Satin Flycatcher. 22.9.78. Rangeview. JEC.

White-browed Scrubwren. 9.9.78. Toowoomba Grammar School. BW. MW.

Red Wattlebird. 3.9.78. Rangeville State School. GC.  
16.9.78. Ocean St., T'mba. GC. JEC.

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater. 16.9.78. Haden. PG.

Apostle Bird. 5.9.78. Goombungee. PG.

White-breast. Wood-swallow. 5.9.78. Dyer's Lagoon. EJ. WJ.

White-browed Wood-swallow. 3.9.78. Perseverance Dam. PG.

\*This record was inadvertently omitted from last month's News-sheet. Apologies to REH.

GC: Graham Corbin. JCC: Jane Corbin. JEC: Jim Corbin. PE: Phillip Elmes.  
SE: Sue Elmes. PG: Paul Gredig. REH: Ron Hopkinson. RGH: Rod Hobson.  
EJ: Eileen Jolly. MJ: Marilyn Jacobs. WJ: Bill Jolly. SP: Sandra Pottinger.  
BW: Brough Warren. MW: Margaret Warren. MGW: Max Wood.

FIELD TRIP FOR NOVEMBER.

Date: Sunday, 19th November. Locality: Oakey Area.

Leader: John Coman. Meeting arrangements: Pigott's Carpark, 8.30 a.m.

(cont/d.)

NEW MEMBERS.

The Club is pleased to welcome the following new members:

Mrs. M.D. Bartlett,  
15, Roessler Street,  
Toowoomba.

Graham Welden,  
c/- Post Office,  
Laidley.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

Q.O.S. Newsletter, Vol. 9, No. 9, September, 1978.

BIRDS. Magazine of R.S.P.B.

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