



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS INC

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

No. 362
March 2007

Editorial

By Darren Fielder

I have now found out how to get a response to an issue – go ahead and do it, then see what everyone thinks! The feedback on the new format for the newsletter was overwhelmingly positive! Some of the comments received were:

"Wow. The newsletter is fantastic!"
- Judy Caughley

"The impact of the latest Newsletter was immediate. The whole thing comes across as bright, inviting and easy to read. Refreshing!" - Bill Jolly.

"The newsletter looks brilliant." - Michael Wood.

"Wow! What a really superb Newsletter! Congratulations to all concerned. Great layout and great articles." - Gloria Glass

"The new layout and front piece are excellent." - Rob and Barbara Collyer.

"The new format looks very good."
- Alan and Carol German.

However, there was also recognition by members that refinement on the stylised **Black-shouldered Kite** logo is needed. I have received a very good photo of a kite which will be used to make improvements to the current logo. Keep an eye out for the change. Feedback on the articles was also positive.

The mystery of the unusual crow in last month's newsletter was cleared up by Rod Hobson. He believes that it was a juvenile Torresian Crow. Juveniles of this species have blue-grey eyes which progress to dark brown in the immature bird. As the bird matures the brown lightens till it reaches the white colour typical of mature *Corvus orru*. The very conspicuous and pink gape also indicates a juvenile bird. This, too, decreases until it is absent in the adult bird."

The *Summer Target: 250 species Beyond club survey area* finished with 262 species. Now it is over to the *Autumn: locally ('within' target)* and *Autumn: non-local ('beyond' target)*. Visit our website for more information.

The Challenge 2007

183 spp as at 17 March



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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By Bill Jolly

COMING EVENTS

24/25 March 2007 - **Species Census**. Check the forum for more details or contact Mick Atzeni (07) 4639 2761 if you want to be allocated to a team.

29 April 2007 - **Lockyer Wetlands**. Meet at Lake Apex at 7am. Contact Rosalie Rudduck (07) 4697 6190.

Lighting up Highfields Falls!

By Pat McConnell

Fifteen people attended the 10 March outing to Highfields Falls which was the first spotlighting outing organised by the Club for many years. It was also decided to do some afternoon birding at the falls because birding there at that time of day can be very rewarding and spotlighting can be very unpredictable.

There was lots of bird activity as we moved through the reserve but much of this was confined to the smaller species in the upper canopy making for hard birding especially for those who were fairly new to the game. **White-naped Honeyeaters** were probably the most common species heard calling but all that could be seen of them in the tree tops was their white bellies, and it was not until we had nearly reached the creek that we got good looks at them coming down to drink. Larger species, which were few and far between, included **Brown Cuckoo-Dove**, **Bar-shouldered Dove**, **Spangled Drongo** and **Dollarbird**. A large **Lace Monitor** created a stir as it checked out some of the hollows in the larger eucalypts. We birded from 4.30pm until about 6.00pm and saw 30 species.

As the sun was starting to set, unfortunately the wind was starting to rise. Spotlighting in the wind is often difficult, but I imagine so is spotlighting after a ten year drought. The **White-throated Nightjar** that Kath and I had seen on dusk the previous night did not turn up so we headed down into the park just before 7.00pm. Most owls tend to give a few territorial calls just on dusk and that was what we were hoping to hear. Unfortunately all was quiet except for a myriad of insects and the 6.55pm coal train making its way up towards Mt Kynoch. These noises did not help when it came to listening for owls but on this particular night I don't think it really made much difference as we couldn't even rustle up a **Common Brushtail Possum**. The only species seen after just over an hours spotlighting was a lone **Eastern Yellow Robin**. Several micro-bats and one **Grey-headed Flying Fox** were seen from the car park as the group was leaving.

What heron is this?

By Al Young

I received three slides of a strange looking heron photographed in Darwin by a friend. I think it is probably a Great-billed Heron with odd plumage (possibly in moult) but I could be way off the mark.

Al Young

Send in any feedback on this bird and what you think it is to Darren Fielder or Michael Atzeni.



Granite Belt reptiles and other non-feathered friends.

By Rod Hobson

Following on from the "Two Trips" Girraween National Park article in last month's newsletter, I offer the following comments on the Granite Belt fauna.

In my fauna surveys of Girraween I've seen **Carpet Python** two or three times. Talking with the rangers there about this matter and they consider them a rarity there as well. Goannas are likewise a rarity in Girraween. Just recently I saw my first *Varanus gouldii* (**Gould's Monitor**) on The Junction Walk. This disparity is unusual as both these reptiles are generally common in SEQ (although *V. gouldii* is often confused locally with *V. panoptes*, the **Spotted Monitor**). Despite this the Granite Belt has a fascinating herptofauna including such species as *Egernia mcphreei* (**McPhee's Skink**) and the Australia's most northerly populations of *Litoria subglandulosa* (**Glandular Tree Frog**) and *Acritoscincus platynotus* (**Red-throated Cool Skink**). Other reptilian specialities of the area include the **Border Thick-tailed Gecko** *Underwoodisaurus sphyrurus* and the skink *Ctenotus eurydice*. Just recently the QM found some old specimens of the skink *Eulamprus kosciuskoi* labelled 'from the Girraween area', which would make this a new species for Queensland if confirmed. It's my 'mission' for spring/summer this year to confirm this lizard for Queensland. And then, of course, there's the melanotic form of **Stephens' Banded Snake** from the park – the list goes on. It's a great spot for reptiles for sure.



Underwoodisaurus sphyrurus, Girraween NP.
Photo: Robert Ashdown.

Southern Sweden in Autumn 2006

By Rosalie Rudduck

My Swedish friend, Kerstin, visited Australia in the early nineties, when we had the pleasure of showing her some of the highlights of south east Queensland – the Bunya Mountains, Cunningham's Gap, Moogerah Dam (with water in it) and Tamborine, just to name a few. The delight of a visitor when seeing a **Kookaburra** calling close range for the first time, is just one of the magical moments one never forgets. We had met when working in a mission hospital in Zululand (South Africa) years before this. So the invitation to visit her "sometime" was there, and "sometime" arrived last November.

The Falsterbo Peninsula is the very south western tip of Sweden and is on the migration path for Scandinavian birds as they converge before crossing the Baltic Sea in a generally south western direction. Lund University has established the Falsterbo Bird Observatory

and many years of detailed study and counting birds, has culminated in the publication in both Swedish and English of "Wings over Falsterbo" – my holiday souvenir.

I had made a comment to Kerstin that "I hoped some birds were left for me to see". Imagine my delight when I walked to her lounge room window and looked over wetlands to Skanor's small harbour. I made a real little track to this window with the binoculars, particularly on the cold, windy and showery days, which are common in November. July to October is the peak migration period. These wetlands are important resting areas for the birds.

On my fourth day, Kerstin had arranged for her keen bird watching friend, Vivienne, to visit. Weather-wise, it was the best day of the holiday – beautiful sunshine, still windy, but not too cold. It was good to start sorting out the geese – **Greylag** not **Bean Geese** were the most common. In a new country, one starts from the beginning again, looking up their most obvious birds which are as common as our **Torresian Crows**, **Willie Wagtails** and **Magpie Larks**.

The weeks of bedtime reading of a British and European field guide before I left were well worth it. Then comparing the small distribution maps with those in a European field guide (written in Swedish) revealed some subtle differences for this area. Needless to say the Latin names became useful for cross-referencing! Thankyou to Bill Jolly for cueing me into this hint before I left.

The distribution maps show three categories namely: present all year, present in summer and present in winter.

The bird list is not particularly impressive, as Kerstin and I did some sightseeing as well, either walking or travelling by bus. It is a flat part of the country, with open farmlands, dairies and golf courses, where many people ride bikes. At the major bus stops, instead of a car park there will be a bike parking area. On one occasion, I saw a bird watcher on his bike with telescope strapped to his back, not close enough to say "hello". But I did visit the Bird Observatory and met with one of the translators of the book briefly.

Bird List: Barnacle Goose (from the Tundra), Black-headed Gull (in winter plumage – white head and a small black spot behind the eye), Blue Tit, Brent Goose, Canada Goose, Carrion Crow, Common Gull, Eurasian Coot, European Goldfinch, Great Black-backed Gull, Great Cormorant, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Grey Heron (a huge bird), Greylag Goose, Herring Gull, Hooded Crow, Jackdaw, Kestrel, Magpie (not like ours), Mallard, Mute Swan, Pheasant, Red Poll, Redshank (at Hollviken Strand, possibly from Iceland; the locals go south for the winter and the Icelandic Redshanks with longer wings, winter in this area, according to a study by Lund University), Rock Dove (fancy going half way around the world to see a Rock Dove!), Rough-legged Buzzard (with Vivienne – made our day – yes, they get excited about raptors too!), Shelduck, Teal, Tree Sparrow, Widgeon, Wren, Possibly a Twite (there are "little brown bird" challenges in Sweden too for the novice) and a Woodpigeon (just a quick glimpse during a walk in one of the local forests).

Powerful Owl in the Garden

By Bill Jolly

Busy chattering this morning (13 March 2007), from various Honeyeaters and **White-browed Scrubwrens** led me to take a closer look at the Fiddlewood tree in the back garden. **Southern Boobooks** have roosted in its cover from time to time, and that's what I expected to see there.



Powerful Owl, Abberton, Lockyer Valley. Bill Jolly (13/03/07)

Instead, I found this magnificent **Powerful Owl** looking down at me, from a height of no more than 15 feet! I darted back indoors and returned with the camera for a few close shots, before retreating again to the verandah.

After having a good close look at me when I first stumbled across him, he settled down again and I set up the camera on the verandah, with a scope alongside, so we were able to watch the bird on and off all day while we took our pics from the verandah, without disturbing him.

By lunchtime, we discovered that there was a clear view from the kitchen window, and we were able to watch him through binoculars from inside the house as he sat with his head turned over his back. He appeared to snooze for some of the day, with eyes closed, though from time to time one or both would open briefly.

Just on dusk, I looked through the scope and the bird was still there; I looked again a few seconds later, and it was gone. We've heard **Powerful Owls** here occasionally, but this is the first one we've seen in the garden.

The Challenge: Species not reported as the 17 March 2007

Stubble Quail *	Marsh Sandpiper	Sooty Owl *
King Quail *	Common Greenshank *	Masked Owl *
Magpie Goose	Common Sandpiper *	Barn Owl
Wandering Whistling-Duck *	Red-necked Stint *	Spotted Nightjar *
Blue-billed Duck *	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	Australian Owllet-nightjar
Musk Duck *	Curlew Sandpiper	Fork-tailed Swift
Freckled Duck *	Red-necked Phalarope *	Forest Kingfisher *
Cotton Pygmy-goose *	Painted Snipe *	Red-backed Kingfisher *
Mallard *	Comb-crested Jacana *	Noisy Pitta *
Chestnut Teal *	Pacific Golden Plover *	Western Gerygone
Hoary-headed Grebe *	Red-capped Plover *	Black-chinned Honeyeater *
Great Crested Grebe *	Red-kneed Dotterel	Brown-headed Honeyeater
Pied Cormorant *	Banded Lapwing	Painted Honeyeater
Little Egret	Silver Gull	Black Honeyeater *
Little Bittern *	Gull-billed Tern *	Scarlet Robin *
Black-necked Stork *	Caspian Tern *	Red-capped Robin
Osprey *	Whiskered Tern	Rose Robin
Brahminy Kite *	White-winged Black Tern *	Crested Shrike-tit
Swamp Harrier *	White-headed Pigeon	Spectacled Monarch
Red Goshawk *	Squatter Pigeon *	White-eared Monarch *
Little Eagle	Wompoo Fruit-Dove *	Satin Flycatcher *
Brolga *	Superb Fruit-Dove *	White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike
Bush-Hen *	Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	Ground Cuckoo-shrike *
Baillon's Crake *	Topknot Pigeon	White-breasted Woodswallow *
Australian Spotted Crake *	Long-billed Corella	
Spotless Crake *	Red-winged Parrot *	Masked Woodswallow *
Black-tailed Native-hen *	Crimson Rosella	White-browed Woodswallow *
Red-backed Button-quail *	Eastern Rosella *	Black-faced Woodswallow *
Little Button-quail *	Blue Bonnet *	Dusky Woodswallow
Red-chested Button-quail *	Swift Parrot *	Little Woodswallow *
Painted Button-quail	Budgerigar *	Australian Raven *
Black-breasted Button-quail *	Turquoise Parrot *	Apostlebird
Latham's Snipe	Pallid Cuckoo	Diamond Firetail *
Black-tailed Godwit *	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Tawny Grassbird
Whimbrel *	Black-eared Cuckoo *	Little Grassbird *
	Barking Owl *	Russet-tailed Thrush *

* Rare/unusual bird requiring a report

Owls, raptors, honeyeaters and pishing

By Bill Jolly

It was the chattering of **Lewin's** and **Brown Honeyeaters**, scrubwrens and such that led me to the **Powerful Owl** that was here a few days back.

Just on dusk, last night (14 March 2007), we could hear them from the kitchen again, fussing around in the same general area. This time the bird at the centre of their attention proved to be a **Southern Boobook** -in the same tree as the **Powerful Owl** had been (see earlier article in this newsletter). Pre-breakfast this-morning, when I followed up more racket from the garden, it led me not to an owl, but to a **Collared Sparrowhawk** which dashed from the same tree to a nearby gum, then to another and then another, all in the same corner of the garden. Sparrowhawks are often around, and will drop silently into the

depths of a big tree to sit quietly as long as unobserved and untroubled, but if they're hassled they usually move on straightaway.

However, after I got back indoors, I could hear the small birds still kicking up a fuss in the same spot. I managed to hold off until after breakfast, but then I had to go back out there.

Sure enough, a small, richly coloured, **Southern Boobook** was in the fiddlewood tree. It was quite low down towards the outer part of the tree, and when it spotted me it made off to a higher branch of an adjacent gum. I took some photos without approaching any closer and a couple of hours later, I can see from the verandah that the bird is still settled there, seemingly oblivious to the occasional fuss from the locals.

Maybe this is one part of the reason that pishing works - the birds that come down to investigate might not only be curious to see what is pishing, but also to find out what it's pishing at.



Southern Boobook, Abberton, Lockyer Valley. Bill Jolly

Members' Bird Notes

All sightings seen by members of the Toowoomba Bird Observers. Accuracy not vouched for by the TBO. Please check with observer before citing.

Red-backed Kingfisher	20/03/07	Hodgsonvale, New England Hwy	MW
Bush Stone-Curlew	16/03/07	Cnr Boundary Rd/Beacon Crt, Toowoomba	MW
Powerful Owl	5/03/07	Abberton, Helidon	BJ
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	2/03/2007	Abberton, Helidon	BJ
Whistling Kite	26/02/2007	Abberton, Helidon	BJ
Pink-eared Duck	25/02/2007	Lake Annand, Toowoomba	MA
Oriental Cuckoo	24/02/2007	Mount Table Top	MA
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	24/02/2007	Highfields Falls	MW
Square-tailed Kite	18/02/2007	Merrol St, Highfields	MW
Eastern Spinebill	12/02/2007	Nielsen Park, Toowoomba	MW
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	11/02/2007	Thomas Rd, Murphy's Ck	MA
Fuscous Honeyeater	11/02/2007	Thomas Rd, Murphy's Ck	MA
Tree Martin	10/02/2007	Willowburn	RH
Diamond Dove*	9/02/2007	Westbrook	RH
Glossy Black-Cockatoo	9/02/2007	Toowoomba City Council Nursery	RC
White-winged Triller	7/02/2007	53 Perth St, Rangeville	MA
Brown Cuckoo-Dove	4/02/2007	Redwood Park	MW
Common Blackbird*	4/02/2007	2 Tara St, Rockville	MA
Striated Thornbill	1/02/2007	Glen Lomond Park, Toowoomba	MW
Black Bittern	27/01/2007	Abberton, Helidon	BJ

MW - Michael Wood, **BJ** - Bill Jolly, **MA** - Michael Atzeni, **MW** - Mark Weaver, **RH** - Rod Hobson, **RC** - Richard Colclough * pers. comm.

COMING EVENTS

24/25 March 2007 - Species Census - instead of the traditional October Species Census we thought we'd run it in a different season for a change. As is traditional, anyone who wants to meet at the Helidon rest area between 10:30 & 11:00am for morning tea and to collate the sightings for the Saturday morning can do so. Check the forum for further details and the results once they are known. If you want to be allocated to a team contact Michael Atzeni (07) 4639 2761.

29 April 2007 – Lockyer Wetlands - Meet at Lake Apex at 7am. Contact Rosalie Rudduck (07) 4697 6190

27th May 2007 – Toowoomba's southern escarpment

23/24 June 2007 – Annual Raptor Survey

28th July 2007 – Helidon region

26th August 2007 – Warwick area

29/30 September 2007 – Karara/Lake Coolmunda - overnight (optional)

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Deadline for articles for the April Newsletter is 13 April 2007.

Please e-mail or snail- mail your articles to Darren Fielder, our Newsletter Editor.

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Surface Mail