



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS INC

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

No. 365
July 2007

Editorial

By Darren Fielder

Is everyone enjoying winter? It brings back memories of the 1980's when we did have cold, wet winters. I like to experience four seasons and Toowoomba is certainly giving us that this year.

It was good to hear that many people were able to help out on another TBO raptor survey. Michael Wood and I both agreed over the phone that Saturday would be a great day for raptors if it was anything like Friday's clear blue skies (22 June). We couldn't have been more wrong! The day started out overcast and cold with intermittent showers and then got worse.

Fortunately, we still got to see some 160 individual raptors including a **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** cruising along the Condamine River at Cecil Plains weir. Another impressive sight was witnessing 75+ **Nankeen Kestrels** working a recently ploughed paddock just north of Norwin. I suspect that there were plenty of insects or mice on offer. Who could refuse a treat like that?

Red-winged Parrots were also seen nesting on the Cecil Plains – Dalby Road.

I've also been asked to remind members who complete monthly checklists to clearly indicate which sector you are recording from (in each column). This will help in the entry of records into a central database that the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service maintain. Michael Wood and Olive Booth have been entering the many thousands of records on a voluntary basis. Thanks Michael and Olive!

There are plenty of things happening over the next month or two. There is a Wildlife Carers two-day conference, Myall Park open day and several related outings from the TBO and from Birds Australia Southern Queensland (BASQ). Take a look at the "Coming Events" sections at the back of the newsletter.

**2007
Challenge**
202 spp as at 20 July



TOOWOOMBA
BIRD OBSERVERS INC

(An affiliated Group of the Bird Observers Club of Australia)

P.O. Box 4730, Toowoomba East 4350
www.toowoombabirdobservers.org

MEMBERSHIP: Adults/Families \$22, Students \$11
(Subscriptions due 31 August)

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COMING EVENTS

28 July 2007 – **Helidon region**. Meet at the Helidon Rest area at 7:30am. Contact: Ross Begent 4697 7198

4-5th Aug 2007 – Swift Parrot & Regent Honeyeater Surveys.

26 August 2007 – **Killarney area**. Contact: Sandra Wilson 0412 065 221

You take the high road and I'll take the low road!

Outing Report 27th May 2007

By Michael McGoldrick

About 13 members and visitors assembled at Echo Valley South Park on 27th May for what promised to be an interesting morning of birding. (Incidentally, this bushland park has been selected by the Toowoomba Bird Observers club for monthly bird surveys in order to compare the variation in biodiversity before and after clearing activities by the Friends of the Escarpment Parks volunteers under the guidance of Bushcare Officers from the Toowoomba City Council.)

There were marsupials in plentiful numbers with eight **Red-necked Wallabies** seen grazing contentedly on the fresh green grass growing on the motocross racing track adjacent to the park but unfortunately the bird species were elusive and lacking in numbers probably due to the cool windy conditions that prevailed. However we did manage to record 20 species.

We then took a detour to a big yellow box tree located in Rowbotham St which was smothered in blossom. This provided a veritable feast for honeyeaters and lorikeets which in turn provided a viewing feast for binocular-wielding birdoes of: **Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, White-naped Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Blue-faced Honeyeater** and **Noisy Miner** all in one convenient location!

The party then moved on to explore Glen Lomond Park which yielded 18 species, among them: **Regent Bowerbird, Silveryeye, Spotted Pardalote, Brown Thornbill, Double-barred Finch, Red-browed Finch, Variegated Fairy-wren** (in eclipse plumage), **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, and **Lewin's Honeyeater** (but unfortunately not the **White-plumed Honeyeater** that had been sighted recently in the park and probably a vagrant from the drier western areas).

Next the little convoy wended its way to the Upper Flagstone Creek Road to visit the resident **Bell Miner** colony whose ringing bell-like calls delighted all those present.

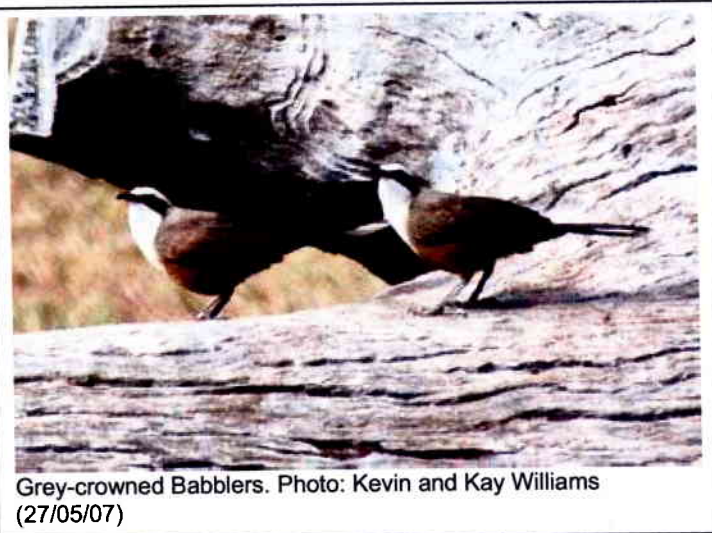


Mike shows Nicholas the Bell Miner colony on Upper Flagstone Creek Road. Photo: Kevin and Kay Williams (27/05/07).

However, we could not help noticing that this bird seems to have more than a passing resemblance to that "flying cane toad", the **Common Myna**, and is indeed a pest in some areas by virtue of its habit of "farming" lerp insects which can then result in die-back of the eucalypt canopy.

Following this we made our way to the Hodgsonvale Lion's Park rest area for our morning tea break. Although we had to endure cold gusty winds while sipping our hot drinks, here we were

rewarded with close views of **Laughing Kookaburra**, **Noisy Miner**, **Rainbow Lorikeet** and a party of the delightful **Grey-crowned Babblers**. Some of the members took the opportunity to snap some memorable close-ups of their antics.



Grey-crowned Babblers. Photo: Kevin and Kay Williams (27/05/07)

A few hardy souls ventured on to Rockmount and Stockyard Creek at the bottom of the range. On the way we made a brief stop to view the strange sight of a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** hovering in the updraught from the escarpment. This behaviour was to me more reminiscent of falcons or kites which resulted in an initial incorrect identification. Once we descended into the valley of the Stockyard Creek, the gusty winds which had prevailed on top of the escarpment abated and we enjoyed a leisurely drive along the road which wound along the picturesque creek side. At one point we stopped to identify a fairly large brown bird with long tail skulking in the top of a pepperina tree (*Schinus molle*) but it wouldn't oblige with a clear view so we decided it was possibly a **Pheasant Coucal** in non-breeding plumage. At another, the group witnessed a "murder" of **Torresian Crows** congregating on a tree-pear covered hillside although we could not determine what the raucous commotion was all about.

At the junction of the Stockyard Creek Road with the Flagstone Creek Road, we stopped to record the morning sightings and were rewarded with good views of **Rufous Whistler** and **Restless Flycatcher** to cap off the day's birding!

Species List for grid C4:

Australian Brush-turkey, Straw-necked Ibis, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Crested Pigeon, Bar-shouldered Dove, Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Musk Lorikeet, Little Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Laughing Kookaburra, Variegated Fairy-wren, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Bell Miner, Noisy Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Eastern Yellow Robin, Grey-crowned Babbler, Eastern Whipbird, Magpie-lark, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, Regent Bowerbird, Double-barred Finch, Red-browed Finch, Mistletoebird

Species List for grid C6:

White-faced Heron, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Masked Lapwing, Crested Pigeon, Pale-headed Rosella, Laughing Kookaburra, Weebill, Striped Honeyeater, Noisy Friarbird, Noisy Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Rufous Whistler, Restless Flycatcher, Magpie-lark, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Figbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, Double-barred Finch, Mistletoebird, Welcome Swallow

Reflections at Queen Mary Falls

By Nicholas Matheson-Kozakis

I hate being a neglected child. During the last weekend of term, with mum locked away marking, ranking, recording and report writing, what was a boy supposed to do? I'd finished my homemade nesting box for either my **Cockatiels** or **Bourke's Parrots**, watched a number of episodes of *Massive Nature*, read my *Gap in Nature* book and made half a dozen jigsaws of animals from around the world. With a bit of my soulful persuasion, mum finally agreed to take me to Queen Mary Falls.

The numerous **Black-shouldered Kites** I spotted close to Killarney and the three **Wedge-tailed Eagles** riding a thermal near Dagg's Falls were precursors to what awaited me at Queen Mary Falls. Upon arrival, I immediately dragged mum across to the café as an inundation of parrots carpeted its front yard. Armed with four satchels of birdseed, I embarked on stirring up a feeding frenzy. At any one time, three or four **Australian King-parrots** and **Crimson Rosellas** were on me, fighting to access the seeds in my hands. Often, overpowered by the rosellas, many Australian King-parrots retreated to the trees, only to immediately regain prime feeding locations when the rosellas were distracted. Even two **Eastern Rosellas** decided to join in the fray. Unlike ever before, some birds allowed me to gently stroke their chests. Lorikeet feeding at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary now had serious competition! Surreptitiously, a **Buff-banded Rail** scuttled out from the undergrowth, looking for its share of the tasty morsels.

With her coffee finished, mum coerced me into taking a walk and thank goodness for that. Following the eucalypt-forested western ridge, constant soft tweeting soon usurped the rasping squawks of the currawongs populating the picnic grounds. In the trees immediately adjacent to the pathway, striated and yellow thornbills intermingled with **Eastern Yellow Robins**. **Red-browed Finches** constantly darted across the path in front of us. In the thickets, **Eastern Spinebills** busily searched for their evening meal while fairy-wrens guided us towards the gorge. Suddenly a shrill whistle, followed by another, and another, pierced the tranquillity. Grabbing my binoculars I was determined to locate this bird high in the canopy, and there it was – my second **Golden Whistler**. Totally absorbed in my find, I was oblivious to the penetrating cold wind blowing up the valley. Unfortunately, the same could not be said about mum and her patience soon wore thin.

Descending into the gorge, silence encapsulated us. The trees from which **Eastern Whipbirds** had spawned their distinct cries only two months earlier, now stood abandoned. At the base of the gorge, an occasional **Large-billed Scrubwren** scurried through the undergrowth. I couldn't understand this transformation. Catalysed by the scarcity of birds, my mind started to wander and so did my mouth. Somehow, filtering out my verbalisations, mum detected an unusual, soft tapping sound. Scouring the nearby bushland, I located the culprit. A tree creeper had stripped approximately eight square centimetres of bark from a sapling and was methodically gorging itself on insects.

With the sun setting and mum's appointment with the midnight oil drawing closer, we agreed to go home. While mum packed up the car, I decided to monitor my favourite **Satin Bowerbird** bower. After two years of use, it now lay desecrated. Only a sporadic distribution of plastic blue lids evidenced its prior grandeur. Feeling heavy-hearted, I soon envisaged the variety of birds I will next see in the Gold Coast Hinterland during the upcoming school holidays. I just wondered if it would compare to today's experience.

Raptor Census 23 – 24 June 2007

By Pat McConnell

Northern Section

Kath O'Donnell and Pat McConnell surveyed the northern section on Saturday 23 June. This section was divided into four sub-sections as in previous years. These were Highfields to Cooby Dam, Cooby Dam to Goombungee, Goombungee to Cooyar and Cooyar back to Highfields. The area was surveyed over a period of about four hours and 170 km were travelled. We saw two species and nine individual birds of prey. Both number of species and number of individuals were down on last year. (See table below for summarised results). The weather during the survey was cool and overcast with regular showers of rain.

Southern Section (Warwick to Toowoomba)

The southern section was surveyed by Ken and Fiona Wells on Sunday 24 June. Ken and Fiona surveyed their sector from 10.30am until 1.00pm. In all they saw two species and nine birds of prey. The route included Freestone Valley, Pilton, Budgee and East Greenmount. This route was showing the effects of a prolonged dry spell in the region, a considerable amount of which is virtually devoid of ground cover, and many mature trees are seriously stressed or dying.

The weather was cool and overcast, without significant air movement.

Eastern Section

The eastern section was surveyed by Michael Atzeni, John Lahdesluoma, Ross Begent, Dan Begent, Nicholas Matheson-Kozakis and Jenny Matheson on Saturday 23 June from 8.00am – 1.00pm. The route was Hodgson Vale, Preston, Rockmount, Stockyard Creek, Helidon, Grantham, Apex Lake (Gatton), Adare Road Swamp (north of Gatton) and Lake Galletly (UQ, Gatton). The weather was cool with light rain at the end of the survey. Six species were seen comprising 32 birds.

Western Section

The western section was surveyed by Darren Fielder, Michael Wood, Mike McGoldrick and Kevin and Kay Williams on Saturday 23 June from 9.30am until 2.30pm. The route surveyed was Oakey, Jondaryan, Bowenville, Formatin State School, Norwin, Cecil Plains, Dalby and back to Bowenville. In all six species were seen comprising 160 birds. A group of 75+ **Nankeen Kestrels** were seen working a recently ploughed paddock just north of Norwin. This number is certainly an underestimate of actual numbers.



Wedge-tailed Eagle, Oakey. Photo: Kevin and Kay Williams (23/07/07)

Table of Sightings for 23 – 24 June 2007

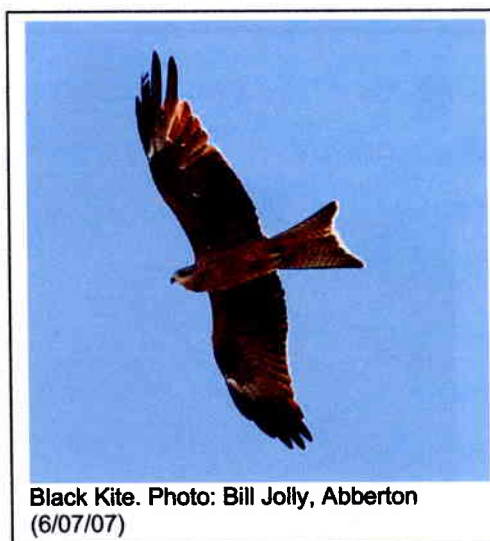
Species Name	N	S	E	W	Total
Pacific Baza			3		3
Black-shouldered Kite	2	2	5	2	11
Black Kite			1	2	3
Whistling Kite			5	3	8
White-bellied Sea-Eagle				1	1
Wedge-tailed Eagle				2	2
Brown Falcon			2		2
Nankeen Kestrel	7	7	16	150	180
Total number of raptors	9	9	32	160	210

Comparisons with 2005 and 2006.

Species were down on previous years while numbers of individual birds of prey were higher than in 2005 and lower than in 2006. In 2005, 14 species were seen comprising 208 individuals. In 2006, 10 species were seen comprising 237 individuals and in 2007, eight species were seen comprising 210 individuals.

Incidental Sightings

From "Abberton" in Helidon Bill Jolly recorded one **Grey Goshawk**, one **Brown Goshawk**, two **Wedge-tailed Eagles** and two **Whistling Kites**. He also recorded this **Black Kite** some days later (see photo).



Black Kite. Photo: Bill Jolly, Abberton (6/07/07)

A big thank you to all involved.

White-plumed Honeyeater - New Toowoomba Bird

By Pat McConnell, Records Officer

Species: White-plumed Honeyeater *Lichenostomus penicillatus*

Observer: Michael Atzeni

Date: 20/05/2007

Location: Glen Lomond Park, ~150m N of Dorge St entrance

Additional information: One bird was originally seen by Michael in Glen Lomond in the morning feeding in a Yellow Box. Later that day, and on following days other Club members went and observed the bird. There was obviously a small influx into the local area as **White-plumed Honeyeaters** also turned up at Bill Jolly's place "Abberton" in Helidon over the following days, Gloria Glass had one at her bird bath at Gowrie Junction on the 13 June 2007, and they were seen at Murphy's Ck (22/6), Stockyard Creek (23/6, and again in July). A check back through Bill's records also showed that White-plumed Honeyeaters turned up at "Abberton" in June 1998 and April 2005. The Club at those times

required a species to be seen by two people before it was accepted onto the records and that is why White-plumed Honeyeater has only just been accepted onto our list.

Tawny Angels

By Plaxy Barratt

Arriving at work last week my fellow birding colleagues and I were amazed to find a rather ethereal image of a bird on a ground floor window of our office. The image had in fact been created by the deposition of 'feather dust' from the bird's powder down as it struck the window. The bird was (thankfully?) nowhere to be found, and while we were saddened by its plight, we couldn't help but marvel at the beauty of the image left behind.



The "Tawny Angel" at the QPWS Office, 158 Hume St. Photo: Robert Ashdown (11/07/07)

The white dust contrasted with the darkly tinted window, creating a very striking (no pun intended!), angelic image. The wings of the bird were upswept, leaving slightly ragged but well defined, curved trails of dust where the primary feathers had touched the window. The head and body were apparent too, with what appeared to be a large, beak outlined in the middle. Overall the image was uncannily suggestive of a **Tawny Frogmouth**.

Robert Ashdown and I were able to take a few photos before the image mysteriously vanished....or the window was cleaned; I prefer the former scenario!

A brief posting on the Birding-Aus email forum started a trail of theories and discussion as to the identity of the bird, and why it may have struck the window. It soon became known affectionately as the 'Tawny Angel'.

Many agreed the image was suggestive of a Tawny Frogmouth, and given the timing it was thought quite likely to have been caused by a nocturnal bird. Some disputed the notion that the shape in the centre could have been created by a beak, given the absence of dust on the beak. And I wonder if the beak could make an impression without needing to make full contact with the glass. While they have huge beaks, if you observe a 'fluffed up' Tawny you can see they have a lot of soft facial plumage around their beak, in the form of a 'beard' and a 'monobrow' if you like! If the bird hit the window with it's head on a slight downward angle could this then leave a V-like outline of the beak perhaps?

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo or **Little Corella** were also suggested as the potential species in question, based partially on the amount of feather dander these birds create. Powder down aids in grooming and feather care, and is essentially soft feathers that crumble at the edges to produce fine powder. I nursed a Tawny Frogmouth, Mr Sophie, last year, and he could produce plenty of powdery, feather dander mess on the floor after a good preening session, bless him!

Theories as to why the bird struck the window (why did the chicken cross the road?) ranged from: perhaps it saw a reflection in the glass, created by a nearby street light, which it tried to attack/prey upon; it was hawking for moths against the window; perhaps it did not see the window; or maybe it saw something *inside* the building which it was trying to catch, such as a mouse?

A very interesting contribution to the discussion was a link to the Hilton Pond bird observatory website <http://www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek070308.html>, posted by Anthony Overs, in which there are photos of a similar impression of a bird on glass. Wing dimensions were the key in the identification of their bird in question, which incidentally was a **Mourning Dove**. If you have a chance to read the article it is really quite fascinating. In the mean time, what do *you* think is the story behind the 'Tawny Angel'?

**Wildlife Carers Darling-Downs
Two Day Conference**

Everyone invited!

Please Register By July 25 2007

(Cost \$10 members, \$15 non-members)

University Of Southern Queensland West Street Toowoomba (K Block)

Saturday 28 July 2007

10:00am - 3:30pm

Wildlife Care, Rescue and Rehabilitation:

posters, displays, merchandise, equipment and skills needed for rescue and rehabilitation of different animal and bird species.

Environmental Awareness, Rehabilitation and Sustainability:

poster and information displays from local groups - TREC, Landcare,

Land for Wildlife, Bush Care, and much more...

Sunday 29 July 2007

9:00am - 10:00am **Registration**

10:00am - 11:00am **Flying Foxes:** Local species identification, rescue, care and rehabilitation

11:00am - 12noon **Toowoomba City Council:** The care and rehabilitation of endangered ecosystems and local wildlife

12noon - 1:00pm **Lunch**

1:00pm - 2:30pm **Raptors:** Rescue, care, rehabilitation and release

2:30pm - 3:30pm **RSPCA:** Wildlife rescue

Please mail to Wildlife Carers Darling Downs Inc PO Box 567 Toowoomba 4350
or email response to lorrymac@bigpond.com or phone 0412 183 569

**Myall Park Botanic Garden
Open Day & Bird Walk 25 August 2007**

Join us at the garden to see what is flowering
Gourmet lunch on sale - provided by Kylie McLean of **Villacoola Winery, Surat**

- 6.30 am **Bird walk**
8.00 am Sausage sizzle breakfast - \$2
9.00 am **Guided tours** of special spots in our Garden
10.00 am Welcome and Smoko
Guided tours or take a self guided tour if you wish to go at your own pace
11.00 am Guest speakers - **Greening Australia**
- Natives, including rare and endangered, for the home garden, including soil types, selection, care.
12.30 pm Another of our special taste experience luncheons - by Kylie McLean of **Villacoola Winery Surat**.
Lunch selection Wine tasting
Cedar Hill Bush Harvesting - guest speaker
Raffle draw
3.00 pm Smoko

\$10 PER PERSON (\$9 'FRIENDS')

(Children free) which includes

Entry, smokos, talks and tours and art exhibition

RSVP: (for catering purposes) MPBG Office: 4665 6705

EMAIL: mpbglimited@itconnect.net.au

Follow the signs from Glenmorgan

COMING EVENTS

28th July 2007 – Helidon region. Meet at the Helidon Rest area at 7:30am. Contact: Ross Begent 4697 7198

4th August 2007 - Albert's Lyrebird Further searches are planned: Border area between Killarney and Stanthorpe. Contact Ray Licence for more information. raylicence@gmail.com, 04 4661 5229, 0409 277 742. [Rosella Feathers, BASQ]

4-5th August 2007 – National Swift Parrot and Honeyeater Surveys. Contact Belinda Cooke swiftparrots@yahoo.com.au free call: 1800 665 766 or David Geering David Geering david.geering@environment.nsw.gov.au 1800 621 056. Members are encouraged to look in the local area, particularly in flowering eucalypts in the escarpment parks. [Rosella Feathers, BASQ]

26th August 2007 – Killarney area. Contact: Sandra Wilson 0412 065 221

8-9th September 2007 – Lake Coolmunda area (*please note change of date*) – overnight (optional). A cottage is available with a stove, toilet facilities etc. on "Ballancar" 31km away. Contact: Sandra Wilson 0412 065 221

29-30th September 2007 – Local outing. To be advised.

27-28th October 2007 – Thornton (private property) – overnight stay optional.

Executive Committee Members

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Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 13 August 2007.

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

**If undeliverable return to
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Surface Mail