

TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS INC



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

No. 368
October 2007

Editorial

By Darren Fielder

When was the last time you nailed a "lifer"? Well fortunately for me I saw four lifers west of Jandowae (13/10/07). A few birders from Toowoomba and Brisbane made the pilgrimage to Jandowae a couple of weekends ago (see article below). I managed to have excellent views of **Painted** and **Black Honeyeaters**, a **Red-backed Kingfisher** and **Little Button-quails**. At one particular location, the **Painted** and **Black Honeyeaters** were in abundance with several other honeyeaters. Plaxy Barratt and I also came across a **Painted Honeyeater's** nest hanging in mistletoe on a **Brigalow** tree.



Painted Honeyeater, Inverai Road, Jandowae. Photo: Kevin Williams (13/10/07).

I also had the opportunity to have a look at a wader site on the Port of Brisbane on Monday just gone. I must admit, those waders were

extremely difficult to identify without a scope. Plaxy and I managed to identify a few **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers**, **Red-necked Stints** and **Black-tailed Godwits** including many other more familiar non-wader species.

TBO members are encouraged to help out with the Toowoomba City Council Birds, Binoculars and Backyards Identification field trip 11 Nov. For further details, please contact Nicci Thompson Ph 4634 3074.

This newsletter will be my last in the editor role. I thank you all for consistently sharing your stories with everyone through submitting articles and photos to me or Michael Atzeni. A big thankyou to Michael Atzeni, Olive Booth and Sandra Wilson for keeping me organised.

**2007
Challenge**
214 spp as at 24th Oct



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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27-28th October 2007 –
Galvin's property near Mt
Mistake via Thornton –
optional overnight stay. Full
details in this newsletter (see
page 6). Contact: Michael
Atzeni (AH) 4639 2761

1st November 2007 –
Annual General Meeting at All
Seasons, starts at 7pm.
Contact Ross Begent 4697 7198

AGM, Executive Nominations and New Roles in TBO

By Michael Atzeni

I hope you have marked in your calendar on the **1st November the Annual General Meeting** for the Toowoomba Bird Observers Club. It will now be held in the **All Seasons function room on the corner of North and Tor Street at 7pm**. The proposed agenda is:

- "Mystery Bird" Quiz – a slide show to fully test your ID skills!
- AGM
- Answers to Quiz and discussion
- Presentation by Ross Whiteford

'Bird photos from Northern Argentina'

Ross Whiteford will present a slide show of his bird and landscape shots of a National Park in Northern Argentina (on the Paraguayan border) in 2000. The park is called Parque Nacional Rio Pilcomayo. Ross has been a professional winemaker for 25 years, beginning his career in France during the mid 1970's. He has worked at a number of Australian companies including Brown Brothers, Penfolds, Angoves and is now based in Kingaroy from where he consults to a number of small companies. Ross's family spent just under three years in Argentina in 2000 - 2002. He became interested in bird photography in the mid 1980's and has an Advanced Certificate in Commercial Photography. He has photographed a lot in South Australia and Victoria and also in the North of Queensland. When Ross's family lived in South Australia they were members of the SAOU and he frequently showed his work at meetings. Occasionally Ross has had photos published in various magazines, but mainly it is a fulfilling and rewarding hobby that gets him out and about and offers both technical and artistic challenges. Ross has noted that in the last few years the pressures of raising a young family has slowed down his photography, and even his bird watching, and he says he rarely gets the time to set up and undertake the ground work to get good bird photos any more. These slides represent the last serious work in photography that Ross has completed.

Executive Nominations and New Roles in the TBO

As normal, there are several roles in the TBO executive committee to tempt people to get involved in the fun of running and planning a club like this. The roles that are up for nominations are: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Records Officer, Newsletter Editor, Librarian and Committee Members. These roles are the traditional offices of the TBO. However, workloads have increased in recent years and there are several areas of need identified in running the TBO efficiently in future which present some good opportunities for more members to contribute their talents and ease the workload. These are:

- **Co-editor** - assists editor in compiling copy from various sources; helps prepare and proof-reads the monthly Newsletter; ensures timely delivery of master to Secretary for email recipients, and to Newsletter Co-ordinator for printing/mail-out.
- **Newsletter Co-ordinator** - organises printing and mail out of monthly newsletters; assists Secretary with inquiries, and requests for club information.
- **Media Officer** - arranges advertising of monthly outings/events through the various free community group forums on radio, the web and in the press. Champions and assists with preparation of special press releases e.g. annual AGM, new projects, TBO publications.

- **Events Coordinator** - assists with planning outings schedule for the year; makes appropriate arrangements to visit private properties; organises leaders; co-ordinates other events e.g. AGM, guest speakers; liaises with Media Officer & Website Assistant.
- **Website Officer** - monitors the website; liaises with the webmaster to ensure it is functional and up to date; moderates the forum; posts information to the forum, and on behalf of others if required; helps promote the website; addresses and reports on feedback.
- **Photo Librarian** - prepares and manages digital library; backs it up regularly; provides appropriate images as required; assists in capturing and documenting a pictorial record of the club's activities and its members for future reference e.g. publications.

Help us make this an even better club by nominating for any position you feel you can assist in. You will enjoy the benefits and you can count on our full support.

Pest Bird Initiatives

By Ross Begent

Readers will recall that we recently requested donations from members to enable the Club to purchase a Common Myna trap. It was our intention that the trap be made available to those interested in undertaking individual efforts to reduce the numbers of these abhorrent (at least in Australia) little pirates of the great outdoors.

I am pleased to report that our fundraising campaign was strongly supported and the club was able to raise close to the required funds to purchase a Common Myna trap for members to use. Quite unexpectedly however, Birds Australia Southern Queensland have generously donated their Common Myna trap for us to use.

Consequently, the Executive discussed the most appropriate use of the funds which were donated for the purchase of the trap, and after due deliberation, expressed a desire to re-allocate the funds to assist with endeavours to prevent Common Blackbirds becoming an established pest in the Toowoomba region.

Whilst it could be argued that the funds could be directed towards the purchase of a second Common Myna trap, it is significant to note that there are varied reports on the success or otherwise of the current range of Common Myna traps. With this in mind, we feel that it is imperative for us to at least trial the first trap before considering the acquisition of a second unit. In addition, I am sure that all would agree that given the strong establishment of Common Mynas in our region, it is highly probable that very little can be done to reduce their numbers.

With blackbirds however, which are known to be breeding locally, their numbers are very low in comparison, and there is an opportunity to take positive action before they too gain a stronghold. This has prompted the club to establish a collaborative blackbird project with the Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries, Toowoomba City Council and Environmental Protection Agency which you will be hearing more about in the near future.

Whilst the emerging blackbird issue was always a matter for our attention in the longer term, we are mindful that this was not the original intention for the money which members

have donated, and I urge you to contact me if you have any objection to our aforementioned involvement in blackbird monitoring and eradication endeavours through the reallocation of funds. I will raise the matter again at our Annual General Meeting to invite any further input before a final decision is made by the Club.

Further Common Blackbird information, images, call and on-line report form are available at <http://www.toowoombabirdobservers.org/tbo/blackbird.html>. Please assist by reporting any blackbird sightings you know of in Toowoomba, Highfields and anywhere else in SEQ.

Painted, Pied and Black Honeyeaters at Jandowae

By Daniel Mantle, Plaxy Barratt and Darren Fielder

Daniel Mantle (8 October, Birding-Aus posting)

Beth Symonds and I joined friends in Toowoomba (Plaxy Barratt and Peter Kyne) to go looking for **Painted** and **Black Honeyeaters** that were reported in the Jandowae area (north of Dalby, SE Queensland). Most of the areas we birded are described online at http://www.wambo.qld.gov.au/visitors/visitors_birdingtrails.shtml (specifically the first birding trail - http://www.wambo.qld.gov.au/visitors/resources/birdtrail_1.pdf). We had an excellent morning exploring and birding the area with a great array of western birds that we rarely or never see closer to the SE Queensland coast. All four areas of bushland that we searched held multiple singing and displaying **Painted Honeyeaters** and **Black Honeyeaters** were probably the commonest honeyeater of the day. Two records of **Pied Honeyeater** comprised the most unexpected sightings of the day but were closely



Black Honeyeater, Inverai Road. Photo: Kevin Williams (13/10/07)

followed by **Crimson Chats** and **Little Button-quails**. I will detail the better birds for each stop below.

Thanks to the group of birders who reported the **Painted** and **Black Honeyeaters** on the Birds Queensland website

(<http://birdsqueensland.org.au/cgi-bin/lis/tsightings.cgi?list=Short>). It really was a delight to watch the display flights of the **Painted Honeyeaters** and to listen to their full repertoire of calls and songs at every stop we made.

Site 4, Jandowae Trail (see above website)

An unscheduled stop but there was a lot of activity in the roadside trees close to the small dam. The area held a good selection of honeyeaters including – **Painted** (2/3 birds), **Black** (5/6 birds), **Singing**, **Spiny-cheeked**, **Brown honeyeater**, and **Yellow-throated Miner**. Many of which were either nesting, displaying, or in full song. Other birds noted were **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **White-winged Trillers**, **Apostlebirds**, calling **Brown Quail** and **Red-rumped Parrots**.

Site 5, Jandowae Trail (see above website)

This area was alive with bush birds, notably large numbers of **White-winged Trillers** which were undoubtedly the most conspicuous bird in the area. Again, no sooner had we left the car than we heard and then saw **Painted Honeyeaters**. There were probably a minimum of

three or four birds in the area and the high display flights were again much in evidence. Black Honeyeaters were apparent by the dozen with up to 5 birds in one tree. Plaxy and Pete had a single male Pied Honeyeater 100m along the track from the road.

Site 6, Jandowae Trail (see above website)

We stopped at the crossroads on the Warra-Canaga Creek Road (near Site 6) and continued the trend of hearing Painted Honeyeaters calling before we had even stopped the car. These birds (at least one pair), along with commoner Black Honeyeaters, were feasting on the flowering mistletoe in the roadside brigalow. We noted our first **White-breasted** and **White-browed Woodswallows** of the day here and saw **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** and **Common Bronzewing**.



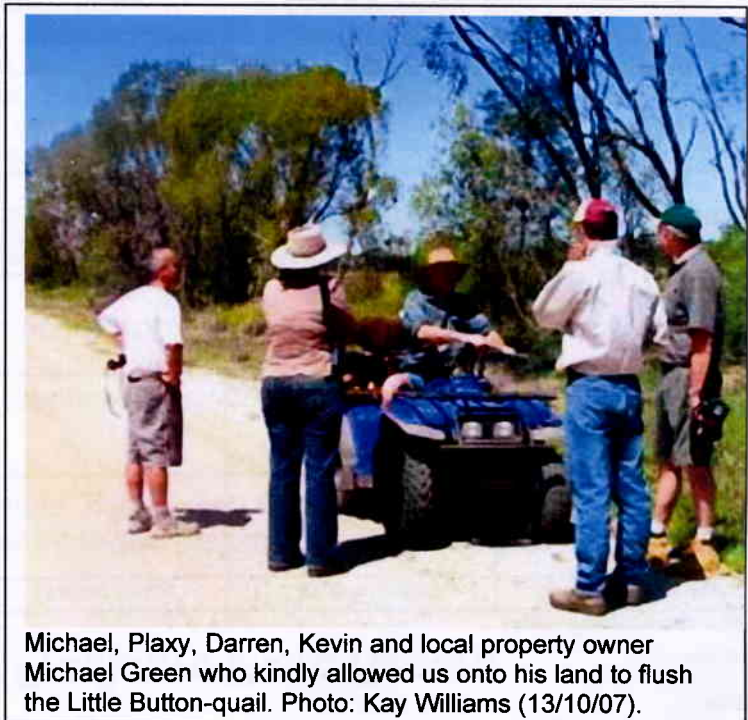
Warra-Canaga Creek Road (700m south of the crossroads near site 6, Jandowae Trail)

This stop provided the most memorable birding of the day with a large mixed flock of woodswallows (Masked, White-browed, and Black-faced) feeding in the weedy, fallow paddocks. Painted Honeyeaters (probably 3 or 4 birds) and Black Honeyeaters (common) were again present in the roadside brigalow, along with the ubiquitous White-winged Trillers. A male and a female Pied Honeyeater were also observed at this site and we all

wondered just how much closer to the SE Queensland coast birders have recorded this species. I guess they may have been found in the Lockyer Valley (90 minutes east) at some stage. **Brown Songlarks** and **Rufous Songlarks** added to the great array of birdsong in the area (we met Dave Stewart with some American friends doing their best to record the bird calls in the windy conditions). **Blue Bonnets**, **Red-winged Parrot**, **Pallid** and **Channel-billed Cuckoos**, **Diamond**, **Bar-shouldered**, and **Peaceful Dove**, **White-winged Chough** were also present in the area whilst **Crimson Chat** (a minimum of 4 or 5 birds) added further unexpected colour to the birding. Finally we flushed two **Little Button-quail** from the weed- and grass-filled paddocks. We did not enter the cultivated fields and had earlier asked permission from the land owners whom we met whilst birding along the road. They were happy to chat and were interested in our sightings but of course no one should stray from the roadside birding without their permission. With the exception of the button-quail, it is also totally unnecessary to leave the road.

Plaxy Barratt & Darren Fielder

Plaxy took a group of us back to Inverai Road the following weekend on the 13th October.



Plaxy, Michael Wood, Michael Atzeni and Darren Fielder headed out early from Toowoomba and later meet up with Kevin and Kay Williams and five other birdos including Tom Tarrant and his wife (<http://www.aviceda.org/>). We had spectacular views of a menagerie of colours and sounds of the different birds on offer. What a day! The main birds we saw on the weekend of the 13th October that were additional to Plaxy and friends first trip to Jandowae were the **Black Falcons**, **Red-backed Kingfisher** and **Plum-headed Finch**. There were a lot less White-winged Trillers (though we saw a large group 40+) and significantly less woodswallows (still the four species but not the 500 mixed flock that was seen on the first trip!) and no Pied Honeyeaters or Crimson Chats.

It was a very exciting four hours or so with a lot of movement of birds and a mix of calls all at once. We saw a total of 75 species that morning.



Michael and Plaxy scanning the roadside vegetation for honeyeaters. Photo: Darren Fielder (13/10/07)

Species recorded on 13th October
Inverai & Warra-Canaga Creek Roads,
Jandowae

Plumed Whistling-duck, White-faced Heron, White-necked Heron, Black-shouldered Kite, Nankeen Kestrel, Little Button-quail, Crested Pigeon, Diamond Dove, Peaceful Dove, Galah, Cockatiel, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Blue Bonnet, Pallid Cuckoo, Red-backed Kingfisher, Rainbow Bee-eater, Superb Fairy-wren, Variegated Fairy-wren, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Striped Honeyeater, Noisy Friarbird, Yellow-throated Miner, Singing Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Painted Honeyeater (br), Black Honeyeater, Grey-crowned Babbler, Rufous Whistler, Magpie-lark, Willie Wagtail, White-winged Triller (br), Olive-backed Oriole, White-breasted Woodswallow, Masked Woodswallow, White-browed Woodswallow, Black-

White-browed Woodswallow, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Australian Raven, Torresian Crow, Apostlebird, Richard's Pipit, Double-barred Finch, Plum-headed Finch, Mistletoebird, Fairy Martin, Rufous Songlark, Brown Songlark

Oakey-Dalby-Jimbour

Plumed Whistling-duck, Black Swan, Australian Wood Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Darter, Little Black Cormorant, Straw-necked Ibis, Masked Lapwing, Black Kite, Black Falcon, Nankeen Kestrel, Dusky Moorhen, Masked Lapwing, Rock Dove, Spotted Turtle-dove, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Little Corella, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Cockatiel, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Red-rumped Parrot, Common Koelm, Laughing Kookaburra, Noisy Friarbird, Noisy Miner, Willie Wagtail, Magpie-lark, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, White-winged Chough, Apostlebird, Richard's Pipit, House Sparrow, Clamorous Reed-warbler, Brown Songlark, Welcome Swallow, Zebra Finch, Common Starling, Common Myna

Thornton Outing Information

Saturday/Sunday 27-28 October - Galvin's property, via Thornton. Leader: Michael Atzeni Ph 4639 2761. This beautiful property is located near Mt Mistake and boasts a wide range of species. The birding is particularly good along the creek which boasts some magnificent fig trees. You won't be disappointed.

On Saturday, meet at the Thornton School at 7.30am. Allow about an hour and a quarter travel time from top of Toowoomba range. **If you wish to come later on Saturday, or on Sunday morning, please travel directly to the property.** The second gate (at the cattle

grid) will be left unlocked during the day for our outing. (I will unlock it around 6am Sunday and be locking up again by lunch). Please leave all gates the way you found them.

If staying overnight, BYO sleeping gear, food and cooking equipment. Some may decide a counter meal at the Mulgowie Hotel 14km down the road is the better option! There is also a flushing toilet, a washing up sink, cold water tap and a hut with table and chairs where we can gather. Those who wish to "semi-rough" it can camp on the floor of this hut. I'm told the spring water at the camp site is fine to drink but take your own water just in case. Bring fly spray and a torch for spotlighting. And don't forget the camera.

Directions to Galvin's property:

1. Travel to Laidley
2. Take the Mulgowie-Townson Rd
3. Travel through Mulgowie. DO NOT TAKE THE RIGHT TURN AT THE HOTEL
4. Continue to Thornton and turn right at the old Thornton Church into Thornton School Rd
5. Cross over the creek and turn left into Main Camp Creek Road
6. Travel up Main Camp Creek Rd off the bitumen until you find the gate with a green sign marked Galvin,etc
7. Pass through this gate and continue straight ahead through 3 more new gates until you reach the set of buildings at the end where we'll camp. You can't miss them. It is approx 2.5km from the first gate to the camp site.

Masked and Barn Owls - how to tell the difference.

By Pat McConnell

After the **Masked Owl** *Tyto novaehollandiae* photo was published in the August newsletter there were several comments about how similar it looked to the **Barn Owl** *T. alba* and would it be possible if the differences could be explained.

Here is a brief description of both owls and some of the features that can be used to differentiate them. Some of the features are subjective and experience with both species in the field is always a good help. It is only likely that a pale phase, male Masked Owl will be mistaken for a Barn Owl.



Spot the differences? A **Masked**, **Barn** and **Grass Owl**. (Photos: Alison McDonald, Ian Gynther and Bill Jolly)

Barn Owls are generally smaller than Masked Owls but there is some overlap in size between the female Barn Owl and the male Masked Owl. The females are larger in both species. However, even a small male Masked Owl will still have a more robust build than a Barn Owl. Barn Owls tend to have a more upright stance whereas if you look at the Masked Owl photo in the newsletter the owl tends to have a more hunched appearance. Masked Owls also have a more rounded face than the slightly elongate face of the Barn Owl. Masked Owls also have more powerful legs that are feathered to the feet, and the feet have long, large talons.

In summary the best field characteristics to look for when determining if an owl is a pale Masked Owl or a Barn Owl are the more robust build, more hunched appearance, larger feet and feathered legs and the more rounded face of the Masked Owl.

Collared Sparrowhawk or Brown Goshawk?

By Dan Begent

One day in late July I was walking around our garden when I heard a lot of birds making a huge noise. In a large tree I noticed a raptor grasping its prey in its talons. I raced inside to get my binoculars. As I was taking off the binocular caps and shoving them in the case, I could hear my Dad's voice in my head saying, "Always put your caps in the binoculars' case or you will lose them!" (Although I know he has lost some of his anyway.....something he doesn't like to talk about.) When I got back the raptor was still there. Goody!

I went over (trying to go really sneakily!) and saw the raptor had a grey back and it seemed to have chestnut bars all down its front. It didn't have a crest so it was not a **Pacific Baza**. I figured it was a **Brown Goshawk** or **Collared Sparrowhawk**; we had seen Collared Sparrowhawks at our place once before. I had learnt how to tell the difference between the two species except I couldn't remember which was which! While I was standing there trying to figure this out, I was terrified my raptor would take off. It was flying all about in the branches and making it difficult to see in the shadows. I was also trying to work out what it was eating. I did not want it to be one of Dad's special chooks or I would end up worse than the raptor's dinner!



Collared Sparrowhawk. Photo: Dan Begent (July 2007)

Suddenly, I spied the raptor overhead. I spun around to look and it was very dark brown all over with a thick white stripe coming up from its shoulder to just below the eye. It didn't have chestnut bars. There were no black and white horizontal stripes on the tail and no white brow. It must be a Brown Falcon! This view was brief but good.

It was nothing like a Collared Sparrowhawk at all. It was nothing like a Brown Goshawk, either. How could I have been so wrong? It must have been very bad light.....but still I had been so sure that it was a Collared Sparrowhawk.

As the Brown Falcon (if I was right, finally) glided off towards the place that raptors love to go to.....out of sight.....I noticed that the **Magpie Larks, Noisy Miners, Magpies** and **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** were still making a lot of noise. So I sneaked over to check it out and guess what? There was my Sparrowhawk or Goshawk still in the same big tree and still with the same prey in its talons. But now it was out on an open branch, standing perfectly still and taking no notice of all those noisy annoyers. Good chance for a photo! So I dashed back inside to get my camera. I found it straight away but was desperately checking to see if the battery was charged up. Fortunately it was. So I got to have a good look and to take a few photos. Well, more than a few.....

It wasn't the same Raptor! I had been watching two different raptors. I guess that's the fun of birding!

P.S. Some studying later revealed that the Brown Falcon really was a Brown Falcon (new one for our house!). The other Raptor in the tree turned out to be a Collared Sparrowhawk. I thought the Collared Sparrowhawk's prey to be a **Spotted Turtle-dove**. What do you think?

Some other interesting bird actions in our garden recently are:

- **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** -15/10/07 pair - Had a short feed in what are possibly *Casuarina glauca* (Swamp Sheoak)
- **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** - Two separate flocks but they were flying together. About seven in all. Flying east to west but then turned and went south.
- **Little Friarbirds** are back for spring/summer again and nesting as they do every year.
- **Rufous Whistlers** - Seen for the first time in about autumn, became permanent but left in about winter and haven't returned. Often I think I can hear them but it always turns out to be just Orioles doing their mimicking thing.
- **Double-barred Finches** - Left when the farmer next door chopped out the short grasses and planted crops in his paddock.
- **Olive-backed Orioles** and **Figbirds** are back for spring/summer: maybe because the mulberry trees are fruiting. Our first **Sacred Kingfisher** of spring was here on 10/9/07.

COMING EVENTS

27-28th October 2007 – Galvin's property near Mt Mistake via Thornton – optional overnight stay. Full details in this newsletter (see page 6). Contact: Michael Atzeni (A/H) 4639 2761

1st November 2007 – Annual General Meeting (AGM) – All Seasons function room (**Note change of venue**), corner of North and Tor Streets. Bird quiz, guest speaker Ross Whiteford on South American birds. **Supper \$4/head. RSVP by 31/10 for catering purposes.** Contact: Ross Begent 4697 7198.

24th November 2007 – Murphy's Creek.

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Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 15 November 2007.

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

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Surface Mail