



# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS INC

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

No. 373  
April 2008

## Editorial

By *Plaxy Barratt & Michael Wood*

Hello Again! Now that the nights are getting cooler and the days are much more conducive to birdwatching it's a real joy to be "out there amongst it". When is it any different!

Both of us had such a great time at the previous outing that we felt the need to return to Goomburra State Forest. All of the wonderful experiences we had on the outing were revisited anew. But if there was something valuable we learnt on the second visit it was that if anyone is to walk the 'Ridge Trail', preferably it should be tackled in a clockwise direction. The latter section is quite tough and is not sign-posted (no doubt the rangers thought it best to conceal this entrance). We were exhausted at the end of it!

Closer to home! What's going on in your neck-of-the-woods lately? Is there a noticeable difference in the make-up of the birds or numbers? Pied Currawongs were going nuts in Toowoomba just a fortnight or so ago –large, noisy flocks gathering to migrate into the "Downs" and "Valley"? And where are the Red-tailed Black-cockatoos that have previously been moving through at this time of year?

We would also like to remind everyone to visit the club's website (address below), where possible, and share your bird records. Recently, no fewer than 37 people visited the forum at the one time (amazing, if it's true – spammers?), which more than doubled that of the previous number. So, there is a great deal of interest in the club's activities.

Also, we've been receiving some great photographs from everyone and are getting quite a library together. Thankyou! All we'd ask is that your initials be put on them so as we don't go citing them to someone else. Ouch!!!

It's also nice to see some new names sending in articles. Come on all you quiet ones! Please!

And finally, a BIG Welcome goes to TBO's newest member Sue Dury.

**2008  
Challenge**  
184 spp as at 12/4/08



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)

## This Issue

### Photography

#### Workshop Summary

By *Gayle Lee & Kay Williams*

### Wonga Wetlands

By *Mary Petr*

### Outing Report –

#### Goomburra SF

By *Michael Wood*

### Lazy Bunya Bathing

By *Margaret Krimmer*

### The Challenge 2008 Update –How are we faring?

By *the editors*

## COMING EVENTS

26<sup>th</sup> April 2008

### Lockyer Valley Wetlands

Meet at Helidon Rest Area at  
7.30am. Leader: Ross Begent

Contact: Kay Williams on (07)  
4659 5475 or 0429 465 954

## Photography Workshop

By Gayle Lee & Kay Williams

The weekend of March 1st and 2nd 2008 was a great weekend for up to 15 of our keenest photographers and birdwatchers who attended the photography workshop conducted by well known Australian ornithologist Graeme Chapman (pictured below).

Graeme has a long-standing passion for birds and bird photography, with a special passion for threatened species. He had worked for CSIRO'S Division of Wildlife Research for many, many years. His pictures and articles have been published widely. We were fortunate enough to have Graeme come and share some of his words of wisdom with us mere amateur photographers.

Saturday saw us all attend the DPI building in Torr Street for the theory and background to photography and to meet this great Australian gentleman.

Subjects covered:

- Photographic equipment, from Box Brownies to Digital SLR's their styles and extra lenses etc.
- Techniques with still, 35mm, and Digital with long lenses, teleconverters and 300mm lenses.
- Use of Tripods and Hides.
- Get to know your subject well; where it eats, drinks, nests.
- Computers and Photoshop programme.
- Caring for your work, films, and digital back-up saving.



Graeme Chapman showing the group how it's done. Photo: Kay Williams

Graeme spent the day relating snippets of his life spent with his cameras in the field of photography. Some of the invaluable information imparted by him included gems such as:

1. "Take pictures not photographs" meaning, make sure the subject is framed correctly and the photo is taken in the best light and position.
2. Australian daylight is too strong for good photography in the middle of the day. Graeme suggests the early morning and late afternoon are best
3. Natural light is always better than a flash. Lens hoods are also an invaluable accessory.
4. Cover highly reflective lenses with something like an old work sock so as to cut down on glare.
5. Hides have got to be lightweight for ease of carrying and setting up and cheap to make.
6. Always determine the best vantage point; face the wind with sun behind you.
7. Know your cameras well, practice, practice and practice. A serious photographer always takes two cameras into the field.

Other points we have already found invaluable include:-

- Don't take "up and unders" -they are not good pictures
- Get down to the level of the bird.
- Focus on the eye of the bird.
- When away from natural water courses, supply birds with water in a 60 litre rubbish bin lid
- Supply them with obvious natural perches, ie. branches and rocks.
- To attract them to the area of your choice supply snippets of fruit, flowers, berries and seeds.

Saturday evening saw a group of us go out for dinner together which was very enjoyable and allowed us to get to know each other without the distraction and clamour of birdlife. Sunday morning we all met at West Creek to try out some of what we had learnt on the previous day. Many tried out the use of tripods to have a steadier camera shots and to stop movement. Some aimed to get down to the level of the ducks in the dams with some interesting results. Graeme personally was interested in getting shots of a waterfowl family. All in all, we don't think any that attended on the weekend came away without learning something of value of use in their future photography of Birds and Wildlife.

## Wonga Wetlands, Albury, NSW

*By Mary Petr*

We recently drove to Melbourne, via Sydney and Canberra, and as a break, we stopped at the Wonga Wetlands, about 4 km west of Albury. It was a pleasant surprise. This is a rehabilitated riverine wetland along the Murray River. There are 5 birdhides and 3 walks:

2.5 km, 1.2 km and 500 m. We took the 2.5 km walk. Due to drying out of the lagoons, there were not all that many water birds, but in the trees there was a constant twitter and flutter of birds (and this was at mid-day). During our one-hour stroll we saw the following birds: Grey Teal, Little Pied Cormorant, Australian Pelican, White-faced Heron, Egret (intermediate or great), Australian White Ibis, **Yellow-billed Spoonbill**, **Black-shouldered Kite**, Whistling Kite, **Purple Swamphen**, Masked Lapwing, Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo,



Male Superb Fairy-wren. Photo: Carol Stephens

Eastern Rosella, **Red-rumped Parrot**, Laughing Kookaburra, **Superb Fairy-wren** (pictured), White-plumed Honeyeater, Golden Whistler, Willie Wagtail, Black-face Cuckoo-shrike, **White-breasted Woodswallow**, Magpie-lark, Australian Magpie, Australian Raven, Red-browed Firetail. It is a worthwhile stop for anyone passing through Albury.

## Outing Report – Goomburra State Forest

29th March, 2008

By Michael Wood

Attendees: Plaxy Barratt, Ross & Dan Begent, Olive Booth, Ron and Sandra Dungleison, Brian & Wendy Henman, Michael Kozakis, Nicholas Kozakis, Gayle Lee, Jenny Matheson, Nicci Thompson, Kevin & Kay Williams, Lloyd-George Worth, Steve Zell.

With a slight sense of nervousness -it was my first TBO outing as leader, Plaxy Barratt and I headed southwards on Friday evening towards **Goomburra State Forest**. A small group of us had decided to spend the night at a spot called 'Goomburra Valley Campground', just a few kilometres west of the reserve and from there make the short trip to the meeting place in the morning.

When we arrived at the campground and were in the process of paying camping fees, Jenny Matheson, her son Nicholas, and his fiend Lloyd-George, pulled up behind us. After a good deal of hoo-ha, we all then made our way over to the camp and were barred by a **Tawny Frogmouth** on the track ahead. When it allowed us to pass, we made our way to the camp, shortly after which we met up with Kevin and Kay Williams.

The five of us then set about undertaking a nocturnal exploration of the area, to the sounds of **Southern Boobook** softly beating up and down the valley. As it was overcast, one might have thought we were a bit of a chance for something interesting. But as with so many spotlighting outings just recently, there was very little night-life to speak of; apart from a **Common Brush-tailed Possum**, we also came across the rather odd-looking **Red-triangle Slug** *Triboniophorus graeffei* (Next day we chanced upon a few more of these and I was aware of an intense need to touch, knowing full well the consequences had I done so. I spoke of this to the others at the time who then pointed to Nicholas' hands, well-coated in a dried, crusty slime.) Much like woodswallows, four



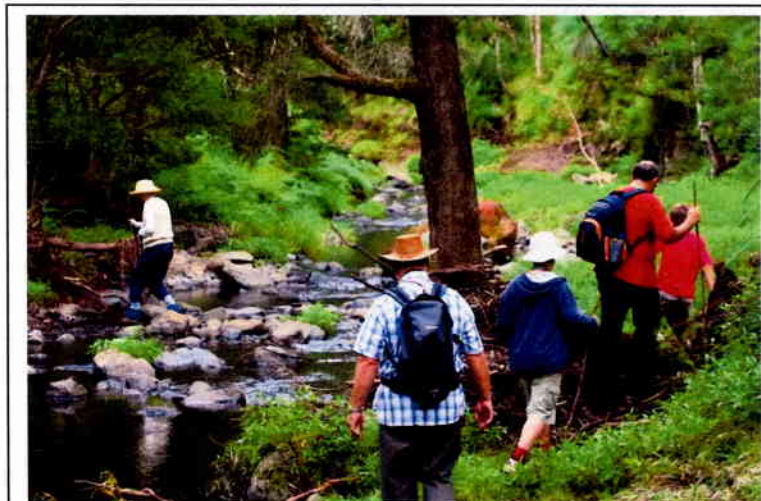
Striped Rocket Frog Photo: Plaxy Barratt

**Crested Pigeon** huddled together along the length of a branch, whereas others recorded on the short walk were the **Masked Lapwing** down by 'Dalrymple Creek', the odd **Noisy Miner** roosting in quite odd locations (one in amongst the foliage of an extremely small sapling, only a metre or so from the ground) and a rather obliging **Striped Rocket Frog** *Litoria nasuta* on the bitumen, no doubt taking advantage of the warmth. The lack of activity eventually got the better of us, though, and we were forced back to the campground.

Next morning, with a wonderful sleep under the belt, we woke early and began recording the bird species around the campsite whilst the billy boiled. Among the more interesting of these were two **White-necked Heron** roosting in trees along the creekline, as well as a **Willie Wagtail**, a few **Pied Butcherbird** and a couple of **Noisy Friarbird**.

Seven 'o' clock arrived and quite a healthy-sized group had gathered at the 'Kurrajong Picnic Area'. In between moments of the ear-breaking screeches of **Red Wattlebirds** and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** –a sweeter sound it is hard to imagine- we went through all the niceties and shortly

afterwards stepped a path across the flowing creek. Once everyone was safely on the other side of the creek, we were on our way upstream along the 'North Branch Trail', clambering across an additional four crossings -the flow seemingly getting faster and more treacherous at each one. I had my heart in my mouth the entire time, feeling responsible for any false step. Thankfully, the rate slowed somewhat on the return trip and everyone came out of it one piece.



'Just Another Tricky Creek Crossing' (birdwatchers in-tact) Photo: Plaxy Barratt

After a while everyone settled comfortably into the environment and began the serious business of birding through 'Dolly Wood'. The birdlife was prolific along the entire length of the valley. All manner of birds were in fine song. But we had trouble seeing much at all and had to wait until the sun emerged from behind the hill, broke the canopy and awakened our side of the valley.

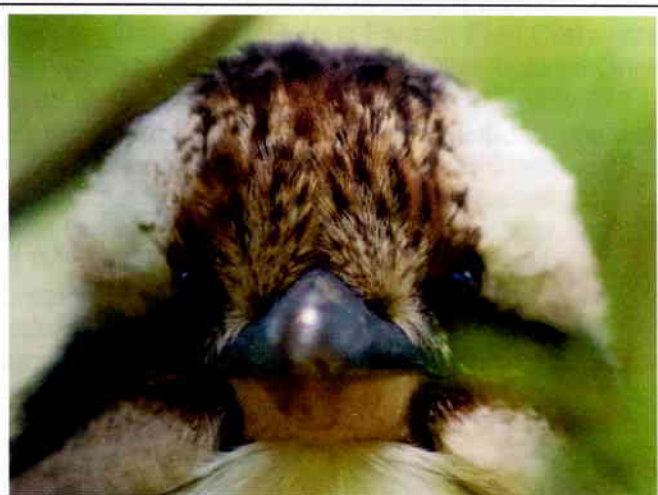
One of the first things that became noticeable on the walk was that the habitat had changed a great deal since a visit a few months earlier, with summer rains responsible for vigorous growth of native grasses and the shrub layer in particular. Acacias seemed to be doing best –surprise, surprise! It was also pleasing to see the odd *Casuarina* sapling popping up here and there. Taking advantage of these improved conditions were an enormous amount of **Red-browed Firetail**; there must have been well over a hundred birds along this section alone, a good proportion of them young. Others doing well were the **Brown Thornbill** and an abundance of **Striated Thornbill** –markings of the latter much less distinct here in Queensland than those in the more southerly states. (Hopefully, Ron and Sandra had some joy with these after we had all departed.)

Little by little other birds began to appear, among the first a very "special one", the **Glossy-black Cockatoo** –it seems to be an excellent spot for the species which is seen or heard on most visits. This handsome bird was soon joined by others such as the first of the **Golden Whistlers**, **Crimson Rosella**, the occasional group of **Little Lorikeet** darting across the valley, numerous **Scarlet Honeyeater** and the **Satin Bowerbird**. Butterflies

were also particularly numerous; no less than ten species were recorded along the trail, the Common Crow, Lesser Wanderer and Macleay's Swallowtail just to name a few.

Back at the picnic area we sat down to morning breakfast. Scavengers soon moved in; a **Pied Currawong** trained its one good eye on our food and an immature **Laughing Kookaburra** (pictured right) took up perch in the same tree just feet away -The paparazzi began working overtime and the bird certainly appeared as though it had something to say about this!

Overhead, a flock of 52 **Straw-necked Ibis** were making a pig's ear of an attempt to establish a v-formation, first flying one way, shortly after another, then another, and so on and so on.... In the end, one of the more decisive individuals became entirely fed-up with all this and made up its mind to leave the bewildered mob for the north-east. Dan Begent then silenced the speculators amongst us by taking a photo of the flock and counting them all, putting to rest any question about their number.



Star-struck Laughing Kookaburra Photo: Dan Begent

As no-one seemed ready to leave just yet, we all decided to do the short rainforest loop, or 'Dalrymple Circuit', and enter the well-organised chaos of the **Bell Miner** colony there. As we carried on around the short loop we picked up a couple of late-to-leave **Rufous Fantail** -still there a fortnight later, the odd **Brown Cuckoo-dove** and an audible **Olive-backed Oriole**. But apart from the discovery of these, and a four-limbed snake-like.... well, reptile,

legless lizard, thinga-me-jigga-mee-bob sun-bathing in the middle of the path, things had quietened somewhat.



The group stops for lunch. Photo: Dan Begent

It was just after midday when we made it back to camp and began packing. Plax and I made a real hash of trying to leave, though, instead enjoying the gorgeous day soaking up the sun on the banks of 'Dalrymple Creek'. On the verge of sleep, we watched a few **Dusky Woodswallows** and **Welcome Swallows** circling above, along with a

**Common Bronzewing** coming in for a sticky-beak, roughly four **Blue-faced Honeyeater**, the odd **Noisy Friarbird** and, at our feet, a cadis-fly larvae moving about below the surface of the water, encased in a hollowed-out segment of grass stalk.

Sadly, in the end, we had to pull ourselves away from Goomburra and head back towards the west. Not far into the trip we caught sight of a **Spotted Harrier** quartering over a

paddock of sorghum, the only raptor recorded within proximity of the park. I had worried about the state of the weather for the outing, but as the day evolved it just got more and more lovely, and I realised there was no reason to think the location wouldn't live-up to expectations –it always has!

**Birdlist for Goomburra SF & Goomburra Valley Campground:**

Red-browed Firetail, Mistletoebird, Bassian Thrush, Welcome Swallow, Silvereeye, Eastern Yellow Robin, Magpie-lark, Torresian Crow, Willie Wagtail, Grey Fantail, Rufous Fantail, Pied Currawong, Australian Magpie, Pied Butcherbird, Grey Butcherbird, Dusky Woodswallow, Olive-backed Oriole, Grey Shrike-thrush, Golden Whistler, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Eastern Whipbird, Noisy Friarbird, Blue-faced Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird, Noisy Miner, Bell Miner, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Lewin's Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Striated Pardalote, Spotted Pardalote, Brown Thornbill, Striated Thornbill, White-browed Scrubwren, Variegated Fairy-wren, Superb Fairy-wren, Satin Bowerbird, White-throated Treecreeper, Laughing Kookaburra, Southern Boobook, Pale-headed Rosella, Eastern Rosella, Crimson Rosella, Australian King Parrot, Little Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Rainbow Lorikeet, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Galah, Glossy-black Cockatoo, Masked Lapwing, Straw-necked Ibis, White-necked Heron, Tawny Frogmouth, Wonga Pigeon, Crested Pigeon, Common Bronzewing, Brown Cuckoo-dove, Pacific Black Duck.



Male Mistletoebird eyeing-off berries of Black-leaved Nightshade. Photo: Bill Jolly

## Lazy Bunya Bathing

By Margaret Krimmer

The cottage in the Bunya Mountains my daughter and little grandson leased over Easter backed on to thick rainforest. Mid afternoon on Easter Sunday with binoculars at the ready I was lazily watching the activity at the bird-waterers when to my amazement a male **Paradise Riflebird** emerged to drink, bathe and preen for fully three minutes at a distance of only three metres. Initially I thought he was the male satin bowerbird but the distinctive beak and the brilliance of the turquoise on his head and wings told me otherwise. An amazing experience as I believe they are very shy and not easy to find!

## The Challenge 2008 Update

By the Editors

These are the additions to the Toowoomba Bird Observers' *Challenge 2008*. Accuracy not vouched for by the TBO. Please check with observer before citing.

**Dusky Woodswallow** 13/4/2008 Redwood Park **MW**  
**Painted Button-quail** 12/4/2008 Table Top Drive, Toowoomba **RH**  
**Noisy Pitta** 10/4/2008 Ferny Gully Walk, Redwood Park **RH**  
**Australian Pelican** 10/4/2008 Amos Road, Murphy's Creek **MA, WH, MW**  
**Latham's Snipe** 6/4/2008 Helidon Spa **PB & MW**  
**Restless Flycatcher** 30/3/2008 Meadows Road, Withcott **DF**  
**Brown Gerygone** 30/3/2008 Redwood Park **MA**  
**Black Falcon** 18/3/2008 south-west of Toowoomba **RJ**

**MA** -Mick Atzeni, **PB** -Plaxy Barratt, **DF** -Darren Fielder, **RH** Rod Hobson, **WH** Bill Holmes, **RJ** -Russell Jenkins, **MW** -Michael Wood

**Here's a list of what was reported by 30 April 2007 but have not yet been reported this year:** Stubble Quail, Magpie Goose, Black Swan, Pink-eared Duck, Emerald Dove, Diamond Dove, Intermediate Egret, Glossy Ibis, Square-tailed Kite, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Swamp Harrier, Buff-banded Rail, Red-necked Avocet, Little Bronze-cuckoo, Powerful Owl, Eastern Barn Owl, Red-backed Kingfisher, Western Gerygone, Eastern Spinebill, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Bell Miner, Spotted Quail-thrush, White-winged Chough, Red-capped Robin, Rose Robin, Rufous Songlark, Brown Songlark, Tree Martin, Plum-headed Finch

[Thanks, Mick Atzeni]



## COMING EVENTS

**26<sup>th</sup> April 2008 – Lockyer Valley Wetlands**  
 Meet at the Helidon Rest Area at 7.30am  
 Leader: Ross Begent. (Contact Kay  
 Williams on 0429 465 954 or 4659 5475)

## Executive Committee Members

<b>President</b>	Ross Begent	4697 7198 (h) 4696 7900 (wk)
<b>Vice-president</b>	Sandra Wilson	0412 065 221 <a href="mailto:zandru@optusnet.com.au">zandru@optusnet.com.au</a>
<b>Secretary</b>	Olive Booth	4633 0553 <a href="mailto:o.booth@bigpond.com">o.booth@bigpond.com</a>
<b>Treasurer</b>	Rosalie Rudduck	4697 6190
<b>Records Officer</b>	Pat McConnell	4631 5573 <a href="mailto:mccommel@usq.edu.au">mccommel@usq.edu.au</a>
<b>Newsletter Editors</b>	Plaxy Barratt and Michael Wood	0427 462 932 <a href="mailto:plaxy.barratt@epa.qld.gov.au">plaxy.barratt@epa.qld.gov.au</a> 0402 283 856 <a href="mailto:mswode@hotmail.com">mswode@hotmail.com</a>
<b>Outings Co-ordinator</b>	Kay Williams	4659 5475 0429 465 954 <a href="mailto:kevkeywills@hotmail.com">kevkeywills@hotmail.com</a>
<b>Media Officer</b>	Jenny Matheson	0431 835 138
<b>Librarian</b>	Dan Begent	4697 7198 (h) <a href="mailto:muda@australiainmail.com">muda@australiainmail.com</a>
<b>Committee Members</b>	Mick Atzeni	4688 1318 (wk) <a href="mailto:michael.atzeni@dpi.qld.qaov.au">michael.atzeni@dpi.qld.qaov.au</a>
	Richard Colclough	4688 6654
	Gayle Lee	4638 5561
	Mike McGoldrick	4635 7371

*Darren Fielder  
4699 4348*

**Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 15th May 2008**

Please e-mail or snail-mail your articles to Plaxy Barratt or Michael Wood.

**If undeliverable return to  
 Toowoomba Bird Observers Inc  
 PO Box 4730, Toowoomba East Q 4350**

**Surface Mail**