

Editorial

By Plaxy Barratt & Michael Wood

Well, firstly, I need to apologise for the lapse in newsletters of recent months!! We both have experienced upheavals of late, and sincerely hope the lack of newsletters hasn't inconvenienced any of you in any way. We appreciate your understanding and patience during this time.

On that note, it is with both sadness and excitement that I report the departure from this role, and from Toowoomba, of our co-editor, Michael Wood. Michael has landed himself any bird watcher's dream job, working as a consultant ornithologist in Western Australia! He is based in Perth, but has already embarked on his first two weeks of field work in the Murchison River area. I can assure you I will be pestering him regularly for articles to keep us all updated!

We would like to thank Michael for his terrific work as co-editor and for the knowledge and enthusiasm he brought to the club. He will be missed. We wish him all the best in this new and exciting chapter of his life.

The club will be holding its **AGM next** month 22nd October. A guest speaker (to be determined), election of Committee members, and maybe even a few games, should make for an interesting and social evening! Bring a plate to share. For further details see the back cover.

Also, we would like to extend an invitation to all members for suggestions for outings and/or leaders for next year. If you have a suggestion we would love to hear it!

As you may be aware, BOCA, of which we are an affiliated member, has recently changed its name. While its acronym remains the same, BOCA is now officially 'Bird Observation and Conservation Australia', to be reflected in our newsletter template, bottom right.

A gentle reminder to everyone that annual subscriptions are due.

And lastly, we hope you are able to make the most birding with this wonderful warm Spring weather. I know I was delighted to add Wedgetailed Eagle to my backyard list - an individual performing a conspicuous territorial display of linked, U-shaped dives and ascents, viewed from my balcony. Breath-taking.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and shall endeavour to get the next one to you as soon as possible!

2008 Challenge 211 spp as at 25/09/08

This Issue

Grey Falcon: New Toowoomba Bird By Pat McConnell

Raptor Census Report
By Pat McConnell

July Outing – Adare's Rd, Lockyer Valley By Kay Williams

Western Medicine: Part 2 By Mick Atzeni

'Kilcowera Station' By Carol Probets

COMING EVENTS

Sunday 28th Sept 2008 Wader Outing: Toorbul & Pumicestone Passage Leader: Esther Townsend Contact: Kay Williams (07) 4659 5475

October 2008 Census

Contact: Kay Williams (07) 4659 5475



(An affiliated member of Bird Observation and Conservation 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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CIPPLE MAINOR

Variation (Sept.)

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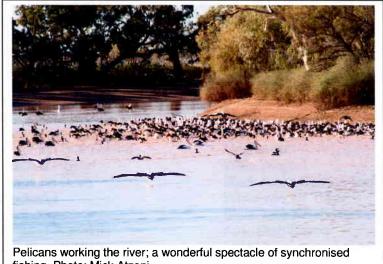
Sincy Falcon: New Toowcomba Simi



Suprer Census: 28" 20" Juni 2008

ubiquitous Red-capped Robin in the same patch. Not far from the 'Eulo Mud Springs' at a roadside pool of water, a Red-backed Kingfisher was added.

At Lake Bindegolly, on the then nearly dry northern lake we picked up our first White-winged Wren and a swag of other species we'd already seen, but did not find an Orange Chat. As time was getting on we decided to press on to Thargomindah, only stopping on dusk to identify a woodswallow - a Masked - about 9 km from "Thargo". Take them as they come they say. But as it



fishing. Photo: Mick Atzeni

turned out, Masked and White-browed Woodswallows were everywhere next morning around the Oasis Motel we're we stayed. Again we were in good company as we knew the owners Phil & Donna, although I had not met Donna in person before. Phil's mother was my mother's matron of honour. I hadn't seen Phil since the late '70s. Good how birding can connect people up again in odd places. They also run the local store. If you're out that way, tell them I sent you and give them our regards!

Next day (1/7/07) we headed off to 'Molesworth', an outstation of Bulloo Downs about 85km SW of Thargomindah, which Phil had teed-up permission for us to visit. We gave ourselves a chance of finding Grey Grasswren there along the Bulloo River, rather than driving all the way down to the Bulloo Overflow to try our luck. As I said in the last newsletter, lifers weren't a priority. On the way, we saw our first Black Honeyeaters - I managed to photograph a young one, a Brown Goshawk, thousands of budgies and the first of many pelicans - more than I was prepared for on arriving at the river. Passing through 'Nooyeah Downs', we finally added Australian Hobby for the trip.

Our first stop on 'Molesworth' proved very fruitful - excellent looks at Black and Pied Honeyeaters (#115), and dad also caught up with **Southern Whiteface**, which he'd missed earlier on the trip. Then, as if that wasn't enough, 4km further in, dad spotted the one bird on the trip that was a lifer for both of us - an Inland Dotterel. It was in flight and landed on a gibber and we set the scope on it and soon after located its mate. But what a cryptic bird! High fives!! Definitely wasn't expecting that one.



Young Black Honeyeater. Photo: Mick Atzeni

And there were to be more surprises – not all new species - but sheer numbers of birds. There was a constant stream of cormorants and pelicans up and down the river - an avian autobahn. As we made our way along the river I made the comment that I could hear voices down on the river ahead of us.... perhaps some fishermen chatting. It turned out the voices were the sound of the pelicans working the river with their open bills; a wonderful spectacle of synchronised fishing that's still very vivid as I write.

We looked in the small patches of lignum along the river for grasswrens without



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Accuracy not vouched for by the TBO. Please check with observer before citing.

*Rare/ unusual locally

Black Swan near Helidon dip 20/09/08 PM, KM
Red-winged Parrot* Highfields 16/09/08 PM, KM
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper farm dam, Helidon 10/09/08 BJ
Red-kneed Dotterel farm dam, Helidon 10/09/08 BJ
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater 15 Mile Road, nr. Murphy's Creek 26/07/08 MA, CP, MW
Tree Martin Thomas Road, Pampas Downs 26/07/08 MA, CP, MW
Pink-eared Duck farm dam, Helidon 10/07/08 BJ
Little Egret Helidon Spa 30/06/08 LT
Buff-banded Rail Helidon Spa 15/06/08 BJ
Blue Bonnet* 29/05/08 Back Flagstone Creek Road, Lilydale NT
Red-necked Avocet Helidon Spa 20/05/08 LT

MA -Mick Atzeni, BJ -Bill Jolly, PM -Pat McConnell, KM -Kath O'Donnell CP - Claudiane Ouellet-Plamondon, LT -Louise Teese, NT -Nicci Thompson, MW -Michael Wood

'Kilcowera Station'

By Carol Probets

Early in July I spent 10 days travelling around parts of western NSW and SW Qld with the aim of checking out a few places I haven't been before. The undoubted highlight was spending two and a half days at Kilcowera station on the Hungerford to Thargomindah road in south-west Qld.

A glance at the visitors' book shows that Kilcowera has already been discovered by a few birders but it deserves to be better known. The birding opportunities are fantastic, the shearers' quarters accommodation very comfortable and the owners Toni and Greg Sherwin very welcoming and helpful.

Kilcowera is a whopping 120,000 acres (nearly 50,000 ha) of mulga, gibber, stony ridge and gorge country, eremophila shrubland, bimble box and coolibah, natural swamps and waterholes, lignum and a good variety of other habitats. The bird list for the property contains 157 species including characteristic mulga species such as Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush and Hall's Babbler and plenty of other outback birds including chats, bustards, Chirruping Wedgebill and the Gibberbird. Grey Falcon is on the list.



Major Mitchell's Cockatoo Lophocroa leadbeateri Photo: Daniel Mantle

having been seen twice. The property adjoins the western side of Lake Wyara, the semipermanent salt lake which forms part of Currawinya NP and is an important waterbird refuge. Earlier this year the lake held a massive Pelican breeding event, but by the time I was there the Pelicans had dispersed and the water was a long way back from the access point. However it was the bush birds that provided ample interest and delight.

During my visit I saw 75 species including Bourke's Parrot, Mulga Parrot, Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush, Crested Bellbird, White-browed Treecreeper, Splendid and White-winged Fairy-wrens, Orange and Crimson Chats, Diamond Dove, Blackfaced Woodswallow, White-fronted Honeyeater and amazing numbers of Pied and Black Honeyeaters.

Several species of Eremophila were flowering and literally everywhere I stopped - without exception - **Pied Honeyeaters** could be heard and/or seen. At one point along the Red Hole drive, I wandered into the bush to find myself surrounded my dozens of male Pieds all competing vocally, they were in the top of every tree and shrub; in one small tree I counted 15 and in another tree there were 6 males competing for the attentions of one female. A few moments later and at least three dozen rose into the air as a flock, filling the sky the way woodswallows do. I have seen concentrations of Pied Honeyeaters before but nothing like this. **Black Honeyeaters** were also very numerous.

While I was watching the honeyeaters, I heard a sound in the tree beside me and there, barely 3 metres away, was an inquisitive **Bourke's Parrot**. (This was only one of several excellent Bourke's sightings I had.) I then put my binoculars onto another tree and saw Bourke's and **Mulga Parrots** and Pied Honeyeater together in one binocular view! The previous day, while admiring the view from the top of a rocky ridge I suddenly became aware of a movement behind a shrub, and a **Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush** materialised. A few moments later I was watching a breathtakingly vivid male **Splendid Fairy-wren** bouncing across the ochre-red ground. These were magical moments!

I took a whole day to do the 70km self-drive tour around the property. The track crosses stony ridges, red dirt plains and dry creek beds, past bores with a colourful history, past windmill-blade signs labelling trees and shrubs and pointing the way to side tracks and caves, eventually reaching a point at the eastern end of the property overlooking Lake Wyara. From this point the lake was no more than a shimmering haze in the distance, even through the scope. I put on my daypack and walked some distance out towards the water and hardly seemed to get any closer, but along the way I encountered groups of **Orange Chats**, **White-winged Fairy-wrens**, **Brown Songlarks**, **Black-faced Woodswallows**, **Black-fronted Dotterels** and the occasional **Wedge-tailed Eagle**. Around the edges of a pool, **Red-capped Plovers** busily foraged. The only evidence of the massive Pelican rookery a few months earlier was the occasional dead young **Pelican** on the salt-encrusted mud, a sight which hinted at some unknown and incomprehensible struggle under a beating sun.

Back along the track, I detoured to a rock hole - a beautiful spot where I could have sat for hours, if only I'd had the time! It felt very special. Here I saw **Hooded Robin** and **Diamond Dove**. I also really enjoyed the drive to Red Hole which passes through fantastic bird habitat and it was along this short stretch I saw 9 species of parrot and cockatoo. At Red Hole itself were a couple of dozen **Pink-eared Ducks**, some **Grey Teal** and **Hoary-headed Grebes**.

In the afternoon I walked around Cardenyabba Lagoon where I saw **Yellow-billed Spoonbills**, many **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallows**, a tree full of **Crimson Chats** and yet more Bourke's and Mulga Parrots looking stunning in the late afternoon sun.

A plastic folder containing a map of the property, interpretive notes and a birdlist are issued to visitors on arrival. The owners Toni and Greg obviously care for their land very well, are interested in birds, and their hospitality is of the sort that the outback is famous for. Accommodation is available in shearer's quarters or camping. The common birds around the quarters included Chestnut-rumped Thornbills, Southern Whitefaces, Red-capped Robins, a group of Emus

and of course those Pied Honeyeaters! At night I heard an Owlet-nightjar.

It would be tempting to compare Kilcowera with Bowra but each has its own merits. It's worth noting that Kilcowera is more remote, being about 80km along a gravel road to the nearest town (Thargomindah). I had to change a flat tyre on the way from Hungerford so I was very glad to have brought a second spare which allowed peace of mind while driving the many kilometres of station tracks.

I heartily recommend Kilcowera for anyone wanting a relaxing stay in a beautiful outback environment amongst friendly people and the promise of a very special birding experience!

Carol Probets Guided birding in the Blue Mountains & Capertee Valley PO Box 330 Katoomba NSW 2780

Web: http://www.bmbirding.com.au

July Outing with John Hadley in Adares Road area

By Kay Williams

Attendees: Richard Thomis and sons Daniel and Alexander, Gayle Lee, Neil and Helen McKilligan, Sandra and Ron Dunglison, Russell and Hiroko Jenkins, Jenny Matheson her son Nicholas and his school mates Tristan Hillebrand and L G Worth, Margaret Cameron, and Kevin and Kay Williams.

We met at Apex Park at 7:00am looking forward to an interesting morning of birding and hoping that the day was going to warm up a little. With a convoy of cars we left Apex and headed towards the area known as Adare.

We had a very interesting walk around the roads in some wooded and open sites, with a small stream running through the area. The bird-life was immense and varied, with bush birds to raptors to water birds. I was fascinated with a **Yellow-billed Spoonbill** in a creek in the scrub. Margaret found a pardalote nest in the bank on the way back to the vehicles.

After a quick cuppa it was down the road to view another area on Adares road – a very interesting spot with many honeyeaters and **Martins**, **Fairy and Tree**, as well as **Welcome Swallow**. A dam

through the trees gave us glimpses of a few water birds as well.

Time for a short comfort break at Pohlman's Nursery saw every one still listening and looking for birds. We saw a **Striated Pardalote** creating a nest in a large barrel of potting mix.

Lake Clarendon was our lunch stop. After we had replenished our appetites it was time to



walk the dam wall, and we found egrets and Glossy Ibis. Daniel and Alexander returned a sad looking turtle to the water - great effort boys.

Off down the road again to Lockyer Waters brought forward more birds of interest, the Thomis Boys counting numbers looking for 100 for the day. These boys are very keen behind binoculars or a camera. Their prize photograph for the day could have been Daniel's Ground Cuckoo-shrike, spotted in a house garden as they drove past. Sadly I did not see it. A variety of raptors had been seen during the day which of course was great for Russell Jenkins our keen 'Raptor man'.

As the afternoon wore on we were seeing more and more lifers for the newer members, such as Banded Lapwing, Ground Cuckoo-shrike (for those lucky enough to see them), Gull-billed Tern, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike.

The variety of sites and species made this a terrific outing for us all. On behalf of all who attended, I would like to say a tremendous big thank you to John Hadley and his friend Margaret Cameron for their time, effort and knowledge. The day was a great success with 106 Species sited.

Species observed

Wandering Whistling Duck Plumed Whistling Duck

Black Swan Wood Duck Hardhead

Pacific Black Duck Australian Shoveler Pink-eared Duck

Grey Teal

Australasian Grebe

Darter

Great Cormorant Little Black Cormorant Little Pied Cormorant Australian Pelican White-necked Heron White-faced Heron Cattle Egret Little Egret

Great Egret Intermediate Egret Glossy Ibis

Straw-necked Ibis Australian White Ibis Royal Spoonbill Yellow-billed Spoonbill

Whistling Kite

White-bellied Sea Eagle Wedge-tailed Eagle Swamp Harrier Black Falcon Brown Falcon Nankeen Kestrel Australian Hobby **Dusky Moorhen**

Purple Swamphen

Eurasian Coot

Comb-crested Jacana Black-winged Stilt Red-necked Avocet Black-fronted Dotterel Masked Lapwing Banded Lapwing Gull-billed Tern Spotted Turtledove Feral Pigeon Peaceful Dove

Bar-shouldered Dove Common Bronze wing

Crested Pigeon Galah

Little Corella Rainbow Lorikeet Scaly-breasted Lorikeet

Little Lorikeet Red-rumped Parrot Fan-tailed Cuckoo Pheasant Coucal Laughing Kookaburra Superb Fairy-Wren Variegated Fairy-Wren Red-backed Fairy Wren Spotted Pardalote Striated Pardalote

White-browed Scrub Wren White-throated Gerygone

Weebill Little Friarbird Noisy Friarbird Striped Honeyeater Blue-faced Honeyeater

Noisy Miner

Lewin's Honeyeater Fuscous Honeyeater

Brown-headed Honeyeater White-throated Honeyeater

White-napped Honeyeater Scarlet Honeyeater **Brown Honeyeater**

Jacky Winter

Eastern Yellow Robin Grey Crowned Babbler

Eastern Whipbird Golden Whistler **Rufous Whistler** Restless Flycatcher Willie Wagtail Grev Fantail

Black-faced Cuckoo shrike White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike Ground Cuckoo Shrike

Grey Butcherbird Pied Butcherbird Magpie Lark Australian Magpie **Torresian Crow** Australasian Pipit Mistletoe Bird Welcome Swallow

Tree Martin Fairy Martin Brown Songlark

Golden-headed Cisticola

Silver-eye

Common Starling Common Myna

'Chasing Birds'

[Birds Australia e-news]

A short documentary film entitled "Chasing Birds", which follows the fortunes of three teams participating in the NSW Twitchathon, will be broadcast on the ABC on Thursday 23 October, immediately before the start of the 2008 NSW Twitchathon. A light-hearted look at the wacky antics of the local birders, the film was first aired at the Sydney Film Festival in June. The critics have given it $4 \frac{1}{2}$ stars.

Australian National Waterhole Count - 11th Oct 2008

[Threatened Bird Network tbn@birdsaustralia.com.au]

Assistance sought for the Australian National Waterhole Count

This year will see the very first Australia wide "National Waterhole Count". All you need are a pair of binoculars, a place where birds come to drink, and to be available to count on the morning of the 11th October 2008. It doesn't matter if you count at the leaky tap in your backyard or a water trough on the Canning Stock Route - the important thing will be to count! We are hoping to have as many volunteers as possible, and all data will be deposited with Birds Australia as part of the national Altas of Australian Birds database. The method is simple and a survey pack, complete with data sheets and a



Brolgas, south of Condamine, in August. Photo Ben Turner

description of the methods, is available by contacting count coordinator Milton Lewis via email at: dalysium@iinet.net.au

[Ed: If you have any doubts as to the joys of watching birds drinking from a tap just ask Kay and Kevin Williams to relay their recent experience at Lake Broadwater, watching honeyeaters drinking from a dripping tap at a water tank. It's an animated re-enactment!!]

New birding brochure for Wambo Shire

Wambo Shire Council has prepared an excellent brochure of birding trails entitled 'Birding Area of the Wambo Shire', researched by Doug Henning with assistance from local birders Malcolm Wilson (Dalby area) and Don and Bernice Seton (Bell/Bunya Mountains area). The brochures are available at local visitor information centres; the information can also be downloaded at www.wambo.gld.gov.au.

Stanthorpe Wildflower Walks

Stanthorpe's Rare Wildflower Consortium is again hosting a series of Wildflower Walks this Spring. Since 2004 these walks have been immensely popular with locals and visitors to the area. The walks are open to anyone interested in learning more about the unique local flora of the Granite Belt. The following walks remain for Spring 2008:

Sunday 5th October: Donnelly's Castle, Pozieres. Met in the Picnic area

Sunday 2nd November: Mount Norman (South). Girraween National Park. Meet at Mt Norman day use area.

All walks start at 9.30am and aim to finish by 12.30pm. For further information phone Liz Bourne on (07) 4683 6374

Directions for Wader Outing - this Sunday 28th September

JOINT TBO/QLD WADER STUDY GROUP WADER DAY AT TOORBUL Sunday 28th September 2008 (NB Sunday)

High tide: 9:30 am

Best time to see waders: 8:00am to 11:00am

Meet: at high tide roost at 8:00am, or whenever you get there.

Directions: From Toowoomba, Warwick etc., find your way to Kilcoy or Brisbane, then

From Kilcoy travel east on the D'Aguilar Highway (which now bypasses Caboolture) and follow the signs to the Sunshine Coast to join the Bruce Highway northbound. After approx. 3 km exit left (sign-posted Pumicestone Road, Toorbul, Donnybrook) and proceed to the roundabout. At the roundabout, turn right into Pumicestone Road and follow this road for approx. 14 km to Toorbul. At the T intersection in Toorbul, turn left into Freeman Road, proceed to the T intersection at the shoreline, then turn right into the Esplanade. Follow the Esplanade approx. 2 km to the high tide roost and park near the picnic tables under the trees (Brisbane UBD Map 51 Q5).

From Brisbane travel north on the Bruce Highway. Take the Pumicestone Road/Toorbul/Donnybrook exit and proceed as above.

PLEASE NOTE: There are no toilets at the high tide roost. The closest toilets and Toorbul's only shop are at the intersection of Freeman Road and the Esplanade (Brisbane UBD Map 41 L17) which you will pass on your way in. There are several wader sites along the Esplanade between Freeman Road and the high tide roost which you might like to stop at along the way. And on your way into or out of Toorbul, it is worth stopping to have a look at Bishop's Marsh (SE corner of Pumicestone Road and Volz Road; Brisbane UBD Map 40 J19), a site beloved of the local Brolgas, but beware the traffic along Pumicestone Road. For people who might like to stay overnight at/near Toorbul, the only accommodation in Toorbul is at the Toorbul Caravan Park (Ph. 5498 8701) which does have cabins. There is plenty of accommodation at nearby Caboolture and Bribie Island.

If you have a spotting scope please bring it with you.

ENQUIRIES: Esther Townsend (Ph. 3356 5007) or Kay Williams (Ph. 4659 5475).

COMING EVENTS*

Sunday 28th September 2008 Wader Outing: Toorbul & Pumicestone Passage

Leader: Esther Townsend Contact: Kay Williams

(07) 4659 5475

22nd October 2008 TBO Annual General Meeting

Uniting Church Hall, corner of North & Tor Sts Starts 7.30pm

Starts 7.30pm Bring a plate

October 2008: Census

Contact: Kay Williams (07) 4659 5475

Second Saturday of each month

Black-breasted Button-quail survey 'Birdwood Park', Gowrie Junction area Contact Mick Atzeni (07) 4688 1318

NB: Remember to pay your annual subscriptions

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Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 15th October 2008

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

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

Surface Mail