



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

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

No. 379
January 2009

Editorial

By Plaxy Barratt & Nicci Thompson

A new year and already the devoted listers among us have been scanning their 2009 year list, planning habitats to visit to ensure the regulars are ticked once again. For at least some club members the year began with a big tick as they observed the **Australasian Little Bittern** pair and their chicks at the Metroplex Wetlands in Brisbane.

Others braved the heat and humidity at Iron Range, Cape York, and were rewarded with birds they had only ever dreamed of; **Palm Cockatoos, Eclectus Parrots, Red-bellied Pittas**, to name a few. After seeing only one new bird in 2008 previously (albeit a **Red Goshawk!**) this was an exhilarating holiday. I made my 500th bird and then some – after two weeks of sweating I had seen a total of 35 lifers...and that's just the birds! Snakes, frogs, butterflies, and other delights abounded; a trip report will follow shortly.

Don't forget the club's lists too – the Challenge for 2009; the Summer count and the monthly list. If you are not really familiar with any of these visit the website at www.toowoombabirdobservers.org.au or talk to our Records Officer, Pat McConnell or the webmaster, Michael Atzeni, to see how you can become involved.

In this edition we have a variety of great articles contributed by members. Richard reports on the ever-popular 'Bowra', and Nicci tells of a trip along the Darling River. Mick has summarized the results of the 2008 Census (well done to everyone who participated), and Darren writes of the snakes at his block in Flagstone Creek; as Rod Hobson says, 'it's not their fault they don't have feathers'!

Plus, you'll find a couple of new additions to the newsletter – a 'Photo Caption Competition', and a monthly 'Mystery Bird Challenge' (p 5); a bit of fun, and a chance to win some prizes at the AGM to boot.

We look forward to catching up with you all on the last Saturday in January at Prince Henry Drive (p12). Prince Henry Drive is a very pleasant place to bird, and supports a high diversity of species – a great place to bird for old and new members alike!

**2009
Challenge**
138 as at 24/01/09



TOOWOOMBA
BIRD OBSERVERS

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Members' Postings

COMING EVENTS

**Saturday 31st Jan 2009
Beginners' outing – new birders welcome!**
Prince Henry Drive
Toowoomba
Contact: Kay Williams
(07) 4659 5475

See back page for more...

(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

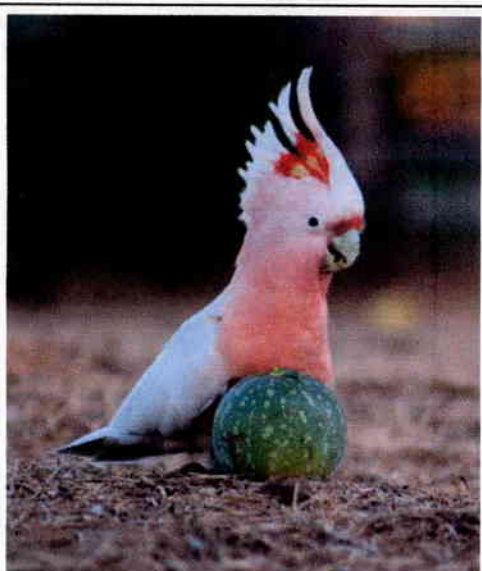
(Subscriptions due 31 August)

'Bowra'

By Richard Thomis

Bowra, Cunnamulla was a place I had wanted to visit for years. I had been carrying around the articles Esther and Gloria wrote, literally and in my head. The problem was selling the idea to the rest of my family, but as my sons, Daniel and Alexander, became keen birders, the planning came to fruition.

The birding started to get more interesting west of St George with **Brolgas** and great views of a **Spotted Harrier**. We stopped to check out a **wood swallow (Black-faced)** and saw **Mulga** and **Australian Ringnecks**, **Spotted Bowerbird** and **Diamond Dove**, all within a few minutes.



Major Mitchel, lured in by a melon. Photo: Richard Thomis

The final 6km into Bowra took about an hour, interrupted by some protracted birding stops for **Red-backed Kingfisher**, **Singing** and **Painted Honeyeater**, and the real highlight for me, flocks of **Budgerigars**; finally – my first new bird. After quickly checking in with owner, Julie, we explored the immediate vicinity. **Chestnut-crowned Babblers** were common around the homestead, but we were overwhelmed by parrots - **Blue Bonnets**, **Mulga** and **Australian Ringnecks**.

First thing next morning **Red-capped** and **Hooded Robin**, and particularly **Crimson Chat**, were highlights amongst all the **Zebra Finches**, **White-plumed Honeyeaters** and **Rufous Songlarks**. After breakfast, we headed to the west of the property. Stopping at likely wren habitat, we soon found a party of wrens and tried to collect the details on the females. To our great fortune, a male **Splendid Fairy-wren** then declared himself. It is hard to imagine a more photo worthy bird, and we duly obliged. Ian, Julie's husband, then appeared on his motorbike and directed us to a group of trees that we had just driven past, a haunt of the Bourke's parrot. With such quality local knowledge, four **Bourke's' Parrots** were readily located.

Stops for recently observed Black Honeyeater and Redthroat were less successful, but stopping at the creek, now more of a river, an **Orange Chat** was an unexpected bonus.

Earlier we had spoken to Ian about the **Major Mitchell's Cockatoos**. We knew from Michael's recent article that they ate the melons we had seen growing en route, and at Bowra. My wife suggested taking some back to our base to attract the birds. I had been a bit scornful, until Ian suggested where to put the melons. On our return, the boys laid the trap and waited. Nothing happened and so we wandered away to check a nearby pond. When we heard my wife's distant squeal we guessed that the cockatoos had landed, and all sprinted across to the cattle yard. Sure enough, two of these magnificent birds were happily munching away on the melons we had left them. As the light began to fail, watching the cockatoos was a great way to finish off the day.

The next morning Ian guided us to **Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush** country, and Daniel soon spotted a "brown bird" close to the road. We back-tracked, pursued the bird and managed reasonable views. **Little Button-quail** was another new bird for me, and after my usual experiences of seeing the back ends of quail disappearing at speed, it was a surprise to almost step on this bird. After lunch by the river, my eagle-eyed sons spotted a raptor miles away. The diagnostic white bull's eyes were soon evident to give us our first **Black-breasted Buzzard**. Back at base, four Major Mitchell's gave us even better



Male Splendid Fairy-wren. Photo: Richard Thomis

views in the cattle yard.

We were returning to Brisbane the next day, but we were still keen to see the **White-winged Fairy-wrens**. As it was literally our last chance, we were a bit pessimistic when we stopped near the grid at the gate, but knew that this was where Gloria had seen the bird. We soon found a group of wrens, and were delighted when a male bird obligingly perched in the open for us. It was a magical end to a great trip. Bowra and the hospitality were wonderful, and well worth the wait.

Pacific Black Duck v Northern Mallard

By Rod Hobson

The following table was supplied by Rod to assist Michael Atzeni in deciding whether a duck was a Pacific Black Duck or a Northern Mallard. We thought other members may also be interested in this information.

Below, Braithwaite & Miller's 1975 (modified by Gillespie, 1985) hybrid index for these ducks. 'Individuals with a score of 0-9 will most likely be a Pacific Black Duck and those with scores 25-35, Mallard.' (HANZAB 1990).

	Character	Appearance	Value
<u>Facial Stripes</u>	Pacific Black Duck	Two clear stripes on a cream background	0-1
	Hybrid	Obscured	2-3
	Mallard	None to thin black eye-stripe in female	4-5
<u>Anterior Border of Speculum</u>	Pacific Black Duck	No white bar	0-1
	Hybrid	Thin white bar (2mm)	2-3
	Mallard	Broad white bar (5mm)	4-5
<u>Posterior Border of Speculum</u>	Pacific Black Duck	Faint white line	0-1
	Hybrid	Thin white bar (2 mm)	2-3
	Mallard	Broad white bar (5mm)	4-5
<u>Bill</u>	Pacific Black Duck	Slate-grey	0-1
	Hybrid	Grey-yellow	2-3
	Mallard	Yellow-orange	4-5
<u>Nape</u>	Pacific Black Duck	Cream	0-1
	Hybrid	Creamy-brown	2-3
	Mallard	Dark brown, varying from dark green to purple-green in male	4-5
<u>Tail</u>	Pacific Black Duck	Slate-grey	0-1
	Hybrid	Grey-brown	2-3
	Mallard	Creamy brown, varying from dark green to purple-green in male	4-5
<u>Leg</u>	Pacific Black Duck	Grey-brown	0-1
	Hybrid	Grey-yellow	2-3
	Mallard	Yellow-orange	4-5

References

Braithwaite, L.W., & B. Miller (1975). *Aust. Wildl. Res.* 2: 47-61.

Gillespie, G.D. (1985). *Auk* 102: 459-69

Marchant, S. & P.J. Higgins (Co-ordinators) (1990). *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand & Antarctic Birds*, Vol. 1 Rattites to Ducks, Part B Australian Pelican to Ducks, Oxford University Press Australia.

Not a Birding Trip they said – Is there any such thing?

By Nicci Thompson



The Darling River on 'Talawla' – ample demonstration that the river does not need to look like a muddy drain to service the pastoral and other industries.

Photo: Nicci Thompson

Somewhere, just north-west of Bourke in NSW the tangle of rivers variously known as the Balonne, the Culgoa, the Narran, the Bokhara and the Barwon morph into the mighty Darling River...well the Darling, anyway. Its days of mightiness are long since gone. In late June 2008 Graham and I joined a group of companions in Bourke to drive along the Darling – where possible – to its junction with the Murray River. In most places it looked like a muddy drain flowing between steep, badly eroded banks, littered with the debris of failed and on-going commercial and agricultural enterprises. In places where the local land manager or community cared for their river some of its former glory lingered and spoke of what could be done for the river, if only...

On our way to this meeting place it was pointed out to me that this wasn't a birding trip and that I

shouldn't expect to be stopping every few hundred yards, as usual. However, there is no such event as a non-birding trip in my vocabulary. I turn a trip to the local supermarket into a birding trip, so a journey from Bourke to Mildura was going to include birds. What did I see?

On the floodplains around Bourke and as we travelled south, it was the parrots that stood out – nothing unusual or unexpected, but sometimes present in unbelievably large flocks – **Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, **Little Corellas**, **Galahs**, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, **Cockatiels**, **Red-winged Parrots**, **Mallee Ringnecks** and **Blue Bonnets**. Unexpected, for me, was the presence of at least one **Grey Shrike-thrush** each time we stopped on the Coolibah-dominated floodplains. Where there was some shrubby undergrowth and good ground litter, **Hooded** and **Red-capped Robins**, **Jacky Winters**, and **Brown Treecreepers** foraged along the river banks. **Australian Pelicans** and the larger **Egrets** and **Herons** dominated the water while **Whistling** and **Black Kites** were the common raptors patrolling the river and the floodplains.

When we left Bourke we travelled on the western bank of the river, visiting a number of properties and the small settlement of Tilpa. At Wilcannia we left the Darling for a spell to visit the isolated, opal-mining town of White Cliffs. Whilst there, we discovered that Peery Lake in the Paroo-Darling National Park contained a substantial amount of water. Ken McKeown joined Graham and I on a quick trip out to the lake. It is quite a large lake and from the access point we could see only a fraction of its surface. **Australasian Shovelers**, **Pink-eared Duck** and **Red-capped Plover** were among the species we could see. It would be an excellent spot to spend more time, but we had to return to White Cliffs and then catch up with the rest of our party that night at Copi Hollow on the Menindee Lakes.



Brown Treecreeper

Photo: Nicci Thompson

We did. There was water at Copi Hollow and Pamamaroo Lake, but Menindee and Cawndilla, the large lakes which form Kinchega National Park were waterless, and the surrounding country, was even more drought-stricken than further north. Birds of any kind were scarce there and as we moved south along the eastern bank of the river through Pooncarie to Wentworth and Mildura. The birding highlight of that drive was a flock of fifteen or so **Major Mitchell's Cockatoos** feeding at the side of the road.

For a while things didn't look any better in Mildura – either from a birding point of view or from a weather aspect. We found our destination – the Junction of the Two Rivers – bordered by a quirky little park in



*Junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers.
Photo: Nicci Thompson*

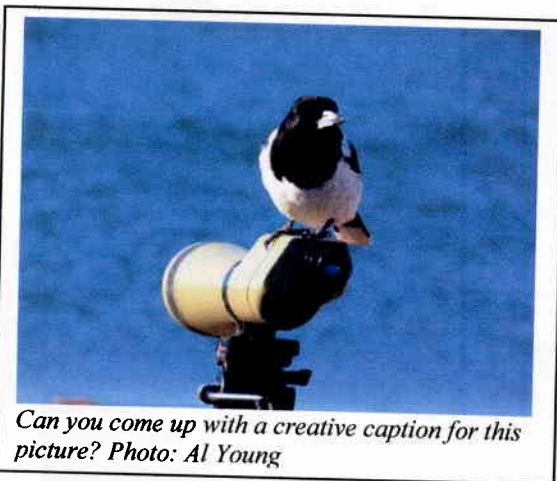
Wentworth. In the lee of the point where the rivers meet a largish flock of **Eurasian Coot** fed quietly out of the currents of the two rivers and a few hundred **Little Black Cormorants** loafed in bare branches along the banks of the Darling, but the bird life was pretty ordinary. We spent a day driving out to, and then through, Mungo National Park. Between the severe drought conditions and the bitterly cold wind under leaden skies, birds were even scarcer – some **Apostlebirds** and a couple of **Australian Pipits**, which looked as cold as we felt.

But then, on a sunny, though bitterly cold day after a freezing, wet night, we spent a morning in the northern section of the Hattah/Kulkyne National Park in Victoria. As soon as we entered the old Mallee

Woodlands the worst of the wind's force was broken by the trees, the rain had firmed the sandy soil and roads and the birds were out in the sunny patches. Of course, the core of woodland birds in south-eastern Australia is the same in most patches, but it was nice to catch up with **Chestnut Quail-thrush**, **Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters**, **Southern Whiteface**, **Mulga Parrots** and **Chestnut-rumped Thornbills** in good numbers.

It would have been great to have spent more days in Hattah/Kulkyne, but the Junction had been our destination and the agreed southern point of the trip. I did not press the point – after all it was a non-birding trip. Most of our travelling companions were on a tight schedule so we packed up and prepared to head north. However, our northward route wasn't the shortest way home, nor was it designated as a non-birding trip – but that is another story

'Photo Caption Competition' and 'Mystery Bird Challenge'



Can you come up with a creative caption for this picture? Photo: Al Young

This cute photo (left) by Al Young is the first in our 2009 'Photo Caption Competition'!

Simply come up with a creative caption for the nominated photo each month and email your answer to the editors. The winning entry (as voted by the Committee) will be revealed in the following month's newsletter, and shown at the TBO AGM in a powerpoint presentation, with prizes for the best entries (as voted by members).

Each month we will also endeavour to present a photo of a 'Mystery Bird' to challenge your bird identification skills. The first photo (right) was taken by Graham Allum at Helidon. (The correct answer can be found on the back page).

Any quirky or comical photos you think would *fit the bill*, so to speak, can be emailed to the eds. Many thanks, and good luck!



Can you identify this Mystery Bird...? (answer on back page) Photo: Graham Allum

TBO October species census 23-26 Oct 2008

By Michael Atzeni

Participants: Olive Booth, Pat McConnell, Kath O'Donnell, Wes & Norma Sturdee, Pat & David Cleary, Rosalie Rudduck, Gayle Lee, Ken McKeown, Michael Atzeni, Gloria Glass, Esther Townsend, Bill Jolly, Rod Hobson, Al Young, Mike McGoldrick, Plaxy Barratt, Louise Teese, John Hadley

They're the grids no one bothers going to year after year. The ones with bugger-all bird habitat. Hardly worth driving to, let alone surveying. But as this latest census shows, they are fields of opportunity for those who like to see the birdlife in any given area – no matter what its appeal – documented faithfully - at least until there are no glaring omissions remaining.

This year's census spanned four days. This was to help ensure that the western and southern grids of the local survey area were visited early morning, each for an hour or so, at some stage. These grids are mostly in agricultural areas with little native habitat remaining or, where suitable habitat does exist, it is on private property. Past visits have tended to be intermittent, brief and often left until later in the day. The aim was to build up the species lists in these "unloved" grids for the purposes of the proposed Toowoomba Bird Atlas.

To that end, there were 34 instances of a species recorded for the first time (officially) in these western and southern grids and vindicates the emphasis placed on these grids. Most were of common species as you will see in Table 1. Overall, 19 of the 20 TBO grids were surveyed (See Figure 1) and **150 species** were recorded over the 4-day period; a superb effort considering the time and resources devoted to the less-productive grids.

Thanks to all who participated and to Olive and Plaxy for their valuable assistance with compiling this report.

W1 (Kingsthorpe) 27°27'30"S 151°47'30"E 39 spp 40	N1 (Gowrie Junction) 27°27'30"S 151°52'30"E 83 spp	N2 (Highfields) 27°27'30"S 151°57'30"E 12 spp	N3 (Murphy's Ck) 27°27'30"S 152°02'30"E 40 spp	N4 (N of Helidon) 27°27'30"S 152°07'30"E
W2 (W of Gowrie Mtn) 27°32'30"S 151°47'30"E 23 spp	C1 (NW Toowoomba) 27°32'30"S 151°52'30"E 17 spp	C3 (NE Toowoomba) 27°32'30"S 151°57'30"E 82 spp	C5 (Withcott) 27°32'30"S 152°02'30"E 59 spp	C7 (Helidon) 27°32'30"S 152°07'30"E 104 spp
W3 (Athol/Umbiram) 27°37'30"S 151°47'30"E 16 spp	C2 (SW Toowoomba) 27°37'30"S 151°52'30"E 10 spp	C4 (SE Toowoomba) 27°37'30"S 151°57'30"E 51 spp	C6 (Upper Flagstone Ck) 27°37'30"S 152°02'30"E 49 spp	C8 (Lower Flagstone Ck) 27°37'30"S 152°07'30"E 43 spp
W4 (W of Cambooya) 27°42'30"S 151°47'30"E 18 spp	S1 (Cambooya) 27°42'30"S 151°52'30"E 17 spp	S2 (Ramsay) 27°42'30"S 151°57'30"E 33 spp	S3 (Rockmount) 27°42'30"S 152°02'30"E 31 spp	S4 (Fordsdale) 27°42'30"S 152°07'30"E 26 spp

Figure 1. Grids surveyed (shaded) and number of species recorded during census. (These are 5-minute grids. For Atlassing purposes, each grid lies within a 5km radius of the given central reference point.)

Future Censuses and New Purposes

Traditionally, the October Species Census has been our one concerted effort each year to record as many species as possible in the TBO area over a single weekend, essentially, providing us with a snapshot of bird diversity in the survey area during the peak breeding season. In the process, we have usually managed to fill in some gaps for the annual list to keep both the Records Officer and ex-Records Officers like me happy!

However, with the Annual Challenge and Seasonal Surveys that have been conducted on our website forum since 2006, most of the species expected for the year - and for the Spring - have already been reported on the forum by late-October. Those species remaining are mostly a mixture of rare, cryptic and vagrant species. Consequently, the outcomes and spinoff benefits of the census are now largely redundant.

Therefore it makes more sense to tailor this popular annual event for more specific purposes as we did during this latest census. Furthermore, our beloved census does not have to be restricted to a weekend, a week or even October. Nor does it have to be restricted to the TBO survey area. It is up to us to identify how to use our collective efforts to better advantage in future. Here are two that spring to mind: a Lockyer Valley waterbird census, and one covering the four hypothetical grids east of our current survey area.

Table 1. Species recorded during census, 23-26 October 2008 (Total: 150 spp)

	W	W	W	W	N	N	N	S	S	S	S	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Australasian Grebe					1					2								7	8
Little Black Cormorant	1*				1													7	8
Little Pied Cormorant	1*				1										4			7	
Australasian Darter															4			7	
White-necked Heron					1				2*							5		7	
White-faced Heron					1		3											7	
Little Egret																		7	
Cattle Egret					1						4							7	
Nankeen Night-Heron														3	4	5		7	8
Australian White Ibis					1										3	4		7	
Straw-necked Ibis			3		1		3*	1*	2				2	3	4	5		7	8
Royal Spoonbill					1*									2	3	4	5	7	8
Yellow-billed Spoonbill																		7	
Plumed Whistling-Duck					1						4							7	
Australian Wood Duck					1	2	3		2			1		3	4	5		7	
Northern Mallard														3	4	5		7	
Grey Teal														3				7	8
Pacific Black Duck	1			4	1						4			3	4			6	7
Australasian Shoveler											4			3	4			7	8
Hardhead					1						4							7	8
Pacific Baza														4				7	8
Black-shouldered Kite	1				1			1						3				7	8
Whistling Kite																		7	
Spotted Harrier																		7	
Grey Goshawk														3				7	
Brown Goshawk															3			7	
Collared Sparrowhawk																		7	
Wedge-tailed Eagle					1					3						5		7	
Nankeen Kestrel	1	2	3	4	1		3	1				1						7	8
Brown Falcon				4*	1													7	8
Australian Hobby		2*																7	
Peregrine Falcon														3				7	
Australian Brush-turkey														3				7	
Brown Quail					1				3					3				7	
Purple Swamphen																		7	
Dusky Moorhen															4			7	
Eurasian Coot					1										4			7	
Black-winged Stilt																		7	
Masked Lapwing	1				1		3		2		4							7	
Black-fronted Dotterel												1		3		5	6	7	8
Rock Dove					1			1					2	3				7	

	W	W	W	W	N	N	N	S	S	S	S	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
White-headed Pigeon					1														
Spotted Dove	1				1		3					1		3	4	5		7	
Brown Cuckoo-Dove														3					
Common Bronzewing														3					
Crested Pigeon	1	2	3	4	1		3	1	2			1	2			5		7	
Peaceful Dove					1							1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Bar-shouldered Dove														3	4	5	6	7	
Wonga Pigeon														3		5	6	7	8
Glossy Black-Cockatoo														3					
Galah	1	2	3	4	1		3	1	2										
Little Corella	1*			4	1							1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	1																		
Cockatiel	1							1*						3		5	6	7	
Rainbow Lorikeet	1	2	3						2*										
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	1				1		3		2*				2	3	4			7	
Little Lorikeet						2													
Pale-headed Rosella			3	4	1	2	3		2	3		1		3	4	5	6	7	
Red-rumped Parrot	1	2	3	4	1			1*					2					7	
Blue Bonnet *					1*								2						7
Australian King-Parrot						2													
Brush Cuckoo														3	4	5			
Fan-tailed Cuckoo					1*									3			6		
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo														3		5			8
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo					1*													7	
Little Bronze-Cuckoo																		7	
Eastern Koel	1				1	2	3		2	3	4					5	6		
Channel-billed Cuckoo					1		3							3	4	5		7	
Pheasant Coucal					1									3	4	5		7	
Southern Boobook					1							1				5	6	7	8
Tawny Frogmouth					1									3					
Azure Kingfisher					1									3					
Laughing Kookaburra	1	2			1	2	3	1	2	3				3	4			7	
Sacred Kingfisher					1		3		2					3	4		6	7	
Rainbow Bee-eater							3			3						5	6	7	8
Dollarbird																	6	7	
Horsfield's Bushlark					1				2	3				3	4			7	
Tree Martin																			8
Fairy Martin	1	2*			1									3					
Welcome Swallow	1		3*			2	3		2	3				3				7	8
Australasian Pipit					1									3	4	5	6	7	8
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	1	2*			1		3		2		4							7	8
Cicadabird														3		5		7	8
White-winged Triller														3	4	5			
Varied Triller										3								7	8
Golden-headed Cisticola				4*	1		3							3					
Australian Reed-Warbler	1*			4	1										4			7	8
Tawny Grassbird					1*													7	8
Rufous Songlark																		7	8
Willie Wagtail	1			4	1		3		2	3	4	1		3	4	5	6	7	8
Grey Fantail					1		3									5		7	
Rufous Fantail																			
Leaden Flycatcher										3				3					
Eastern Yellow Robin																	6		
Rufous Whistler					1									3	4		6		
Grey Shrike-thrush					1									3		5	6	7	
Grey-crowned Babbler					1						4*			3		5	6	7	
Eastern Whipbird								2								5			
Spotted Quail-thrush *														3	4		6	7	
Red-backed Fairy-wren							3									5			
Superb Fairy-wren	1	2		4*	1						4			3		5		7	
Variegated Fairy-wren					1				2	3				3	4			7	8
White-browed Scrubwren					1					3				3		5		7	
														3	4	5	6	7	

	W	W	W	W	N	N	N	S	S	S	S	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Speckled Warbler										3				3		5	6	7	
Buff-rumped Thornbill										3*								7	
Brown Thornbill					1					3	4				4	5			
Yellow-rumped Thornbill		2			1				2					3		5	6	7	8
Yellow Thornbill																		7	
Weebill	1				1					3						5	6		
White-throated Gerygone			3*	4	1			2	3					3	4	5	6	7	
Varied Sittella																		7	
White-throated Treecreeper														3			6		
Mistletoebird					1		3				4			3		5	6	7	8
Spotted Pardalote														3		5	6		
Striated Pardalote	1	2			1		3				4			3	4	5	6	7	8
Silvereye					1				2	3	4			3		5	6	7	8
Brown Honeyeater	1				1		3		2*	3	4			3	4	5	6	7	8
Scarlet Honeyeater							3							3					
Lewin's Honeyeater					1					3	4			3	4		6	7	
Yellow-faced Honeyeater									2	3				3	4		6		
White-naped Honeyeater														3				7	
White-throated Honeyeater							3									5		7	
Brown-headed Honeyeater																5			
Little Friarbird					1		3			3					4	5	6	7	8
Noisy Friarbird					1				2		4			3		5	6	7	
Striped Honeyeater	1		3*		1	2										5		7	8
Blue-faced Honeyeater										2*				3					
Noisy Miner	1	2	3	4	1		3	1*	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Yellow-throated Miner	1	2																	
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater					1														
Red Wattlebird														3	4				
Olive-backed Oriole					1		3				4			3	4	5	6	7	8
Australasian Figbird					1		3			3	4	1		3	4	5	6	7	8
Spangled Drongo						2				3				3	4		6		
Magpie-lark	1	2	3	4	1		3	1	2		4	1		3	4	5	6	7	8
White-winged Chough					1*														
Apostlebird					1														
Grey Butcherbird	1	2			1	2	3							3	4	5	6	7	
Pied Butcherbird	1	2		4	1		3	1*	2		4	1		3	4	5	6	7	8
Australasian Magpie	1	2	3	4	1		3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Pied Currawong	1				1		3			3	4	1		3	4		6		
Satin Bowerbird										3				3			6		
Torresian Crow	1	2	3	4*	1		3	1	2	3	4			3	4	5	6	7	8
Common Myna	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	2				2	3	4		6	7	8
Common Starling	1	2	3		1	2		1						2				7	
House Sparrow	1	2			1			1	2			1	2	3	4		6	7	8
Red-browed Finch																		7	
Plum-headed Finch																		7	
Zebra Finch					1											5		7	8
Double-barred Finch	1				1		3			3				3		5	6	7	8
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin		2*																7	

* First official TBO record for this grid

Spotted Python and other snakes of Flagstone Creek

By Darren Fielder

I thought I would share a few snakes that I have seen at my place here at Flagstone Creek. We have been preparing to sell our house over the Christmas break after 10 years of living here [Darren wishes to clarify that he is not leaving Toowoomba! Ed.]. While I was cleaning up my termite infested timber pile, I came upon a **Spotted Python** (*Antaresia maculosa*). The Spotted Python was a good find, as I hadn't seen one before then. It was coiled up in amongst sheets of corrugated iron. I realised quickly that it wasn't the usual python that I have seen on numerous occasions (usually devouring another chicken of mine) which is the **Carpet**

Python (*Morelia spilota*). The Carpet Python is by far the most common snake to be seen around here - they come in all sizes too, from metre-long babies, to 2.5 m mummies the size of a man's forearm, and an appetite to go with.

Other snakes that I've seen regularly during this time include the **Yellow-faced Whipsnake (*Demansia psammophis*)** which I have seen sun-baking in our garden and up in the bush area of the block. The **Green Tree Snake (*Dendrelaphis punctulata*)** is also a common snake in this part of the world. I rescued my wife one time, who accidentally jammed a snake in the front door of the house. It wasn't too happy to see me as I un-jammed it and took it down to the bush to release it.

On a steamy night in the summer of 2006 / 07, I went spotlighting for frogs as my small dam was teeming with life after recently being filled. While I was there, I came upon a **Southern Dwarf Crowned Snake (*Cacophis krefftii*)**. It was hunting the frogs that were too taken with the opposite sex at the time to notice the intruder.



Spotted Python Antaresia maculosa. Photo: Darren Fielder

Another small snake that I have seen only twice here is the **Eastern Small-eyed Snake (*Cryptophis nigrescens*)**. This is a small snake that has a beautiful black lustre with tomato-red underneath. I had one that unfortunately decided to sun itself in July 07 on a relatively warm day only to be trapped outside as the weather took a nasty turn to the cold. I found it the next day looking as good as new - only it was dead! It is happily being chilled in my freezer until I take it to the museum as a specimen.

The latest addition to the snake fauna at Flagstone Creek is the common **Bandy-bandy (*Vermicella annulata*)**. It was hard to miss this striking snake, with its black and white bands, as it crossed my driveway at the small dam on a hot night after one of the many downpours during December 08.

An interesting observation is that I have only ever seen one **Eastern Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*)** on my place in all the years of being here in the bush. Another snake that is strangely missing from my list is the **Red-bellied Black Snake (*Pseudechis porphyriacus*)** as it tends to associate with creek habitats and watercourses.

So, all together, that takes my sightings to eight snakes which I thoroughly enjoyed seeing - except for Carpet Pythons in my chicken pens at night!

Members' Postings...

Correction:

On page 3 of the TBO's December newsletter the report of the Breakfast with the Birds outing incorrectly ascribes sightings of the Little Shrike Thrush and Russet-tailed Thrush to Ernie Potts and Neil McKilligan; they state that they definitely did not see those species.

Ground Cuckoo-shrikes at Gowrie Junction – by Gloria Glass

Sunday morning, December 14, about 7.40am – I was heading into Toowoomba along Ganzers Road [the back road that brings one out either at Wilsonton or, continuing further, into Mort Street] and saw on the road ahead a party of ... what were they? Not magpies – not big enough and bodies not sloping enough. Not peewees either – a bit small, although bodies were parallel to the ground OK.

They showed no inclination to fly off the road, so I slowed even more. They rose, but then, maddeningly, settled again on the road! By this time I'd identified them as **Ground Cuckoo-Shrikes**. I kept on slowly and

they rose again, this time settling on the roadside. They didn't seem to know what they were supposed to do, as if they'd been dropped there unexpectedly having come from far away.

What a lovely surprise to see them. We'd seen a group some years ago in one of our paddocks near the house, but they really are unusual in this part of the world.

Good one, Gloria. I agree they're difficult to locate around Toowoomba. My most reliable spot for them around here is at the back of Oakey near the cemetery. Ed



Osprey returning to its nest with a feed of fish, Pottsville, NSW. Photo: Judi Gray

By Judi Gray

Here is a photo that I took a month ago in Pottsville, Northern NSW. It turned out pretty good, of an osprey coming into land on its nesting pole with a fresh feed of fish for its babies. It was a great sight to see. I had been photographing its mate who was sitting below when along it came with the fish.

Great photo Judi! Well done. Ed

World Music for Migratory Waders and World Wetlands Day!

World Wetland Day

World Wetlands Day is an annual celebration on 2 February to mark the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971. This year there are plenty of activities planned, including one in Brisbane that directly acknowledges the importance of wetlands for birds...

World Music for Migratory Waders Wetlands Festival!!

- A celebration of world music and the remarkable migratory wader birds that visit Moreton Bay from around the world each year.
- **Where:** Nudgee Beach foreshore, end of Fortitude St (UBD Map Ref 111 M15)
- **When:** Sunday 8 February, 12 noon until sunset
- For full details visit www.ourbrisbane.com/whats-on/festivals
- Or contact: Brisbane City Council (07) 3403 8888

The day will include an outdoor screening of DisneyNature's newest feature 'The Crimson Wing – Mystery of the Flamingos' revealing the dramatic lives of Tanzania's Lesser Flamingos. There will also be a variety of cultural workshops, food stalls, children's activities and information on conserving our wonderful wetlands.

Activities are also planned for World Wetlands Day at the Boondall Wetlands Centre; for more details visit: www.wiki.wetlandlink.com.au or ph. Boondall Wetlands Environment Centre on (07) 3403 1490.