

TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

No. 382
April 2009

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

Editorial

By Mick Atzeni & Nicci Thompson

Hi folks. Find myself guest editor again this month with Plaxy away.

I have just spent the last week on the beautiful Atherton Tableland, visiting several dairy farms in connection with upgrading their effluent management systems.

Dashing between farms didn't exactly lend itself to birding but picked up the odd good raptor en route (**Grey Goshawk, Swamp Harrier, Pacific Baza**). Biggest thrill however was near Millaa Millaa where a "large possum" in a roadside tree caught my eye. The Grey Goshawk overhead as we pulled off the road earned only a cursory look as I bee-lined to my quarry: my first ever tree-kangaroo! In broad daylight to boot!! What a weird and wonderful animal.

Next day a dairy farmer we visited said they had four on their property. One had even become partial to the Nutri-Grain left out for it.

Anyway back to the birds. The big news locally is the surprise mass clearing by the Lockyer Valley Council of the vegetation (read: removal of iconic heronry) on the island opposite the new multicultural centre at Lake Apex. To my knowledge, no bird groups were consulted and understandably many of us are asking: Why not?

Species diversity has declined noticeably over the years, a reflection on how the habitat is now managed.

If the council values its birdlife, and its avi-tourism industry, they should be talking to us.

Thanks Michael. I, too, have been absent from Toowoomba, but at the opposite end of the continent – south to the Victorian High Country but staying in Myrtleford where the **Gang-gang Cockatoos** had come down from the heights for the winter (it was 6 degrees up in the mountains with a bitterly cold wind blowing). They were present in flocks of up to a dozen birds gorging on the spiky nuts of the exotic plane trees. It was good to see a native species adapting to exotic plants, as so much of the native woodlands have been replaced by crops.

This Issue

Victoria Point Outing

By Barbara & Rob Collyer

Members' bird notes

By Pat McConnell

Vale Professor Allen Keast

By Nicci Thompson

Members' correspondence

From 'Volunteer' –TBN Newsletter

COMING EVENTS

Sunday 26th April 2009

Lake Broadwater

Leader: Malcolm Wilson

Meet at the recreation area
7:30am

Contact: Kay Williams

46595475 /0429465954

May outing

Venue and details in May Newsletter

Regent Honeyeater/Swift Parrot Surveys

16-17 May, 2009 – details under Threatened Bird Network article

2009

Challenge

189 as of 21/4/09



TOOWOOMBA
BIRD OBSERVERS

(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)

Moreton Bay outing – 28 March 2009

By Rob and Barbara Collyer

Participants:- Ken Mckeown, Ross Begent, Graham and Nicci Thompson, Kevin and Kay Williams, Rob and Barbara Collyer

It may seem a little odd to the uninitiated to go searching for shore birds when they are not wading and feeding on the shore! After all, it is during this time, low tide, when waders are generally noticed. They are usually active, often widely distributed and far away on the edge of the waterline, making identification sometimes difficult and frustrating! It makes for much more productive and comfortable viewing when the birds, literally, come to the viewers i.e. at the high tide roost site.

And so it was a couple of hours before high tide that the above group headed off to Oyster Point in Cleveland. It had been very windy during the previous few days and showering overnight so we were keeping our fingers crossed that the weather would be kind. We were in luck although the blustery south easter kept blowing hats off! The site is on the south-eastern edge of a community park with a boat ramp which leads down onto red pebbly sand/mud flats between the mangroves and it is here that the birds land with increasing frequency as the incoming tide forces them from other more submerged sites.



Wader Watching: Photo:Kevin Williams



Great Knots & Bar-tailed Godwits. Photo:Kevin Williams

And land they did! Initially, a handful of **Bar-tailed Godwits**, many in their colourful breeding plumage, and **Great Knots** also in breeding garb, with distinctive arrowheads on their flanks and chestnut patches on their wings! They were joined by other species – **Whimbrels**, **Eastern Curlews**, **Caspian Terns** – and the numbers kept growing and getting closer and closer with the approaching tide. We also had a great view of the **Great Egret** and its eye marking before the other birds kept jostling for position and disturbed it to flight.

After some morning tea, we then headed off to Point Halloran Nature Reserve. Here, after a short distance through a bushland environment, is a wide mud/sand salt flat behind the mangrove trees of Erapah Creek. We conduct a high tide wader bird count here on a set day of each month for the Queensland Wader Study Group so we were very excited to have extra counters for this month! As soon as we arrived at our usual spot, we were delighted to record a large group of **Red-capped Plovers** (36 in all) not very far away, many showing their short, jerky running style. Along the flat closer to the creek mouth was one of our usual spottings – **Pacific Golden Plovers** – many decked out in their unusual breeding plumage. Their migration and changes in feather patterns and colours of the wader birds continues to fascinate us and these sightings were no exception! Overall, a great morning's bird watching!

OUTING BIRD LIST: Australian Wood Duck, Darter, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Australian Pelican, Striated Heron, White-faced Heron, Great Egret, Australian White Ibis, Royal Spoonbill, Eastern Osprey, Whistling Kite, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Brahminy Kite, Pied Oystercatcher, Pacific Golden Plover, Red-capped Plover, Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Great Knot, Caspian Tern, Masked Lapwing, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Little Corella, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Little Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Laughing Kookaburra, White-throated Treecreeper, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Brown Thornbill, Mangrove Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Eastern Whipbird, Rufous Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Magpie Lark, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Torresian Crow, Australian Pipit, Red-browed Finch, Welcome Swallow.

Members' Bird Notes

By Pat McConnell

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES: All sightings seen by, or reported to members of the Toowoomba Bird Observers. Accuracy not vouched for by the TBO. Please check with observer before citing.

Wandering Whistling-Duck	21/03/2009	Helidon	MA, TQ
Australasian Shoveler (8)	25/03/2009	Helidon, Farm dam	WJ
Intermediate Egret	21/03/2009	Helidon	MA, TQ
Black Bittern	17/03/2009	"Abberton" Helidon	WJ
Black Kite	21/03/2009	Withcott	MA, TQ
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	06/04/2009	S.E. Toowoomba	AY, HY
Spotted Harrier	12/04/2009	Cooyar South	SB
Little Eagle	21/03/2009	Withcott	MA, TQ
Oriental Cuckoo	21/03/2009	Upper Lockyer	MA
Common Koel	20/03/2009	Webb St. Toowoomba	RH
Sacred Kingfisher	01/04/2009	"Abberton" Helidon	WJ
Rose Robin	28/03/2009	Upper Lockyer	MA
Black-faced Monarch	21/03/2009	Redwood Park	MA, TQ
Spangled Drongo	05/04/2009	Spring Bluff	SB
Spangled Drongo	10/04/2009	Upper Lockyer	MA
Barred Cuckoo-shrike	21/03/2009	Redwood Park	MA, TQ
Ground Cuckoo-shrike (2)	05/04/2009	Gowrie Junction	OB, MM, AY

MA, M. Atzeni; OB, O. Booth; SB, S. Burke; RH, R. Hobson; WJ, W. Jolly; MM, M. McGoldrick; TQ, T. Quested*; AY, A. Young; HY, H. Young.

* From BundyBOCA, Bundaberg.

Vale Professor Allen Keast
By Nicci Thompson

Professor Allen Keast, whose research and writings influenced Australian ornithology during the latter half of last century, died in Kingston, Ontario, on 8 March 2009, after a short illness. He was in his 87th year.

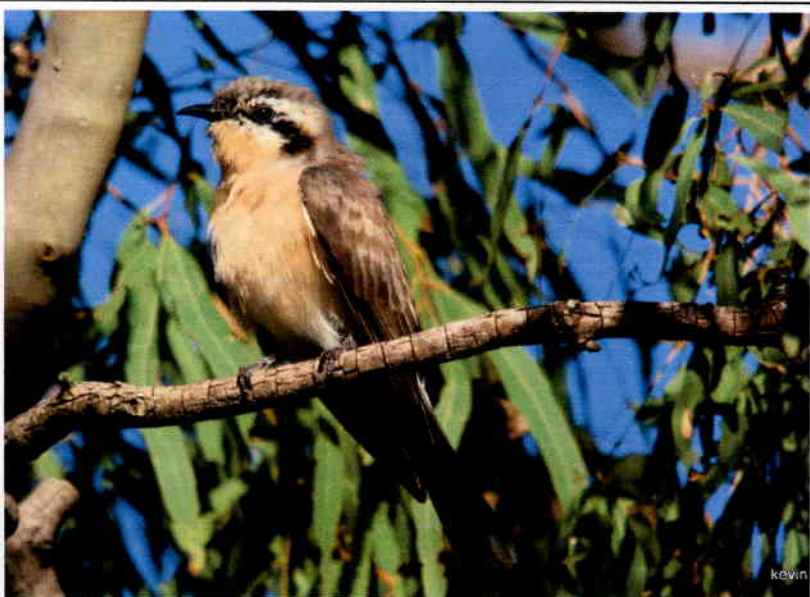
Much has been written about Allen Keast already and I expect much more will be. During his career he held positions in Australia and Canada. He was involved with and influenced ornithological communities in both countries. Allen was a strong believer in using field work and field studies centres for both research and teaching. His ground-breaking research was widely published. He was a prolific writer, producing at least 50 research papers and contributing to numerous books and conference chapters.

He trained, supported and encouraged countless students. He has ensured the continuation of that support and encouragement with the establishment of the generous Professor Allen Keast Research Award (Birds Australia), the J. Allen Keast Lake Opinicon Undergraduate Research Fellowship (Queen's University), and endowments for lectureships at the University of Sydney and Queen's University.

As Professor Emeritus, after his retirement, he divided his time between Canada and Australia, continuing to write and be involved in field studies. I had the privilege of knowing him at this time. Allen had a charm and personality that were memorable. He will be greatly missed by many friends and colleagues.

Member's Correspondence

From Kay Williams



Black-eared Cuckoo: Photo : Kevin Williams

This fellow was seen on the Lockyer Creek Road on Saturday, 18th April by Kevin, Kay and Olive – C7 is the TBO area.

We had stopped for some Double-barred and Zebra Finches on the side of the road and this **Black-eared Cuckoo** was in the tree just behind them. If we had not stopped we would have missed it - a lifer for all three of us.

**From 'Volunteer' – The Newsletter of
The Threatened Bird Network**

Grey Falcon:

For the Australia-wide study of 'Movements and Genetics of Grey Falcons', the sixth breeding season is coming up. It is therefore time to remind everyone out there to keep their eyes open for these elusive birds. Early in 2009, much of the prime habitat for the birds received a lot of rain or was subject to intensive flooding, in particular western Queensland and the Pilbara. It is expected that this inundation of water should stimulate birdlife in general and, consequently benefit the Grey Falcon.

If you sight a Grey Falcon, please report your observation to the project leader Jonny Schoenjahn. Should you be fortunate enough to find an active nest, it would be extremely valuable to us if you report your find without delay, preferably on the same day. Nesting can occur any time between June and November. Needless to say all records will be kept strictly confidential. For more information check the website www.users.bigpond.com/jonnybird/greyfalcon.htm All sightings reported to the project coordinator, Jonny Schoenjahn, on 08 9385 9939, via fax/SMS on 08 9385 9801, or via email: jonnybird@bigpond.com

Regent Honeyeater Surveys:

The autumn and winter official survey weekends for the Regent Honeyeater are 16-17 May and 1-2 August. As part of the Woodland Bird Conservation Project, we will be seeking broad simultaneous coverage of known and potentially suitable habitat in search of Swift Parrots and Regent Honeyeaters. To register your interest in becoming involved in the Regent Honeyeater surveys please contact Dean Ingwersen on 03 93470757 or email d.ingwersen@birdsaustralia.com.au

Editors Note: The search area for Regent Honeyeaters in Queensland is within the triangle enclosed by an imaginary line connecting the towns of Stanthorpe, Texas and Karara. Most sightings and breeding records of this species in recent years have been in this area.

Photo Caption Competition



Double-barred Finches near Mt Tvson Photo: Nicci THOMPSON

Simply come up with a creative caption for the nominated photo each month and email your answer to the editors.

The winning entries will be revealed at the TBO AGM with a slide presentation.

COMING EVENTS

Sunday 26th April 2009

Lake Broadwater via Dalby

Leader: Malcolm Wilson

Meet at the recreation area 7:30am.

Take the Moonie Highway west of Dalby to
turnoff to Lake Broadwater on the left,
approx. 25-30 km from Dalby.

Nearly 240 bird species have been
recorded in this area!

BYO everything, including insect repellent
and scope if you have one.

Contact: **Kay Williams** 46595475 /
0429465954

Executive meeting

7.30 - 9.00pm first Wednesday of month

Now held in the *Groom Room*,

Toowoomba Town Hall, Ruthven St.

Contact Olive Booth (07) 4633 0553

**Birds Australia Conservation Forum in
Brisbane on 30 May 2009.**

Program and registration form available
from the [BA website](#).

Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 15th May, 2009
Please e-mail or snail-mail your articles to Flaxy Berrall or Nicol Thompson

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

Surface Mail