

# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

No. 385  
July 2009

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

## Editorial

By Plaxy Barratt & Mick Atzeni

What's so fantastic about the birds of the Toowoomba region and why should we invest in promotion of bird trails?

These are two of the questions we are anticipating when we meet with several environmental and tourism staff from Toowoomba Regional Council on Thursday 23 July. Amongst them will be Councillors Joe Ramia and Bill Cahill.

In preparation for this, a group of us met on the weekend to discuss Toowoomba's birdwatching appeal. One thing we lack is an iconic species like Regent Honeyeater, or localised species like Eastern Bristlebird, or a co-operative pair of impressive Powerful Owls residing in our Botanic Gardens

But what we do have on many other areas is great position! We are central to a variety of habitats and sought-after birds. Our Top 10 list could boast high profile species like Red Goshawk, Black-breasted Button-quail and Glossy Black-Cockatoo, and others like Grey Goshawk, Spotted Quail-thrush, Regent Bowerbird and Plum-headed Finch.

What's your Top 10 for promoting the local area?

It will be an interesting but worthwhile challenge putting together bird trail information in an appealing, user-friendly format. Fortunately, there are plenty of good examples to go by. Let's hope we get the necessary support to do so.

I mentioned the wayward Wompoo Fruit-Dove last month but didn't include a photo. For the record, here it is – quite possibly the first ever of a *live* Wompoo in Toowoomba. The only other I've seen was of a dead one – in fact, the first TBO record. And that one made it into the Chronicle! (Just justifying my poor shot below. Sorry Plax, couldn't resist!)



Wompoo Fruit-Dove, QPIF, Wilsonton, 3/6/09.  
Photo: Mick Atzeni

**2009  
Challenge**  
204 as of 21/07/09

## This Issue

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By Pat McConnell

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### Photo caption competition

### New Members

## COMING EVENTS

**Saturday 25 July 2009.**

**Lockyer Valley Wetlands**

**Leader: John Hadley**

**Sunday 6 September 2009**

**Wader ID day, Toorbul**

**Contact: Kay Williams**

**0429 465 954 or**

**07 4659 5475**

**For further details see  
article within.**



TOOWOOMBA  
BIRD OBSERVERS

(An affiliated member of Bird Observation and Conservation Australia)

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MEMBERSHIP: Adults/Families \$22, Students \$11

(Subscriptions due 31 August)

## Raptor Census 27 – 28 June 2009

By Pat McConnell

### Northern Section

Kath O'Donnell and Pat McConnell surveyed the northern section on Sunday 28 June. This section was divided into four sub-sections as in previous years. These were Highfields to Cooby Dam, Cooby Dam to Goombungee, Goombungee to Cooyar and Cooyar to Highfields. We saw five species and 20 individual birds of prey. (See table below for summarised results). The weather during the survey was cold, windy and overcast unlike last year when it was fine and warm. Similar conditions were encountered by the groups surveying on Saturday.

### Southern Section

The southern section was surveyed by Ken and Fiona Wells on Friday 19 June from 11.00am till 2.00pm. They saw two species and 13 individual birds of prey. The route they surveyed included Freestone Valley, Goomburra, Pilton, Ascot and East Greenmount. The weather was fine and cool, with a significant breeze in the early part of the transect.

### Eastern Section

The eastern section was surveyed by Steve Burke, Jenny Matheson and Michael Atzeni on Saturday 27 June from 10.30am until 2.45pm. They saw 10 species and 41 individual birds of prey. The route they surveyed was from Upper Lockyer – Helidon – Grantham – Placid Hills – Adare – Gatton – Lake Galletly – Lake Clarendon – Jahnke's Lagoon.

### Western Section

The western section was surveyed by Mike McGoldrick, Olive Booth, Gayle Lee and Rod Hobson on Saturday 27 June. They saw seven species and 183 individual birds of prey. The route they surveyed was Toowoomba – Oakey – Jondaryn – Bowenville – Formartin – Norwin – Cecil Plains – Dalby – Kaimkillenbun – Quinilow – Jondaryn – Mt Tyson – Toowoomba (via Biddeston).

Table of Sightings for 27 – 28 June 2009 (and 19 June)

Species	N	S	E	W	Total
Black-shouldered Kite	3	3	5	22	33
Square-tailed Kite			2		2
Whistling Kite			4	11	15
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	1		2	1	4
Spotted Harrier			1		1
Swamp Harrier			1		1
Wedge-tailed Eagle	5		5	1	11
Black Falcon				1	1
Brown Falcon	1		5	26	32
Australian Hobby			2		2
Nankeen Kestrel	10	10	14	121	155
<b>Total number of raptors</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>257</b>

### Comparisons with 2007 and 2008

In 2007 eight species and 210 individual birds of prey were seen, in 2008 nine species and 273 birds of prey were seen and in 2009 11 species and 257 birds of prey were recorded.

Incidental sightings included two Black Kites by John Hadley outside Gatton near the Forest Hill turnoff; a Brown Goshawk at "Abberton", Helidon by Bill Jolly; and another Brown Goshawk at Gowrie Junction by Esther Townsend.

A big thank you to all involved especially the leaders.



## To Lake Eyre

By Al and Helen Young

Recently (May & June, 2009) we hooked up the caravan and headed south to see the water in Lake Eyre. Prior to leaving and during the trip we heard many conflicting stories about the situation at Lake Eyre – “the lake is full” ; “it is nearly dry”; “very disappointing”; “can’t get near the water”. TV reports showed thousands of birds, representing many different species breeding on the Lake, but when we flew over the Lake the ‘penny dropped’ – there are no Coolabah or River Red Gums around Lake Eyre! Most of the TV footage was taken further north along the Diamantina River and Cooper Creek. Unfortunately, we encountered very poor weather – cold, cloudy and wet for most of the trip.

Our first birding stop was ‘Bowra’ Station, via Cunnamulla and it was certainly the best birding spot of the trip with 71 species seen, including **Hoary-headed Grebe, Black-tailed Native-hen, Blue Bonnet & Mulga Parrots, Major Mitchell Cockatoo, Chestnut-crowned Babbler, Spotted Bowerbird, Chirruping Wedgebill**, and four species of Woodswallows -**White-breasted, Masked, White-browed and Black-faced**.

Before leaving home I re-read the article by Carol Proberts about ‘Kilcowera Station’ in the July-September 2008 TBO Newsletter, so we were looking forward to a few days of good birding as we headed towards ‘Kilcowera’. Alas, this was not to be because the area has been in very severe drought for many months, with both Cardenyalla Swamp and Lake Wyara dry. Toni Sherwin said that in less than 12 months the numbers and species diversity of birds at ‘Kilcowera’ had declined severely. We arrived at about 3 pm and recorded only 10 species before dusk, including **Mulga and Australian Ringneck Parrots, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Southern Whiteface and Splendid Fairy-wren**. There was light rain overnight and it was very cloudy and cool in the morning, so we decided to head back to the bitumen as more rain was predicted. The boom and bust cycles of the arid and semi arid areas of Australia plus the vagaries of the local weather certainly makes birding a challenging and exciting pastime.

We spent two very interesting days at Mutawintji National Park, north-east of Broken Hill. It is a very culturally significant area for the local Aboriginal people because there are numerous stencils and rock engravings in the area. We did a tag-along tour with an Aboriginal ranger into protected areas which are not open to the public unless accompanied by a guide. The area has been fenced off with locked gates to exclude goats and human vandals. Some of the birds seen in the park were: **Emu, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Australian Ringneck, Mulga Parrot, Blue Bonnet, Tree Martin, White-plumed Honeyeater and Chestnut-rumped Thornbill**.



Pair of Mulga Parrots. Photo: Al Young



Red-winged Parrots. Photo: Al Young.

From Marree we drove north to ‘Muloorina’ Homestead where we camped for several days along with lots of other fellow travellers and a zillion flies. There is a nice camping area on a lagoon of the Frome River that is augmented by inflows from an artesian bore drain. Here we saw a **Spotless Crake** which we have not seen for many years and also a **Little Grassbird**. We were very surprised to see many **House Sparrows** and a few **Common Starlings** there. From ‘Muloorina’ we drove to Level Post Bay on Madigan Gulf of Lake Eyre. Although there was no water in the bay we saw some good birds – **Orange Chat, White-winged Fairy-wren, Cinnamon Quail-Thrush** and

## Gibberbird.

From 'Moolorina' we drove back to Marree and then on to William Creek along the Oodnadatta Track. William Creek which normally has a population of five or six was really humming. The campground was full, the pub was doing a roaring trade and there were about six light planes parked at the airstrip. Luckily the clouds lifted on the day we had booked our flight over Lake Eyre. It was a spectacular sight flying over the water in Lake Eyre North at about 500 feet. The highly saline water was clear, smooth and had a glassy appearance, whereas the freshwater was brown and had ripples on the surface. We flew over an **Australian Pelican** rookery of about 200 birds on Delahunty Island. Also, saw a few **Silver Gulls**. Most of the area around Lake Eyre North is drought stricken and Anna Creek Station which holds leases over a huge area near Lake Eyre has been destocked. It is certainly a very barren landscape with the only signs of plant life being along ephemeral creek lines; however it is very awesome and beautiful. It is hard to imagine the physical and mental stamina of the early explorers, who ventured into this foreboding landscape using only camels or horses for transport.

The next day we drove from William Creek to Halligan Bay (Lake Eyre North) and were lucky to get right down to the waters edge because a north-westerly wind was blowing the water towards the western side of the bay. Apparently, the next day due to a wind shift the water was about a kilometre away from the shore and only the foolhardy would attempt to reach the water by walking over these treacherous mud flats. Birds seen between William Creek and Halligan Bay: **Chiming Wedgebill** (seen calling near William Creek), **Red-capped Dotterel**, **Crimson and Orange Chat**, **White-backed Swallow**, **Singing Honeyeater**, **Black-faced & White-breasted Woodswallows**.

Despite the poor weather and very difficult birding it was well worth the trip to see Lake Eyre with water! It was possibly a once in a lifetime experience for us.

## 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.

Common Pheasant	27/05/2009	Ravenshoe	MA
Black-necked Stork	11/03/2009	Beachmere Rd, Beachmere	ET
Brolga	12/04/2009	Beachmere Rd, Beachmere	ET
Australasian Bittern*	19/07/2009	Lake Clarendon	MA, WJ, KayW, KevW
Magpie Goose	19/06/2009	Lake Broadwater	MA, RH, MW
Buff-banded Rail**	22/07/2009	Boyce's Rainforest, Mt Lofty	DM
Baillon's Crake	19/07/2009	Lake Clarendon	MA, WJ, KayW, KevW
White-headed Pigeon (3)	10/07/2009	Highfields	PM, KO
Long-billed Corella***	17/5/2009	Kedron Brook, Stafford	ET
Crimson Rosella (3)	18/07/2009	"Tiddalac", Upper Lockyer	MA, OB, KayW
Australasian Gannet (6)	09/07/2009	Hervey Bay	PM
Red Goshawk (2)	12/06/2009	Haigslea	RH
Grey Plover	01/03/2009	Stratford, Brisbane	ET
Red-capped Plover (5)	19/06/2009	Lake Broadwater	MA, RH, MW
Painted Button-Quail	09/07/2009	Table Top Drive	RH
Oriental Cuckoo	13/03/2009	Adare	JH
Powerful Owl	15/05/2009	Slaughter Falls	JH
Albert's Lyrebird	07/07/2009	Cummingham's Gap	JS, SS
White-eared Honeyeater	19/06/2009	Lake Broadwater	MA, RH, MW
Singing Honeyeater	19/06/2009	Lake Broadwater	MA, RH, MW
White-eared Monarch	11/07/2009	Sparkes Hill, Stafford	ET
Little Shrike-thrush	20/05/2009	Beachmere	ET
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	13/06/2009	Connors Rd, Helidon	MA
Nutmeg Mannikin	11/04/2009	Sparkes Hill, Stafford	ET
Nutmeg Mannikin	03/05/2009	Kedron Brook, Stafford	ET



\* One bird seen out in the open. Prior to our arrival a second bird was seen but disappeared into reeds.

\*\* First record.

\*\* 4 birds in a flock of ~200 Little Corellas

**MA**, M. Atzeni; **JH**, J. Hadley; **RH**, R. Hobson; **WJ**, B. Jolly; **PM**, P. McConnell; **DM**, D. Mears; **KO**, K. O'Donnell; **JS**, J. Scanlan; **SS**, S. Scanlan; **ET**, E. Townsend; **MW**, M. Wilson; **KayW**, Kay Williams; **KevW**, Kev Williams

#### Bird notes

Please submit bird notes by email to [mccommel@usq.edu.au](mailto:mccommel@usq.edu.au) or via the Club's mailing address.

#### Monthly Checklists

Please post checklists to the Records Officer

## Correspondence

### Bustard near Oakey!!

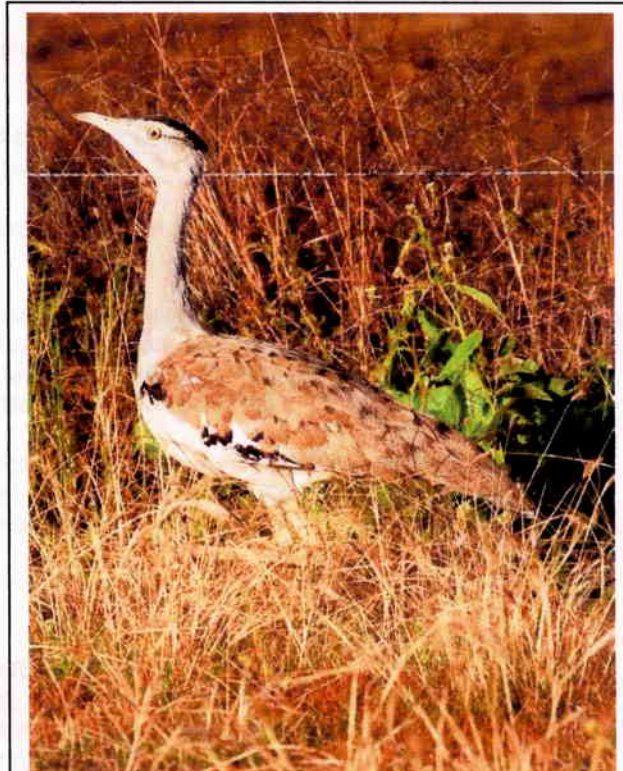
Max and Pam Bacon sent Gloria Glass this photo Max took of an **Australian Bustard** at their place perhaps 8 km north of Oakey on Sunday 21 June 09. It was on Portion 217, parish of King.

Then on 26 June Gloria wrote:

Max Bacon called in the other day. He said the Bustard had been seen by several people. Also Max was surprised to see it fly. It actually flew over that barbed-wire fence, instead of trying to struggle through. I'm not sure if it was further away from the fence when it took off, though. He didn't say if it was still around.

### Australasian Bittern at Lake Clarendon, Kay Williams

We heard on the grapevine there was an Australasian Bittern at Lake Clarendon, so Kevin and I made haste to view said fellow on Sunday 19th July. On our way we stopped at Jahnke's lagoon to see if we could see the Freckled Duck we had heard was down that way. Alas, no duck, but a Brown Goshawk which was a first for both of us - our first lifer for the day.



Australian Bustard. Photo: Max Bacon.



Australasian Bittern, Lake Clarendon. Photo: Bill Jolly

On to Lake Clarendon where, along the dam wall, we met up with Bill Jolly and his two guests – keen bird photographers from the Isle of Man, three Brisbane birders and Mick Atzeni. There were already lots of cameras and scopes aimed at an Australasian Bittern down in the marshy area bordering the dam wall. Lifer no.2 for the Williams!

As time went on, with cameras clicking and peering through the scopes, Mick picked up

the Baillon's Crake they had seen before our arrival. Not the most co-operative individual and it didn't show for long, but long enough to be identified ID. We were amazed how small it was, as were Bill's overseas guests. Awesome!! Lifer no.3 for us.

Well Outside the Outside, Michael Wood

(Posted: Jun 07, 2009 on TBO forum)

Here are some observations that have occurred over the past couple of months. Each is more than a little outside TBO's official area, just over the border/s.

**Bourke's Parrot;** seen regularly during surveys in the Murchison and Gascoyne (WA). When the birds are not being seen they are being heard as they come in to drink at first and/or last light.

**Slaty-backed Thornbills:** reasonably common in mulga habitat, of which there is much in WA. This species is still giving me a little grief with calls. Mixed flocks regularly consist of Inland, Chestnut-rumped, Slaty-backed Thornbills and Redthroats.

**Chestnut-breasted Quail-Thrush:** regular in mulga habitat with rocky under-storey. Like the other quail-thrush species, they have a liking for feeding along dirt roads and woodland verges, especially in the very early hours and evening.

**Orange Chat:** the odd individual of this species turns up in suitable habitat –saltmarsh mainly- within the Murchison & Gascoyne (WA) regions.

**Ground Cuckoo-Shrike:** only saw my first couple of birds for WA in the autumn season just past. Not a common bird at all, unless they are simply expert in avoidance.

**Crested Shrike-Tit;** three individuals of the lovely-looking western race were sighted at Flint State Forest, west of the town of Brookton, WA.

**Western Whipbird;** a brilliant view of a single bird was gained along Quiss Road, Fitzgerald River National Park (a lifer). The bird was no more than five metres away and ventured out into the open briefly, something they apparently rarely do. Another bird was heard a few days later at Mt Trio, on the northern side of the Stirling Ranges NP. Several calling at Two Peoples Bay, east of Albany, WA.

**Noisy Scrub-bird:** a few birds heard at Cheyne Beach, on the northern side of Waychinicup NP, east of Albany. An extremely hard species to see and a bird I have yet to see despite being no less than two feet away from them on occasions. Tendency to burst eardrums!

Others:

Western Yellow Robin –Dryandra SF & Flint SF

White-breasted Robin

Southern Scrub-Robin –Old Ongerup Rd., Fitzgerald River NP

Western Spinebill –reasonably common around Perth

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater –reasonably common around Perth

Purple-gaped Honeyeater –reasonably common in mallee heath

Western Bristlebird –Fitzgerald River NP, Waychinicup NP

Southern Emu-wren –Stirling Ranges

Red-winged Fairy-Wren –reasonably common around Perth

Blue-breasted Fairy-Wren –Dryandra SF

Rufous Treecreeper –Dryandra SF & Flint SF

Elegant Parrot –reasonably common in south-west WA

Red-capped Parrot –reasonably common around Perth

Regent Parrot –reasonably common in south-west

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo

Brush Bronzewing

Bush Stone-Curlew –Dryandra SF

Painted Button-Quail

## Photo caption competition



Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Drayton.  
Photo: Cathryn Harris

Come up with the winning creative caption and be present at the AGM to win a prize.

Either post or email your answer to the Secretary  
[o.booth@bigpond.com](mailto:o.booth@bigpond.com)

## New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members this year:

- Brian and Di Russell, Westbrook
- Eric and Judy Donaldson, Oakey
- Betty Dent, Toowoomba
- John Carr, Toowoomba
- Patrick Morton, Toowoomba
- Jean and John Mackay, Upper Lockyer
- Marie Gittins Gatton
- Bernie Pohlman, Toowoomba

May the birds be with you and your association with the club a long and satisfying one.

## September Wader ID Day

*Sunday 6 September 2009 – at Toorbul*

This will be hosted by the Queensland Wader Study Group, so you'll be in good hands.

**Meet:** 9.30am

High tide is at 10.21am (plus 30 minutes later for Toorbul) of 2.03m.

**Directions:** Take the Bruce Highway north from Brisbane to the Donnybrook/Toorbul exit. Turn off here and head east over the highway overpass. Continue on this road to Toorbul. Turn right at the T-junction then first left then right, which brings you on to the Esplanade. Follow this road to the end (approx. 2kms); we will be on the left.

**Bring:** water, food and a chair. It is a good idea to have a hat, sunscreen and insect repellent. Most importantly bring your binoculars or telescopes. Hopefully we can provide the answers to all your questions.

Please contact Kay Williams 0429 465 954 or 07 46595475 if you have any questions.



## COMING EVENTS

### Saturday, 25 July 2009.

#### **Lockyer Valley Wetlands**

The Lockyer is humming at the moment with a good variety of waterbirds and raptors present this winter.

Meet at Lake Apex, Gatton, at 7.30am.

**Leader:** John Hadley.

**Phone:** 07 5465 4445

### 29-30 August 2009

#### **Optional overnight camp.**

#### **Lake Coolmunda/Durikai SF**

**Contact:** Kay Williams

0429 465 954 or 07 4659 5475

### Sunday, 6 September 2009

#### **Wader ID day, Toorbul**

**Contact:** Kay Williams

0429 465 954 or 07 4659 5475

## Committee Members

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**Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 15th August 2009**  
Please e-mail or snail-mail your articles to Plaxy Barratt or Nicci Thompson

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PO Box 4730, Toowoomba East Q 4350**

**Surface Mail**