



# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

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

No. 389  
November 2009

## Editorial

Nicci Thompson

Janus, the Roman God, had two faces – one looking forward and the other looking back; at this time of the year it seems that Toowoomba Bird Observers Inc does the same.

At the AGM in October the outgoing president, Ross Begent, delivered his report which looks back over the just, completed club year. His report is included in this newsletter for those of you who were unable to attend the AGM.

In October the club conducts the annual census of the Toowoomba area and Michael Atzeni's report of that activity is also included in this issue.

At the AGM, we elected a new committee to lead the club for the next year. Many of the faces are the same as those of last year's committee, but there has been a change in two key positions. Steve Burke has been elected President and Ross Begent Treasurer. Our long serving treasurer, Rosalie Rudduck, is taking a break to spend more time on other interests. Names and contact details for all elected committee members are at the end of this newsletter as usual.

The new committee is now looking forward and plans are well under way for next year's club activities.

Do you have any favourite birding spots which you think the club would enjoy visiting? If so contact Kay Williams or another committee member.

The committee is promoting the wearing of name badges at outings to make it easier for newer members. You can obtain one from Kay Williams – details at the end of the newsletter.

Our last outing for the this calendar year will be **Breakfast with the Birds** at West Creek Park, so bring your breakfast and join us for a very social morning in a lovely setting.

Have you paid your subscription – due on 31st August? If not, this is probably the last newsletter you will receive.

As this is the final newsletter for 2009 I take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

2009  
Challenge



TOOWOOMBA  
BIRD OBSERVERS

## This Issue

**President's Report 2009**  
by Ross Begent

**Unusual nesting behavior  
by Australian King-Parrots**  
by Malcolm Wilson

**Census report**  
by Michael Atzeni

**Members' bird notes**  
by Pat McConnell

**Pelagic Birding Cruise  
from Woolongong**  
by Al & Helen Young

## COMING EVENTS

**November outing**  
**Saturday: 28th November**  
**Venue: West Creek Park**  
**Time: 07:00am**  
**Leader: Kay Williams**

**January outing:**  
**Saturday, 30th January,**  
**Venue: Prince Henry Drive**

(An affiliated member of Bird Observation and Conservation Australia)

P.O. Box 4730, Toowoomba East 4350  
[www.toowoombabirdobservers.org](http://www.toowoombabirdobservers.org)

MEMBERSHIP: Adults/Families \$22, Students \$11  
(Subscriptions due 31 August)

## President's Report 2009

Ross Begent

2008-09 saw a strong programme of regular activities, and a year of further consolidation and planning for our club.

I am very mindful that after a small, local, special interest club like Toowoomba Bird Observers Inc has been operating for over 32 years, it needs to ensure that it avoids complacency and remains relevant to the needs of its members if it is to survive.

In addition, I think it is equally important to reflect on why Toowoomba Bird Observers was commenced, and what drove its founders to establish it as a separate organisation some 32 years ago.

Thankfully, some people who passed this way long before I have recorded the reason for this:

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

Whilst, as an organisation, we may sometimes be criticised for not getting more heavily involved in issues such as policy development, programmes, fundraising or conservation matters, I think it is important for us to reflect on why the club was established. In many respects, this is a Club for the people (those people who call themselves bird observers) but it is more than that – it is to encourage the observation and study of the birds of the Toowoomba area. Yes it is a club for local birders but there is a lot more to our charter than that.

Some examples over recent weeks of where we have been involved in campaigning at the local level for improved protection of our birds include:

- Liaison with Lockyer Regional Council regarding development at Lake Apex
- Liaison with Toowoomba Regional Council regarding destruction of habitat and vandalism at Highfields Falls
- Surveys in the Rockmount area on properties earmarked for a major gas pipeline development
- Joined like-minded organisations in drawing to the attention of Queensland and New South Wales State Ministers, the importance of retaining and protecting the diverse network of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves.

Everybody seems to look forward to our outings. They are an important part of what we do, and we have worked hard to conduct events which are ideal for beginners as well as extending the challenge a little to suit some of our longer-standing members.

The Club Challenge seems to have become an annual event. This event was initially launched in 2005-06 when some of our club members read Sean Dooley's book "The Big Twitch"

Our Newsletter production is vitally important. So many people (not only local members) look forward to receiving it, and (rightly or wrongly) it is a tool by which our value is measured by others. The quality, content and value have increased substantially over recent years. Finding volunteers to fulfil the ongoing Newsletter Editorial position has presented some challenges this year, but we are confident that we will be able to continue

through an "all hands on deck" approach. As is often the case with similar organisations, our club receives significant recognition through its Newsletter.

It has been encouraging to welcome a steady flow of new members throughout the year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Vice President (Mike McGoldrick) for standing in when I could not be there, our Secretary (Olive Booth) and our Treasurer (Rosalie Rudduck). I would also like to acknowledge the longstanding work done by our Records Officer (Pat McConnell) and the work of our Newsletter Co-editors (Plaxy Barratt & Nicci Thompson). Kay Williams has fulfilled the dual roles of Outings Co-ordinator and Librarian in the past year – thanks Kay, and a special thanks to our Media Officer (Gayle Lee) who has managed to get us some fantastic media coverage over the past 12 months. Mick Atzeni and Joe Scanlan have looked after our Web Site and thanks must also go to our Committee Members Sandra Wilson and Rod Hobson who have also made a regular contribution to the Club throughout the year. There are a number of others who may not be members of our Committee but nevertheless have made an enormous contribution to the Club. These are the Club Members who are actively involved in promoting the Club or leading outings and the partners (both birders and non-birders) who support us in so many ways.

And finally, as I deliver my third Annual Report as President, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our members for their confidence in me, and the Committee for their support in keeping things rolling along when I could not be there.

On behalf of Toowoomba Bird Observers Inc, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to our Executive, the Committee members and to all members of our club. Without the hard work and dedication of our Committee members, our organisation would not function effectively. And without the support of our members, we simply would not exist.

We value you all highly.

### **Unusual Nesting Behaviour by King Parrots** by Malcolm Wilson

I received a phone call from a friend who said that their next door neighbour had a female Australian King-Parrot sitting on three eggs on the ground under a shrub in their garden. The area is on the outskirts of Dalby, Queensland.

I went and found the bird brooding the eggs on a garden bed which was covered with wood chips as shown in the enclosed photograph. The garden is planted with native species and was lush after good rain.



Photo: Australian King-Parrot  
By D.Henning

Their dog disturbed the bird whilst I was there and when she flew off, we found she had laid a fourth egg. When she flew, one egg rolled a short distance away from the other three. Soon she returned and carefully rolled the egg back under her and settled down again.

The owners of the garden placed a hollow log nearby for protection if she required it. We wondered if the bird was an aviary escapee, but a male Australian King-Parrot was nearby to her most of the time. The bird stayed on the eggs for ten days from

when the owners first noticed it sitting. After ten days, she abandoned the eggs but at last report, the pair was still in the vicinity.

Also in the garden were several hollow trees. Common Starlings and Common Mynas were using these hollows. Could the lack of nesting hollows be the cause of this unusual occurrence?

### **TBO October Species Census, 30 Oct-02 Nov 2009**

by Michael Atzeni

**Participants:** Wes & Norma Sturdee, Bernie Pohlner, Olive Booth, Pat McConnell, Pat & David Cleary, Kev & Kay Williams, Nicci Thompson, Michael & Laurie Atzeni, Bill Jolly, Toni & Greg Campbell, Gayle Lee, Jenny & Nicholas Matheson, Alison & Chris James, Barb & Rob Learmonth

Twenty-two participants surveyed a total of 15 grids (75% of the survey area) as per Figure 1 and recorded 158 species in total (Table 1). It was an excellent result given the general consensus that bird numbers were noticeably down and some species were much harder to find. It was particularly noticeable down range where we struggled to locate or didn't find some "easy" species.

Several of us made the effort to survey grids that are not visited often, either because of a lack of habitat or limited access. A prime example of the latter is N4, a grid north of Helidon, with only two roads accessing it. N3 was the only grid not surveyed last year, so my team surveyed it along the Seventeen Mile Rd north of Helidon, early Saturday morning. My father and I surveyed it again along White Mountain Rd, northeast of Murphys Creek, on Monday morning. It was surprisingly species-poor despite the ample habitat, but there was no blossom. Eighteen species were recorded including a flock of White-throated Needletails overhead, the only ones reported during the survey. Unfortunately, the most westerly grids (predominantly farmland) received very little attention this year - only W3 was surveyed, yielding 16 species (the same number as last year).

<b>W1</b> (Kingsthorpe) 27°27'30"S 151°47'30"E	<b>N1</b> (Gowrie Junction) 27°27'30"S 151°52'30"E	<b>N2</b> (Highfields) 27°27'30"S 151°57'30"E	<b>N3</b> (Murphy's Ck) 27°27'30"S 152°02'30"E	<b>N4</b> (Helidon North) 27°27'30"S 152°07'30"E
	15 spp	58 spp	67 spp	18 spp
<b>W2</b> (W. of Gowrie Mtn) 27°32'30"S 151°47'30"E	<b>C1</b> (NW Toowoomba) 27°32'30"S 151°52'30"E	<b>C3</b> (NE Toowoomba) 27°32'30"S 151°57'30"E	<b>C5</b> (Withcott) 27°32'30"S 152°02'30"E	<b>C7</b> (Helidon) 27°32'30"S 152°07'30"E
	48 spp	73 spp	61 spp	109 spp
<b>W3</b> (Athol/Umbiram) 27°37'30"S 151°47'30"E	<b>C2</b> (SW Toowoomba) 27°37'30"S 151°52'30"E	<b>C4</b> (SE Toowoomba) 27°37'30"S 151°57'30"E	<b>C6</b> (Upper Flagstone Ck) 27°37'30"S 152°02'30"E	<b>C8</b> (Lower Flagstone Ck) 27°37'30"S 152°07'30"E
	16 spp	30 spp	71 spp	36 spp
<b>W4</b> (W. of Cambooya) 27°42'30"S 151°47'30"E	<b>S1</b> (Cambooya) 27°42'30"S 151°52'30"E	<b>S2</b> (Ramsay) 27°42'30"S 151°57'30"E	<b>S3</b> (Rockmount) 27°42'30"S 152°02'30"E	<b>S4</b> (Fordsdale) 27°42'30"S 152°07'30"E
		39 spp	5 spp	34 spp

**Figure 1. Grids surveyed (shaded) and number of species recorded during 2009 Species Census. (These are 5 minute grids. For Atlassing purposes, each grid falls within a 5km radius of the given central reference point.)**

Downrange highlights were **Hoary-headed Grebe** and **Red-necked Avocet** at Helidon Spa; **Red-necked Dotterels** at two Helidon locations; **Black Bittern** at "Abberton", Helidon; **Pale-vented Bush-hen** calling at "Tiddalac", Upper Lockyer; **White-throated Nightjar** and **Spotted Quail-thrush** at Cleary's property, Withcott; **White-winged Chough** and **Apostlebird** at Ramsay (S2) and the latter also in N1.

Some species we'd reasonably expect to see but dipped on were: **Yellow-billed Spoonbill**, **Whistling Kite**, **Peregrine Falcon**, **Eurasian Coot**, **Latham's Snipe**, **White-headed Pigeon**, **Pallid Cuckoo**, **Brush Cuckoo**, **Horsfield's Bushlark**, **Barred Cuckoo-shrike**, **Rufous Songlark**, **Crested Shrike-tit**, **Striated Thornbill**, **White-browed Woodswallow** and **Masked Woodswallow**.

Thanks to all who participated and look forward to your help again next year. Thanks also to Olive for her assistance with Table 1.

**Table 1. Species recorded during Census, 30 October-2 November 2009 (Total:158)**

Species	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	N1	N2	N3	N4	W3	S2	S3	S4
Australasian Grebe	1			4			7	8		2	3					
Hoary-headed Grebe *							7									
Australian Pelican							7									
Little Black Cormorant				4			7									
Little Pied Cormorant	1			4	5		7	8								
Australasian Darter	1						7									
White-necked Heron					5		7				3					4
Eastern Great Egret				4			7									
Intermediate Egret					5		7									
White-faced Heron							7	8			3			2		
Cattle Egret		2		4	5		7	8		2	3					4
Black Bittern							7									
Australian White Ibis	1		3	4			7							2		4
Straw-necked Ibis	1	2		4			7	8	1	2	3					
Royal Spoonbill							7									
Plumed Whistling-Duck	1						7	8								
Australian Wood Duck	1		3	4	5		7	8	1		3			2		
Grey Teal	1			4			7	8								
Pacific Black Duck	1		3	4			7	8			3			2		4
Australasian Shoveler							7									

Species	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	N1	N2	N3	N4	W3	S2	S3	S4
Pink-eared Duck *	1															
Hardhead	1			4			7	8								4
Black-shouldered Kite	1	2			5		7			2	3		3	2		
Spotted Harrier								8								
Grey Goshawk		2														
Brown Goshawk							7				3					
Collared Sparrowhawk							7				3					
Wedge-tailed Eagle		2				6	7	8		2	3			2		
Little Eagle																
Nankeen Kestrel		2					7	8		2				2		
Brown Falcon					5		7	8					3			
Australian Hobby							7									
Australian Brush-turkey				4												
Brown Quail						6	7	8						2		4
Pale-vented Bush-hen *											3					
Purple Swamphen				4			7									
Dusky Moorhen				4			7				3					4
Black-winged Stilt							7									
Red-necked Avocet							7									
Masked Lapwing	1		3	4	5	6	7		1	2	3			2		
Red-kneed Dotterel							7									
Black-fronted Dotterel							7									
Rock Dove	1	2	3				7									
White-headed Pigeon																
Spotted Dove	1		3	4			7	8		2						
Brown Cuckoo-Dove										2						
Common Bronzewing					5					2	3					
Crested Pigeon	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		2	3			2		
Peaceful Dove			3	4	5	6	7			2	3					4
Bar-shouldered Dove			3		5	6	7	8		2	3					4
Wonga Pigeon			3	4												
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo							7				3					
Galah	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		2			3	2		4
Little Corella	1						7		1				3	2		4
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo		2		4	5	6			1	2			3	2		4
Cockatiel	1	2							1						2	
Rainbow Lorikeet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		1	2	3			2		
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet		2	3	4	5		7	8	1	2	3			2		
Musk Lorikeet										2						
Little Lorikeet					5		7				3	4				
Pale-headed Rosella	1	2	3	4	5		7		1	2	3			2		
Red-rumped Parrot	1	2					7			2			3	2		
Australian King-Parrot			3	4						2	3			2		
Fan-tailed Cuckoo											3					
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo							7									
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo							7									
Little Bronze-Cuckoo											3					
Eastern Koel		2	3	4			7	8		2	3					4
Channel-billed Cuckoo			3	4	5		7	8		2	3					4
Pheasant Coucal				4	5		7	8			3					4
Southern Boobook			3	4												
Tawny Frogmouth										2						
White-throated Nightjar					5											
White-throated Needletail												4				
Azure Kingfisher							7									
Laughing Kookaburra	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		2	3	4		2	3	
Sacred Kingfisher			3	4	5	6	7	8			3			2		4
Rainbow Bee-eater							7	8								
Dollarbird	1			4			7	8		2	3		3			4
Fairy Martin	1				5		7									
Welcome Swallow	1	2	3	4			7	8		2	3			2		
Australasian Pipit							7	8								
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		2	3		3	2	3	4
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike							7									
Cicadabird			3		5							4				
White-winged Triller							7	8								
Varied Triller			3													
Golden-headed Cisticola	1						7	8								4
Australian Reed-Warbler	1							8								
Tawny Grassbird							7	8								
Willie Wagtail	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		2	3	4		2		4

Species	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	N1	N2	N3	N4	W3	S2	S3	S4
Rufous Fantail			3	4												
Black-faced Monarch			3													
Spectacled Monarch			3													
Leaden Flycatcher			3				7	8								
Jacky Winter							7				3					
Eastern Yellow Robin			3	4	5		7			2		4				
Golden Whistler			3													
Rufous Whistler			3	4		6	7	8			3					
Grey Shrike-thrush			3	4	5		7			2	3	4				
Grey-crowned Babbler					5	6	7			2				2		
Eastern Whipbird			3	4	5	6	7			2	3					
Spotted Quail-thrush *					5											
Red-backed Fairy-wren			3		5		7	8								
Superb Fairy-wren	1		3		5		7	8	1	2	3					4
Variiegated Fairy-wren			3		5					2	3					
White-browed Scrubwren			3	4			7									
Large-billed Scrubwren			3													
Speckled Warbler			3	4	5		7									
Buff-rumped Thornbill					5						3	4				
Brown Thornbill			3	4						2						
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	1	2	3	4			7	8		2				2		
Yellow Thornbill							7									
Weebill			3								3					
White-throated Gerygone	1		3	4	5	6	7			2	3					4
Brown Gerygone			3													
Varied Sittella			3		5											
White-throated Treecreeper			3							2	3	4				
Mistletoebird			3		5		7	8			3				3	
Spotted Pardalote										2	3	4				
Striated Pardalote			3	4	5	6	7			2	3					4
Silveryeye	1		3	4	5	6	7	8		2	3	4				4
Brown Honeyeater	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		2	3	4				4
Scarlet Honeyeater							7				3					
Lewin's Honeyeater			3	4	5	6	7	8		2	3				3	4
Yellow-faced Honeyeater			3	4	5	6				2	3	4				
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater *											3					
Fuscous Honeyeater							7									
White-naped Honeyeater	1			4												
White-throated Honeyeater			3				7					4				
Brown-headed Honeyeater				4												
Little Friarbird			3	4	5	6	7	8			3					
Noisy Friarbird			3	4	5	6	7			2	3	4		2		
Striped Honeyeater				4	5	6	7	8			3					4
Blue-faced Honeyeater	1		3	4			7				3			2		
Bell Miner				4												
Noisy Miner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3		3	2		
Red Wattlebird			3													
Olive-backed Oriole			3	4	5		7	8		2	3					4
Australasian Figbird	1		3	4	5	6	7	8		2	3					4
Spangled Drongo			3	4			7			2						
Magpie-lark	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		2			3	2		4
White-winged Chough														2		
Apostlebird	1													2		
Grey Butcherbird		2	3	4	5	6	7	8		2	3	4		2		
Pied Butcherbird	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			3	4	3	2		
Australasian Magpie	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3			2		
Pied Currawong	1		3	4	5	6				2	3	4	3	2	3	4
Regent Bowerbird			3													
Satin Bowerbird				4												
Torresian Crow	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3		3	2		4
Common Myna	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3		3			4
Common Starling	1		3					8	1				3	2		4
House Sparrow	1	2	3		5		7	8		2			3	2		
Red-browed Finch			3	4	5	6	7									
Zebra Finch		2					7	8								
Double-barred Finch				4	5	6	7	8		2						
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin							7									

## Pelagic Birding Cruise from Wollongong

by Al & Helen Young



Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross  
Photo: Al Young

In late October we joined a group of 16 keen 'seabirders' aboard the 15 m 'Sandra K' which departed from Wollongong Harbour at about 7 am on October 24<sup>th</sup>. The trip was organised by the Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association (SOSSA). We had barely cleared the harbour when **two Little Penguins** and **four Humpbacked Whales** were sighted. One of the whales was alone, whereas the other three were together; a female with a calf and a larger individual, possibly a male escort. We stopped the boat for about 20 minutes and the female whale remained with her head down and fluke out of the water for this

period. Lindsay Smith, who has been conducting these pelagic trips for many years, said he had never seen a Humpback Whale stay in this position for so long. On the return trip, in the same general area, was a whale with its fluke out of the water with a calf circling around it. Strange! Also, accompanying us out of the harbour was a group of **Short-beaked Common Dolphins**.

From the harbour eastward to about halfway to the continental shelf we were accompanied by numerous **Silver Gulls** which were replaced by **Crested Terns** at about the halfway mark. The Silver Gulls took over from the Crested Terns as the main escorts from about the halfway mark on the return journey. Before reaching the continental shelf we saw **Short-tailed, Fluttering, Wedge-tailed** and **Hutton's Shearwater, Australasian Gannet, Southern Giant Petrel, Cape Petrel, Providence Petrel, Wilson's Storm Petrel** and **Arctic Jaeger**.



Immature Black-browed Albatross  
Photo: Al Young

As we approached the continental shelf the amount of chicken mince and cod liver oil burley (Yum!) increased and so did the numbers and types of albatross. Seven species/subspecies of albatross were seen – **Wandering, Black-browed, Shy, White-capped, Yellow-nosed, Gibson's** and **Campbell's Albatross**. We had great views of these magnificent birds as they circled the boat and landed on the water for a burley snack. The highlight of the trip was watching two Shy Albatross being captured with a long-handed net. They were measured and banded before being released. Over the years SOSSA has banded many thousands of albatross captured off the east coast of Australia. Occasionally, a bird banded on South Georgia Island in the Antarctic is recaptured. To see these amazing birds up-close and to touch their soft feathers was just magic. Birds not recorded on the outward trip but seen on the return trip were – **Northern Giant Petrel, Black Petrel, Pomarine Jaeger, White-fronted Tern** and **Kelp Gull** and **Australian Pelican**. During the trip 26 species/subspecies were recorded. We saw eight 'lifera', not including three subspecies of Albatross



## Members' Bird Notes

by Pat McConnell

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.

Stubble Quail	16/10/2009	Bongeen	RH
Pink-eared Duck	14/10/2009	Helidon	BJ
Hoary-headed Grebe (4)	17/10/2009	Helidon Spa	MA
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	14/10/2009	Helidon	BJ
Red-kneed Dotterel	17/10/2009	Helidon Spa	MA
Blue Bonnet	5/11/2009	Wellcamp State School	RH
Fork-tailed Swift	16/11/2009	Highfields	PM
Rufous Scrub-bird	6/10/2009	Border Ranges NP	SM
Ground Cuckoo-shrike (6)	10/11/2009	Handley St Toowoomba	AY
White-browed Woodswallow	15/11/2009	Highfields	PM

**MA**, M. Atzeni; **RH**, R. Hobson; **BJ**, B. Jolly; **SM**, S. McBride; **PM**, P. McConnell; **AY**, A. Young.

If anyone wishes to submit bird notes they can do this directly to me at [mccommel@usq.edu.au](mailto:mccommel@usq.edu.au) or via the Club's mailing address.

Thanks  
Pat McConnell

## Name Badge



TOOWOOMBA BIRD  
OBSERVERS.

Kay

Williams

On the left is an image of the name badge that may be obtained from Kay Williams.

It features the Black-shouldered Kite, the club's emblem.

It is encased in a clear plastic envelope and may be worn as a badge or attached to a lanyard.

Cost is \$5:00

Contact Kay Williams to order one

Phone: 4659 5475

Mobile: 0429 465 954

Email: [kevkeywills@hotmail.com](mailto:kevkeywills@hotmail.com)

## COMING EVENTS

### Saturday: 28th November, 2009

Venue: West Creek Park

Leader: Kay Williams

Time: 7:00am

- Meet in Lemway Avenue off Stenner Street.
- BYO your breakfast
- Gas Barbecues & picnic tables are available
- Folding chairs so we can all be together would be useful
- Contact: Kay Williams 4659 5475

### Saturday, 30th January, 2010

Venue: Prince Henry Drive

Time etc in the January Newsletter

### Sunday: 27th February, 2010

Venue: Bunya Mountains

Details to be announced

## Committee Members

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**Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 16th March, 2009**

Please e-mail or snail-mail your articles to Plaxy Barratt or Nicci Thompson

**If undeliverable return to  
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