

TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

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

No. 403
April 2011

Editorial

Steve Burke

The season is slowly changing but I'm surprised at how the warm and wet weather seems to be lingering this year. The birds at home certainly know it's time to move however and we are seeing less of some species such as the **Spangled Drongos** and more of species like **Red-capped Robins**. Many of the birds on the move are immature.

Which brings me to the subject of species identification. I love my birds but I have to admit that I do have trouble from time to time with some identification, especially if the bird is immature or seen in compromised light or at a non-flattering angle. Once seen and identified however, it is much easier to pick the bird next time. A recent case in point occurred on the March excursion to McEwan State Forest where Kevin Williams and I were stalking a mid-sized plain bird with coppery-rufous wings. I knew from seeing and identifying a similar bird before, with the help of my good mate Mick Atzeni, that it was an immature **Golden Whistler**. It felt good to be able to use my past experience to solve a

present day birding conundrum.

The photo below was sent to our Records Officer, Pat McConnell, with the text "an odd looking Kookaburra". It has proven a good identification exercise amongst those that have seen it. Any ideas anyone? Send your suggestions to Pat at mcconnel@usq.edu.au and I will print the pop-quiz answer in the next issue.



What am I?

Photo: Supplied.

2011 Challenge
151 species as
at 26/4/2011



(An affiliated member of Bird Observation and Conservation Australia)

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

April Outing
Saturday 30th
Venue: Lake Apex and
Lockyer wetlands
Leader: Rob & Jocelyn
Wilson

May Outing
Saturday 28th/Sunday 29th
Venue: Lake Broadwater
& Bunya Mtns foothills
Leader: Mike McGoldrick

Tamworth – there and back again.

By Steve Burke

On the Queen's Birthday long weekend 2010 I decided to go for a drive to Tamworth because firstly I had never, as an adult, been to that area or even driven through the area between Toowoomba and Tamworth and secondly I wanted to see my friends' 2500 acre property at Bundella near the Coolah Tops National Park west of Tamworth before they sold it. I set myself the goal of counting every raptor I could for the trip.

I didn't leave as early as I would have liked so I was under the pump all the way. I hoped to arrive in Tamworth at around 5 pm. I went via Karara then Inglewood where I began to see more **White-plumed Honeyeaters** and less **Brown Honeyeaters**. I then went on to Goondiwindi and stopped for a little while under the big fig trees at the end of the main street by the river. There were plenty of **Figbirds** above, **White-plumed Honeyeaters** in the Blue Gums and a **Sacred Kingfisher** sitting by the boat-ramp.



White-plumed Honeyeaters.

Photo: Steve Burke.

Then I was across the border and on to Moree and beyond, with Mt Kaputar looming to my left as I closed in on Narrabri. I had noticed a change in vegetation and birdlife after Moree with large flocks of **Galahs**, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, **Little Corellas** and lots and lots of **Torresian Crows**, and **Australian Ravens** as I got further south. I was making hard work of it with all the stopping to check out suspected lifers and getting my first for the trip with two **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes** north of Narrabri, closely followed by a small flock of **Inland Thornbills** flying across the road in front of me and landing in a handy tree on the verge of the highway. I was seeing large numbers of **Yellow-throated Miners**, and thought it funny that I had gone so long before seeing my first at Zimm's Corner near Toowoomba not long before and now they were all around me and giving really good chances to watch them as they fed in the small trees along the road. I had run out of light

by the time I got to Gunnedah, so it was straight on to Tamworth and dinner at the Calala Pub with my friends. Raptors for the day – **Nankeen Kestrels** x 23, **Black-shouldered Kites** x 6 and **Brown Falcons** x 2.



Galah.

Photo: Steve Burke.

Next day we went for a drive down through Quirindi, where I got my first **Grey Goshawk** and it was a white morph, and then to a great waterbird habitat called the Old Quipolly Dam which was teeming with plenty of Grebes, **Black Swans** and plenty of **Pacific Black Ducks**. It was then up the Gaspard Road to Nundle.

The Gaspard Road was very interesting with 7 or 8 creek crossings and plenty of birdlife including **Eastern and Crimson Rosellas**, **Eastern Yellow Robins**, **White-plumed Honeyeaters**, **Spiney-cheeked Honeyeaters**, **Jackie Winters**, **Apostlebirds**, **Red-browed and Double-barred Finches** and my first ever **Clay Pigeons** as we passed the local clay pigeon shooting venue. No clay pigeons were harmed for this article. **Nobby Dragons** are also quite common in this area.

The next part of the day trip took us up to a spot called Hanging Rock near the Nowendoc N/P where we saw two groups of **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, **Crimson and Eastern Rosellas**, **Weebills**, **White-eared**, **White-plumed** and **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**, **Red**



Crimson Rosella.

Photo: Steve Burke.

Wattlebirds, **Superb Fairy-wrens** and many others. We went back to Tamworth via the Forest Way and Niangala, passing through picturesque high altitude farming country.

Large flocks of **Galahs**, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Little Corellas** were common throughout the day with smaller flocks of **Cockatiels** as well. Raptors for the day – **Nankeen Kestrel** x 26, **Brown Falcon** x 7, **Black-shouldered Kite** x 4, **Grey Goshawk (white morph)** x 1, **Wedge-tailed Eagle** x 1 and **Whistling Kite** x 1.



Hibernating Wanderer Butterflies.
Photo: Steve Burke.

Day three dawned clear and cold and we were soon on our way south-west out of Tamworth to the farm at Bundella near the Coolah Tops N/P. We crossed over a section of the Liverpool Plains which was dotted with lighter sandier knolls with Cypress Pine and into White Box country with really pebbly creeks and rivers. A couple of adult **Wedge-tailed Eagles** were sitting in a dead tree by the road waiting for the angled sun to warm them up. It was on the pine covered knolls that we saw the

first **Common Bronzewing**s for the trip and then massively large flocks of **Apostlebirds** and **White-winged Choughs**. At the farm we spent most of the day looking at cows, oats and pasture but there was time to appreciate the **Eastern Rosellas** again, another wedgie, **Spotted and Striated Pardalotes** and large numbers of hibernating **Wanderer Butterflies** at the ends of branches in the Casuarinas along the creek.

At the end of the day we found ourselves quite high up the hills toward the back of the farm near a little dam just in time to catch some end of the day drinkers. **Crimson and Eastern Rosellas** were there again, as well as **Superb Fairy-wrens**, **White-browed Scrubwrens** and **Double-barred Finches**.

We also saw **Inland Thornbills** here and my first **Western Gerygone**. We moved back around to the sunnier side of the mountain and flushed a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** from a tree on the edge of a clearing where feeding **Eastern Grey Kangaroos** mingled with **Eastern Wallaroos**. I was very surprised at



A Varied Sitella.

Photo: Steve Burke.

the dark, almost black colour of the male.

The sun had now set so we jumped back on the four-wheeler and headed back down the hill to the ute and then back to Tamworth in the dark again. Raptors for the day – **Nankeen Kestrel x 9, Wedge-tailed Eagle x 5, Brown Falcon x 3 and Black-shouldered Kite x 2.**

Day 4 was the trip home back to Narrabri and then up to the top of Mt Kaputar for a look. There were more large flocks of **Galahs and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** on the farming country. Mt Kaputar was a revelation but nothing new from the birds. I then headed across to Bingara and Warialda, Texas and home. The stretch between Narrabri and Bingara was very fruitful birding with **Zebra Finches, Peaceful Doves, King Parrots, White-throated Treecreepers, Varied Sitellas, Yellow-throated Miners, White-winged Choughs, Apostlebirds** and a **Restless Flycatcher** to name a small sample. Raptors for the day – **Nankeen Kestrel x 12, Wedge-tailed Eagle x 1, Whistling Kite x 1 and Black-shouldered Kite x 1.**



Mt Kaputar National Park in the background.

Photo: Steve Burke.

A birder in focus – Ross Begent.

By The Roving Reporter

Hi Ross, how long have you been interested in birds?

I've been interested in birds for about as long as I can remember really, but more seriously in recent years.

How did you get started?

Well, my parents were both crazy about fishing. They used to go a very long way out to sea in very small boats. As a child I was not so keen on fishing but when Dad threw the contents of the burley bag overboard to attract the fish, it also attracted sea birds. I was fascinated with the sea birds which circled our boat waiting for their share. Wish I had started recording what they were back then!

When did you join the TBO Club?

Around 2005 following my first ever bird outing with a group – an early morning walk with Henry Nix at Myall Park. Until then I had not appreciated how much more I could learn in a group. I was hooked!

How did you find out information about the TBO Club?

From the TBO web site.

Why did you join this club?

I joined the Club to learn about the birds in the region where I live.

Are you a lone birder in a family of non-birders?

Well I was a lone birder, but now my son Dan knows much more than I. It is great to be able to share birding with him.

What are the reactions of friends and family with your birding activities?

Patient, enduring and longsuffering – in the extreme!

What is the best or worst thing about birding?

Best - finding a new bird. Worst - getting seasick without finding any new birds. And being chased by a Southern Cassowary near Mission Beach was rather memorable too!

When or where would you like to go birding next?

Mmmmmm, that's hard – next summer in Broome via Christmas Island!

Where are some of your favourite birding spots?

That's even harder! Julatten, Mission Beach, Lamington, Kakadu, Darwin, Myall Park, Flinders Island, Bruny Island,.....

When did you realise that you were hooked on bird watching?

When I went on my first bird outing with a group and realised that there were other people who actually believed it was quite normal to feel this way!

What is on top of places to go birding, Australia, Overseas or somewhere?

The Kimberleys, Gluepot, Newhaven, Broome and Papua New Guinea.

Do you constantly write lists?

I suffer a little from chronic obsessive list writing syndrome, but not as badly as some.

What is your favourite bird?

The Pied Oystercatcher (if it is possible to have a favourite!)

Describe one of your best birding experiences?

Watching a **Lesser Yellowlegs Sandpiper** about 30 metres in front of me with a pair of **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos** and a pair of **Variegated Fairy-wrens** in a tree about two metres above my head – all at the same time!! The walk from the Mt Lewis Road to the old tin mining dam ranks very highly too!

What is on top of your birds to see list?

Any bird that is not on my list yet! The **Orange-bellied Parrot** ranks highly.

Where is your favourite local birding area?

Glen Lomond Park.

Thank you very much Ross for giving me this interview, it was great.

Till next time, The Roving Reporter

March Outing – McEwan State Forest
By Steve Burke

The March outing took place at the newly gazetted McEwan State Forest on a blustery but beautiful Autumn morning. We met at our home, "Russell-Ridge" and had a handy turn-out of a dozen keen supporters. Attendees were: Murray French, Mike McGoldrick, Wes and Norma Sturdee, Al Young, Ken McKeown, Kevin & Kay Williams, Steve Burke, Marita Bortman, Gayle Lee and Alastair Silcock.



Happy birders on the March outing.

Photo: Steve Burke.

McEwan State Forest was gazetted in late 2010 after being bequeathed to the State Government by Jack Alexander McEwan who died on September 12 2006, aged 92. Jack lived a reclusive life on the property for nearly seventy years without electricity or telephone.



It was a cool blustery day which made birding a challenge but the remnants of Jack's life; machinery and farm buildings, scattered around his old home (shed) and the interesting natural environment around us kept everyone engaged. We walked from our carpark along the access road to Jack's home in the forest and then along tracks that had been carved out of the scrub between cleared grazing areas and old cultivation paddocks. **Variegated Fairy-**

wrens gave good views as did a photogenic **Mistletoebird**. A **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** was a highlight for many although I missed it as I was chasing what turned out to be an immature **Golden Whistler** with Kevin and Alastair.

The **Grey-crowned Babblers** didn't let me down and made an appearance near to the end of the morning at Jack's old piggery, along with the **Figbird**. We had morning tea and debriefed at the shed accommodation on our property with the **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** singing in the background. Before leaving, a couple of birders took a guided tour of the garden to get photos of the various nests to be found around the house, including **White-throated Gerygone** and **Double-barred Finch**.

Bird list: Rock Dove, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Superb Fairy-wren, Variegated Fairy-wren, Striated Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Speckled Warbler, White-throated Gerygone, Yellow Thornbill, Noisy Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Grey-crowned Babbler, Varied Sitella, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Leaden Flycatcher, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Spangled Drongo, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Figbird, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, Double-barred Finch, Mistletoebird, Silvereye, Common Starling.

New Members

By Steve Burke

The Club Committee and members would like to welcome a new member to the fold of the Toowoomba Bird Observers. **Barbara Eldred** lives in a beautiful part of the world, Springbrook, and has access to some great rainforest birding but we hope she can join us for some 'western' birding and we look forward to meeting Barbara at some future outings.

Glossy Black-Cockatoo Birding Day

From email sent by Guy Castley

While it only seems like yesterday our last Glossy Black-Cockatoo survey was completed in October last year. We had a good turnout throughout the region with almost 300 people participating on the day and recording 105 individual cockatoo. The Sunshine Coast, Scenic Rim and Tweed areas were most successful while only nine birds were recorded from the Gold Coast. While it is too early to say much about seasonal movement patterns and distribution from only two surveys we had a number of comments from observers in some areas that an October count was the wrong time of year to see the cockatoo in those areas (the Gold Coast being one of these). At a Glossy Black Conservancy meeting towards the end of last year the timing of the survey was discussed and it was decided to revert back to a May time slot for the surveys, with the plan to review these figures after the survey and decide on whether two surveys a year would be necessary to capture the possible regional variation between seasons.

That said the next survey is planned for 22 May 2011 (Sunday) and will follow the same structure as in previous surveys. In other words we are hoping that volunteers will be able to spend the whole day in the field at a specified location looking for both signs of the birds themselves or their presence. Observers can take part on their own or as part of a group but you will need to form your own groups before letting us know how many of you will be heading out to the field. We are once again aiming to get as many volunteers in the field on the day looking for Glossy Black-Cockatoo across the SEQ and north-eastern NSW region.

If you are interested in participating on 22 May please get in touch so that we can keep you updated as to any new developments in the coming weeks. I will be running a number of workshops in May (two weeks prior to the survey) to provide background information on the identification of the birds as well as their feed trees and feeding signs but also on how to capture your birding data information. Rebecca Sims (rebecca.sims8@bigpond.com) will be assisting in compiling a database of volunteers for this year's survey but you are welcome to contact either Rebecca or myself if you want to take part.

First-Aid on Club Outings

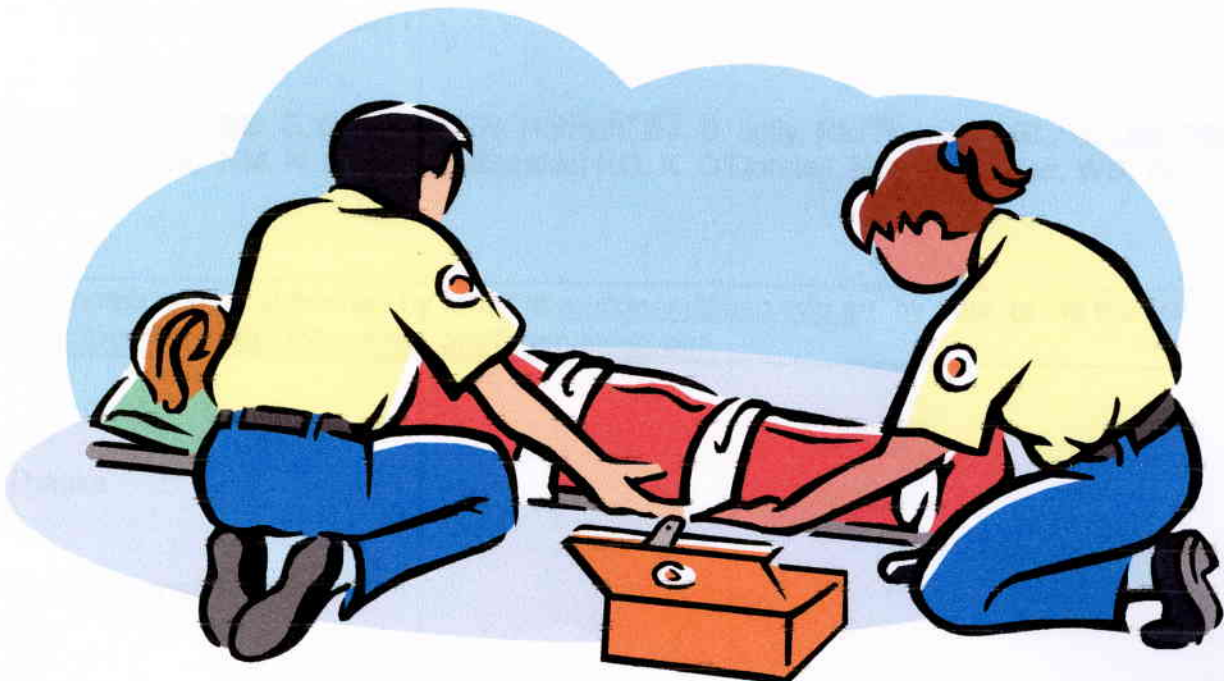
From the TBO Committee

The provision of a safe environment for Club members in which to enjoy their birding experience while on Club organised event is one of the Toowoomba Bird Observers most important responsibilities. A recent discussion by the Committee has highlighted the need for the Club to have more than one person available to provide first-aid to members during Club sponsored events as that one person is not always going to be available to attend all outings.

Following on from this discussion, the Club is looking for expressions of interest from Members who would like to offer their first-aid services to the Club on an as needed basis. Members who already have a current First-Aid and CPR Certificate and want to offer their services are encouraged to contact **Mike McGoldrick** or one of the other Committee members listed on the last page of this Newsletter.

The Club is willing to consider subsidising the cost of a Member renewing their certification when required or obtaining First-Aid and CPR certification for the first time. The Club does have access to a number of RTO's who will provide training at a reasonable rate.

Obviously it would only be of an advantage to the Club to offer this subsidy to members who have in the past shown that they regularly attend Club events or plan to regularly attend events in the future.



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.

Magpie Goose (6)	14/03/2011	Willowburn, Toowoomba	GL
Great Crested Grebe	8/03/2011	Lake Dyer	WS,NS
Black-necked Stork	4/03/2011	Warrill View Dam	NM
Squatter Pigeon	7/04/2011	Cressbrook Dam	WS,NS
Superb Fruit-Dove (heard)	3/03/2011	Buderim Forest Dam	RL
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo (12)	10/02/2011	Highfields	PM,KO
Musk Lorikeet	18/03/2011	Tor St Toowoomba	MA
Powerful Owl *	20/03/2011	Prince Henry Dr. Tmba	RH
Brown-headed Honeyeater	6/02/2011	Upper Lockyer	MA
Ground Cuckoo-shrike	16/03/2011	Pittsworth	SB
Ground Cuckoo-shrike	11/04/2011	Flagstone Ck Road	BJ
Australian Raven (2)	25/03/2011	Muntapa Tunnel Cooyar	RH
Common Blackbird **	4/03/2011	Highfields	PM,KO

* Electrocuted

** Still present 12/04/2011

MA, M. Atzeni; SB, S. Burke; RH, R. Hobson; BJ, B. Jolly; RL, R. Lamb; GL, G. Lee; PM, P. McConnell; NM, N. Matheson-Kozakis; KO, K. O'Donnell; NS, N. Sturdee; WS, W. Sturdee.

Bird notes can be submitted by email to mccommel@usq.edu.au, by post, or via the forum www.toowoombabirdobservers.org/forum/index.php

Thanks

Pat McConnell

COMING CLUB EVENTS

April Outing

Saturday, 30th April 2011

Venue: Lake Apex & Lockyer wetlands

Time: 6.30am for 7.00am start

Meet: Lake Apex BBQ shelter

Leader: Rob & Jocelyn Wilson

Phone: 07 5462 1230

May Outing

Saturday/Sunday, 28th & 29th May 2011

Venue: Lake Broadwater & Bunya M'tns foothills

Time: TBA

Meet: Lake Broadwater carpark

Leader: Michael McGoldrick

Phone: 07 4635 7371

June Outing

Saturday/Sunday, 25th & 26th June 2011

Venue: Raptor Census

Time: Your group to decide

Leader: Pat McConnell

Phone: 07 4631 5573

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Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 20th May 2011

Please e-mail or post articles to the Editor.

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