



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

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

No. 408
September 2011

Editorial

Steve Burke

Due to a combination of factors, the Outing scheduled for Sunday, September 25th has been moved to Saturday, October 15th at Redwood Park. This has been done to coincide with the Redwood Park Open Day also scheduled for that day. The Club will have a stall there promoting local birding and conservation. Please spread the word amongst your family and friends.

At a recent General Meeting of the Club it was decided that membership fees had to rise in order to keep the Club viable and better able to continue to provide the services that Members have come to expect of the Club.

The fees are now \$30.00 for an adult/family and \$25.00 for a student/concession holder. These fees compare favourably with other similar clubs in the region.

I have to apologise to Members for this Newsletter again not having an Outing Report but the authors' have continuing computer issues. Be patient.

With the Club AGM coming up soon, it is great time for Members to reflect on how, as Members, we can add value to our club.

The Annual General Meeting is to be held on Wednesday night October 19th at the Uniting Church Hall on the corner of Tor Street and North Street at 7pm. Call Olive Booth if you plan to attend. All are invited.



Red-backed Kingfisher - Mt Tyson.
Photo: Al Young.

2011 Challenge
183 species as
at 11/9/2011



TOOWOOMBA
BIRD OBSERVERS

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COMING EVENTS

September Outing
Saturday, October 15th
Venue: Redwood Park
Leader: Pat McConnell

October Outing
Species Census
Venue: Own arrangement
Leader: Mick Atzeni

November Outing
Sat/Sun 29th & 30th
Venue: Species Census
Leader: Mick Atzeni

(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)

Lasgair – the fishing Pheonix

By Robert Ashdown

Osprey! We looked up from the shining water of Tingalpa Creek to see the bird moving towards us. A visiting wildlife photographer friend from Sweden, Ulf Westerberg*, had expressed a wish to see some local birds, in particular an osprey, so we were off up the creek at high tide in a mate's small tinny. To our astonishment, as the bird approached it suddenly folded its wings and dived straight at us. Despite having at least three cameras between us in the boat, all that moved was our jaws as they fell open in surprise. Talons outstretched, the bird rocketed directly toward us, bright yellow eyes clearly staring ahead. With a huge splash the osprey hit the creek, no more than two metres from the boat, showering us with water. It then floated for several seconds, looking calmly at us, before hauling itself out of the water and flapping off. It had missed the targeted mullet, and was soon travelling away from us, looking left and right for other dinner chances in the water below. We burst into laughter and shouts of amazement. "Yes," I'd said earlier "perhaps we just might see an osprey."

We are fortunate to have such exciting birds sharing our local fish with us. Despite some persecution, they have not been threatened with extinction in Queensland. As I recently had the good fortune to be doing some raptor spotting in Scotland, I found out a little about the story of the osprey over there. It's a tale of despair and tragedy leading to unlikely success.

There are four sub-species of osprey distributed throughout the world. The Scottish osprey is a different sub-species from

ours, but is very similar in appearance. Their Scottish name is Lasgair, which means 'fisherman'. Scottish Ospreys migrate to Africa during the northern winter, returning to breed in spring. In the 1800s, Ospreys were shot by landowners, and the 'naturalist-hunters' killed adult Ospreys and took their eggs. There was a market for their skins (for display cabinets) and their blown eggs (for egg collections). Typical of the time was this effort by Lewis Dunbar.

On the 3 May 1851, Dunbar arrived at Loch an Eilein, near Aviemore in Scotland. He had walked many miles through the night. Quickly, he slipped into the icy water and swam to a deserted castle on an island in the loch. As he climbed the castle, six inches of snow covering the ramparts slowed his progress. Eventually he reached the top, where there



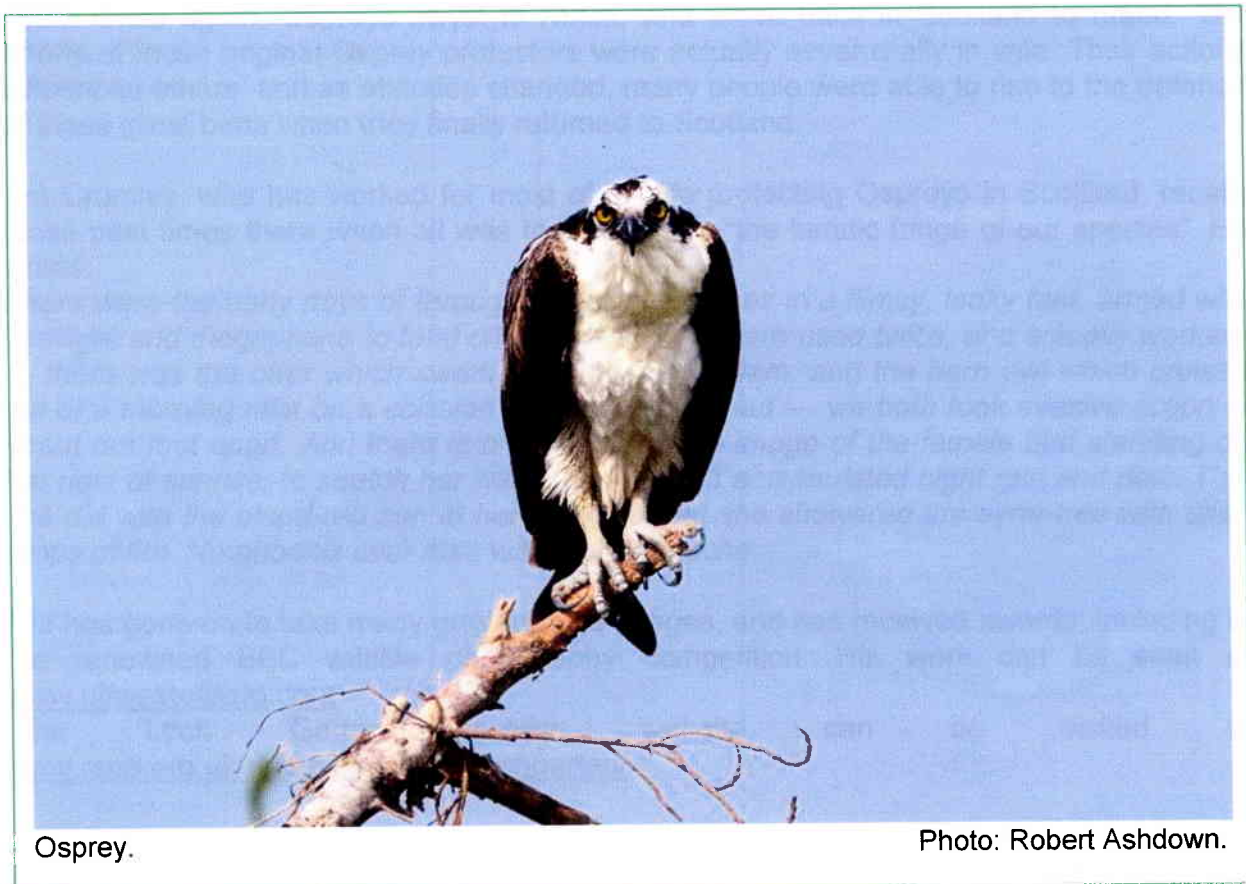
Osprey with Garfish.

Photo: Steve Burke.

was an osprey sitting on eggs. Chasing away the bird, he grabbed the eggs and climbed back down. Dunbar then swam to the shore, an egg in each hand. There, he then blew the eggs, washed them out with whiskey, and eventually sold them to collectors.

As a result of events like this, Ospreys became extinct in Ireland in 1800. In England, they vanished by 1842. By 1848, there were only 40 – 50 pairs left in Scotland. On 17 May of that year, two collectors, Charles St John and William Dunbar (Lewis' brother), met at Loch an laig Aird, a known Osprey nesting location. They arrived to see a female Osprey in the nest. St John shot the female as she flew past. The male returned, and St John wrote, "He flew around, plainly turning his head to the right and to the left as if looking for her, and as if in astonishment at her unwonted absence." As St John and Dunbar left with the two eggs and the body of the female, St John recalls, "the male bird unceasingly calling and seeking for her. I was really sorry I had shot her."

Despite the efforts of beleaguered Osprey fans at the time, 1916 saw the last pair nest in Scotland. They were not seen again after that year. I wonder how those few Osprey protectors felt — their efforts had been to no apparent avail.



Fortunately, the story does not end there. In the 1950s, due to protection by bird fans, Osprey numbers in Norway increased, and in 1953 a pair travelled from there to Loch Garten in Scotland. Osprey fans rallied, but egg collectors robbed the nest. The same thing happened during the next two years. In 1957, the Royal Society for the Protection of

Birds organised volunteers to watch the nest around the clock, but one of the adults was shot travelling to the nest. In 1958, after a pair of Ospreys arrived, Operation Osprey swung into action — just in time, as an egg collector was caught climbing the tree immediately after the female laid eggs. A team of volunteers worked around the clock, but on a dark and stormy night another thief climbed the tree and took the eggs. It caused headline news, and a tide of public sympathy began to flow in favour of the birds. The area was declared a sanctuary, which made it illegal to enter the land without permission. In 1959, a huge army of volunteers camped at the nest tree. Their efforts were successful — young were hatched, and the warden George Waterson took the brave and risky move of opening an observation post for the public. In the seven weeks until the young flew, 14,000 people flocked to catch a glimpse of these birds!

Today, the nature reserve at Loch Garten has been extended to 30,000 acres. Until 1991, 58 young were raised at this nest, but not without problems — the observation post was burnt down in 1991, and the nest tree has been attacked three times. The site has become famous. Press, radio and television report each year's arrival of birds. Road signs declare that "ospreys have arrived" or "eggs laid!" In the last three decades, over one and a half million people have visited the site! Around the country, 836 young Ospreys were raised to 1991. Once again, Ospreys travel to Africa, and arrive back in Scotland to breed. The efforts of those original Osprey protectors were actually never really in vain. Their actions influenced others, and as attitudes changed, many people were able to rise to the defence of these great birds when they finally returned to Scotland.

Jim Crumley, who has worked for most of his life protecting Ospreys in Scotland, recalls those past times there when all was threatened by "the lunatic fringe of our species". He writes:

There were the early days of through-the-night watches in a flimsy, leaky tent, armed with spotlight and megaphone to fend off intruders (they were used twice, and actually worked) ... there was the otter which swam past my feet at 4am, and the barn owl which cruised out of a morning mist on a collision course for my head — we both took evasive action at about ten feet apart. And there is one unforgettable image of the female bird standing on her nest at sunrise, to stretch her wings and cast off accumulated night rain and dew. This she did with the blood-red sun at her back, so that she showered the eyrie-tree with shed drops of fire. No phoenix ever rose with more panache.

*Ulf has gone on to take many great wildlife images, and has received awards, including in the renowned BBC wildlife photography competition. His work can be seen at www.ulfwesterberg.com

The Loch Garten reserve website can be visited at www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide//lochgarten/

Hidden treasures in the TBO library
By Kay Williams

An update from the TBO Librarian.

I have recently received some new books for our Library. I felt this was a good time to let you all know what we have in these boxes I have in our family room. The following list is all books with Year of publication and Authors. As you will notice some of these books are very old/? valuable. And all as far as I can tell have been donated to the club. I have taken them to the pot-luck lunch but as not all members were there I felt you all deserved to know what we have.

Toowoomba Bird Observers Library List:

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|---|--------------------------------|
| 1 Australian birds and their favoured plants. 1981 | Adams G M. |
| 2 Australia's beautiful coastline. | Australian Women's Weekly. |
| 3 Australia's Birds and their Young. | Australian Women's Weekly. |
| 4 A Field Guide to Nests and Eggs. | Beruldsen, G. |
| 5 Raptor Identification 1995 | Beruldsen, G. |
| 6 The Atlas of Australian Birds 1984 | Blakers, Davies, Reilly |
| 7 Birds Of Australia. (1968) | Breeden and Slater. |
| 8 The Love of Birds. (1975) | Burton and Risdon . |
| 9 What bird is That? 1954 | Cayley. |
| 10 Bird Wonders Of Australia 1969 | Chisholm. |
| 11 American Birds. 1973 | Clement |
| 12 Birds Of a Salt Field. 1978 | Cooper. |
| 13 Spotting Birds, Field Guide. 1967 | Duris and Burke. |
| 14 An Australian Wildflower Diary 1984 | Dutton. |
| 15 The World Of Birds. 1979 | Ellis. |
| 16 Birds Of The Tropics. 1974 | England. |
| 17 The Birds Of Paradise and Bowerbirds.1987 | Everett |
| 18 Watching Birds 1978 | Fisher and Flegg. |
| 19 Australian Waterfowl 1960 | Fish ,wildlife Dept, Victoria. |
| 20 Nightwatchmen of Bush and Plain. 1968 | Fleay. |
| 21 Australian Bush Birds 1971 | Frauca. |
| 22 Australian Bird Spotter's Book 1980 | Frauca. |
| 23 Bird Photography as a Hobby. 1961 | Hosking and Newberry. |
| 24 Birds of lord Howe Island 1990 | Hutton. |
| 25 Wild Birds and The Land 1956 | Lancum |
| 26 Wonders Of the Owl World. 1972 | Lavine. |
| 27 An Australian Bird Book. 1929 | Leach. |
| 28 Focus on Australian Birds 1991 | Lewis. |
| 29 Wild Life In P N G 1975 | Lindgren. |
| 30 Birds For Beginners 1980 | MacDonald. |
| 31 Where to Find Birds in W. A. 1986 | Marr. |
| 32 The How and Why Book of Birds. 1962 | Mathewson. |
| 33 Bush Walks in Toowoomba Region. 3 copies last 2009 | |
| McKilligan, Neil. | |

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|---|-------------------------|
| 34 Australian Birdlife Illustrated. 1975 | McNaughton. |
| 35 Birds of Australia (2 Books) 1971, 1974 | Morcombe. |
| 36 Birds of Prey and Grounds of Australia. 1993 | Olsen P, Crome Olsen J. |
| 37 Small birds of the N Z Bush. 1971 | Power. |
| 38 | |
| 39 Complete Book of Aussie Birds. 1976 | Readers Digest. |
| 40 Aust. Native Gardens and Birds. 2 copies 1977,1979 | Salter. |
| 41 Field Guide to Aust Birds vol 1. 1970 | Slater. |
| 42 Masterpieces of Aust Bird Photo's 1980 | Slater. |
| 43 The Treasury of Birds. 1972 | |
| 44. | |
| 45 Lake Broadwater. 1988 | Scott. |
| 46 Birds of Paradox 1967 | Pollard. |
| 47 The Wildfowl Trust. 1969 | |
| 48 Birds of Hong Kong/South China 1994 | Viney. |
| 49 Bird Watching in Aust. 1977 | Schurmann. |
| 50 Garden birds of Australia. 1970 | Kloot/McCulloch |
| 51 World of Birds 1970 | Fisher/Peterson. |
| 52 Birds Of S E Queensland 1979 | Roberts. |
| 53 Little Terns and Fairy terns in Aust. 1988 | Hill |
| 54 The Care of Injured/Orphaned Birds. | Wheeler. |
| 55 The Forest of East Gippsland. 1983 | Native Forest Council. |
| 56 Littlest Book of Aust Birds. 1984 | Ars edition. |
| 57 Water Birds Of Australia 1971 | Beruldson. |

58-63 Are books recently donated to us by friends of Ron and Sandra Dungleison. These books are very valuable and I wish to cover them properly. Any suggestions or assistance gratefully received.

Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds set of 6 books.

- 58 Volume 1 part a Ratites to Petrels 1990
- 59 Volume 1 part b Aust Pelican to Duck 1990
- 60 Volume 2 Raptors to Lapwings 1993
- 61 Volume 3 Snipe to Pigeons 1996
- 62 Volume 4 Parrots to Dollarbird 1999
- 63 Volume 5 Tyrant-flycatchers to Chat 2001

CD's and Tapes

- What Bird is that? CD (2) in set. 1987
- What Bird is That? Tapes (2) in set . 1987
- The Regent Honeyeater-- Video. (copy)
- The Wetlands -- Video. 1994

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New Club Members
By Steve Burke

The Committee of the Toowoomba Bird Observers would like to welcome a new member to the fold. **Sherry Ryan** from Toowoomba is a valuable new member and we hope to catch up with Sherry at an upcoming event or outing. **Marie Gittens** and **Nicci Thompson** have also re-joined the Club and it is very heartening to see them back.



A male Variegated Fairy-wren at Inskip Point.

Photo: Steve Burke.

Member's Photo Album
By Greg & Toni Campbell



Two hungry Kookaburras.
Photo: Greg & Toni Campbell.

Arrived home just before noon recently to be greeted out the back yard by a terrific racket (no not the boys, they were at day-care). Finally tracked the din down to these two **Kookaburras** both refusing to relinquish any portion of their combined lunch. The disagreement went on for the 30 minutes that I was home and for how long before that, who knows?

This is just one of the many **Red-necked Wallabies** currently seen around our property. They are very cute.



Red-necked Wallaby and joey.
Photo: Greg & Toni Campbell.



A Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo.
Photo: Greg & Toni Campbell.

It is amazing what you jag when you keep clicking. I think this **Yellow-tailed Black - Cockatoo** (that visited us a few weeks back) has been if front of the camera before. A very obliging subject.

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.

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Australasian Shoveler (pair)	30/08/2011	Adare Road Dam	AY, MM
Pink-eared Duck	30/08/2011	Janke's Lagoon	AY, MM
Musk Duck	20/08/2011	Hoods Dam Helidon	BJ, MA
Great Crested Grebe	30/08/2011	Lake Dyer	AY, MM
Spotted Harrier	18/08/2011	Wyreema	RJ
Red Goshawk	29/08/2011	Plainlands	RJ
Black-breasted Button-quail	11/09/2011	Inskip Point	CS
Topknot Pigeon (3)	18/09/2011	Ballard	MA, TQ
Eastern Koel	17/09/2011	Middle Ridge	MA
Brush Cuckoo	28/08/2011	Table Top Drive	RH
Noisy Pitta	1/09/2011	Highfields Falls	K & KW
Rainbow Bee-eater (app. 50)	16/09/2011	Stoneleigh	SB
Scarlet Robin (male) *	17/08/2011	Harlaxton	WS, NS
Satin Flycatcher	29/08/2011	Webb St. Toowoomba	RH
White-browed Woodswallow	17/09/2011	Middle Ridge	MA
White-browed Woodswallow	17/09/2011	Highfields	PM, KO
White-browed Woodswallow	17/09/2011	Harlaxton	PM, KO
Masked Woodswallow	17/09/2011	Middle Ridge	MA

*Great record. Only third confirmed record for Club area. Good photos taken.

MA, M. Atzeni; **SB**, S. Burke; **RH**, R. Hobson; **RJ**, R. Jenkins; **BJ**, B. Jolly; **PM**, P. McConnell; **MM**, M. McGoldrick; **KO**, K. O'Donnell; **TQ**, T. Qusted; **CS**, C. Sanderson; **NS**, N. Sturdee; **WS**, W. Sturdee; **K & K W**, K & K. Williams; **AY**, A. Young.

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

Thanks

Pat McConnell