

TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

No. 414
April 2012

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

Editorial

Steve Burke

The March outing to Toorbul was a huge success and was well represented by TBO members who joined an avid group of coastal birders for a very busy weekend. Thanks to Kay and Kevin Williams for the time and effort they put into organizing the weekend.

There have been some mixed responses forwarded to Committee members after the recent meeting at the Uniting Church Hall where Dezmond Wells, representing Birdlife Australia, provided information to a small group of attendees. The Committee's thanks go to Dezmond for taking the time to drive up from Brisbane.

The Committee would like to remind members that this ongoing discussion is probably the most important single discussion in the Club's history since it was formed over three decades ago. Rest assured, the Club's form and fees will have to change to accommodate new third party insurance premiums and all Members will be responsible for voting on the changes they see necessary to

support their birding activities going forward over the coming decades. Please start thinking about this issue and talk to fellow Club members and Committee members.



Little Bronze-Cuckoo.
Photo: Trevor Quedstedt.

2012 Challenge

Tally: 202 spp April 22nd

This Issue

Mareeba Wetlands etc
Gloria Glass

Toorbul outing
Kay Williams

New member
Steve Burke

Field Naturalists
invitation
Kay Williams

COMING EVENTS

April Outing
Saturday 28th
Venue: Duggan Park
Leader: K & K Williams

May Outing
Sat/Sun 26th & 27th
Venue: Karara/Lake
Coolmunda
Leader: Steve Burke

June Outing
Sat/Sun 23rd & 24th
Venue: Raptor census
Leader: Pat McConnell



TOOWOOMBA
BIRD OBSERVERS

(An affiliated member of Bird Observation and Conservation Australia)

P.O. Box 4730, Toowoomba East 4350

www.toowoombabirdobservers.org

MEMBERSHIP: Adult/family \$30,

Pensioner/student \$25 (Subscriptions due 31 August)

Mareeba Wetlands, etc – a week in August 2011

By Gloria Glass

Diana suggested we fly to Cairns and have a little holiday at Jabiru Safari Lodge in the Mareeba Wetlands. It turned out to be just the thing for us. We like being in the bush and doing our own thing, and that's what we did. We had rather luxurious living conditions in a safari tent on a platform, connected to our own facilities and with a veranda for sitting out on. There was quite pleasant bush all around.

We had arrived at the Lodge headquarters to find it a large open-sided building overlooking a lagoon [Clancy's Lagoon] with an impressive array of ducks and other waterbirds and **Green Pygmy-geese**. The nearest ducks were **Wandering Whistling-Duck**, diving and messing around, and there were **Welcome Swallows** feeding nestlings in the roof. *Then* we discovered that there was a large mob of **Gouldian Finches** actually in a big cage, under cover, beside the building. These are bred here and released in different locations in the north, it turned out. This is a bird I've not yet seen in the wild, though Diana had seen them recently in northern WA. [We are going to combine my 490+ birds with her specialities and get to 500 yet!]



A male Emu with chicks.

Photo: Gloria Glass.

The first bird at our tented cabin was not one we needed to look up in our bird book, but the **Brown Honeyeater**, which we had just said 'Goodbye' to, at home! Actually, I did look it up, because I was so surprised. Yes, it had the curved bill and the little white bit behind the eye! Definitely a Brown Honeyeater!

The second bird was another honeyeater, the **Yellow Honeyeater**, which Diana quickly identified. I had forgotten it from the time I'd spent at Townsville in the 1960's! How age does dim one's memory. Both these

birds, as well as **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**, spent a lot of time in the yellow and pink grevilleas planted around our veranda.

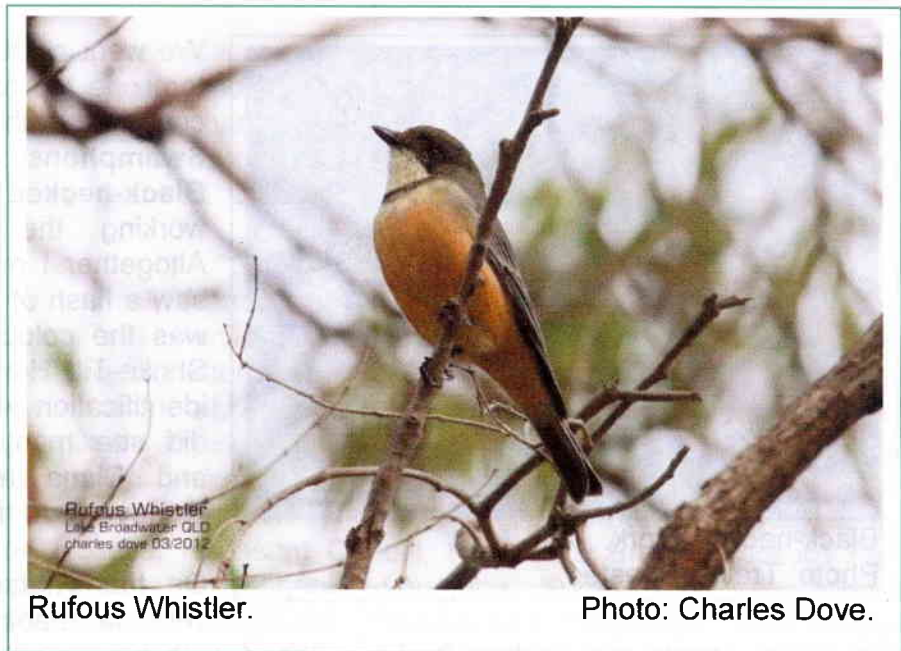
It was pleasant settling in after our early morning departure from Gowrie Junction, travelling to Brisbane, then on the plane for Cairns, hire-car to Mareeba and following the directions a few kilometres north, then west. Here we were, and let the holiday begin! **Blue-winged Kookaburras** gave us a raucous welcome call, and the **Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos'** single note, repeated, alerted us to their presence. They flew around most days almost always in groups of three.

Later, as we were sitting on the veranda, an **Emu** appeared, just moseying around! We were so surprised. It turned out there were three of them and we saw them most days. They aren't fed, but must have been getting something from the dry-ish bush and seemed to like being around the cabins.

We had no sooner settled into bed rather early, to read our books [there was no television!] when the **Barking Owl** started calling. I had learnt years ago that you can always tell it's an owl and not a dog because, although it sounds like a dog, its call does not vary, and a dog's does. That was a great bird to add to our list.

Early next morning saw us out before breakfast for a 2.5 km walk around Clancy's lagoon. It was so interesting that I did not find the distance a problem. The first bird was a **Little Pied Cormorant**, resting on a dead tree. There were **Double-barred Finches** in the dry bushland, and enormous termite nests which looked as if they'd had a special thick 'icing' poured over them. There were **Australasian Grebes** in the lagoon and, further around, a party of **Black Swans** and a **Darter** or two.

The next day, we went further afield, to Pandanus Lagoon. As we passed another traveller on the track, he said, 'Just Double-bars here, I'm looking for *Black-Throated Finches*.' We were no more than 50 metres ahead when we came across dozens, hundreds? of these **Black-throated Finches**, so we went back to tell him and he came and photographed away to his heart's content. They were the only species in the area, and there seemed to be grassy nests in many of the trees as well.



Rufous Whistler.

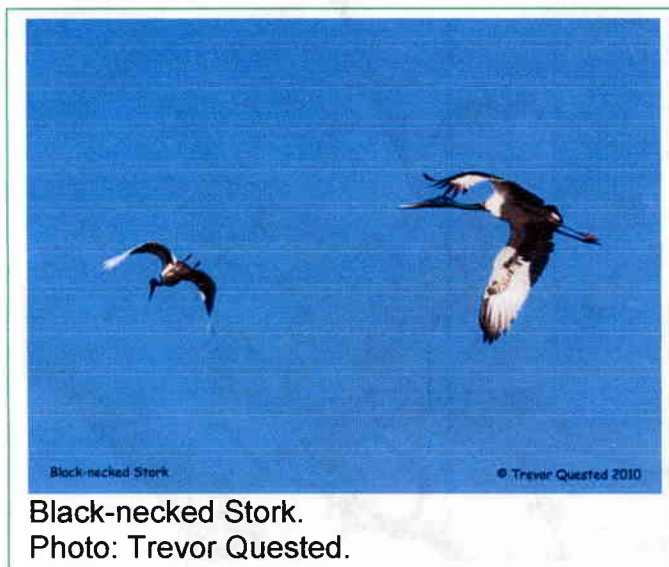
Photo: Charles Dove.

Perhaps they had bred there. I was hoping it was a new bird for me, but alas, when I checked my records – why am I sad? – it wasn't. This was the day we also saw **Leaden Flycatchers** and a **Rufous Whistler** and a number of other birds, including **Forest Kingfishers** and **Rainbow Lorikeets**. The track took us around a large area of badly eroded country, but eventually after going up-hill for a while we reached one of the bird-hides and could see the Lagoon. Here were the **Brolgas**, as promised, though we never did see any Sarus Cranes, which apparently also grace this lagoon at times, and, joy of joys, a couple of **Black-necked Storks**.

During the afternoon, I went over to the headquarters to have a good look at the ducks on the lagoon, and to take time over looking at the Gouldian Finches in the big, big cage. Not many of these latter had red heads, I noticed. Our hostess had told us, when we asked what the people in the small boat would have been looking for, that there were three types of waterlily, one of which had quite small leaves and was mainly around the edge 'under' the reaching-out veranda.

So I decided on that visit to have a good look at these small waterlilies and came across a waterbird I had not seen before. I took careful note: it had white marks up each side of its eyes in its darkish head, speckled back, pale breast easing into buff below and towards the tail. What was it? (Readers who are better birders than I, will know already!) I hadn't brought my bird-book over with me, and there didn't seem to be a standard book available for visitors either, so it was into the big *Readers Digest* bird book. Fortunately our hostess came along and told me I had undoubtedly seen their prize **White-browed Crake**, that people came from 'all over' to see! So, there I had my first New Bird for the trip! I looked for it many times thereafter but failed to see it again.

That night, there were some German visitors in the next cabin, according to Diana, who could hear them speaking German. The **Bush Stone-curlews** turned on a spectacular display of their terrifying calls, all night it seemed, and the poor Germans seemed to suffer amazingly! Our hostess said, when we told her how the birds kept waking them up, that she *had* told them, as she told all overseas visitors, not to be alarmed when hearing what seems to be people being murdered. However, I thought back to my experience as a newish teacher at Herberton eons earlier about hearing 'a baby being murdered' while overseeing the girls working at their homework during the evening. The girls didn't blink an eyelid so I carried on, as one did in those days, just hoping that baby was OK, until Prep was over and I could ask another adult. It was perhaps 20 years later when I first saw one of these birds!

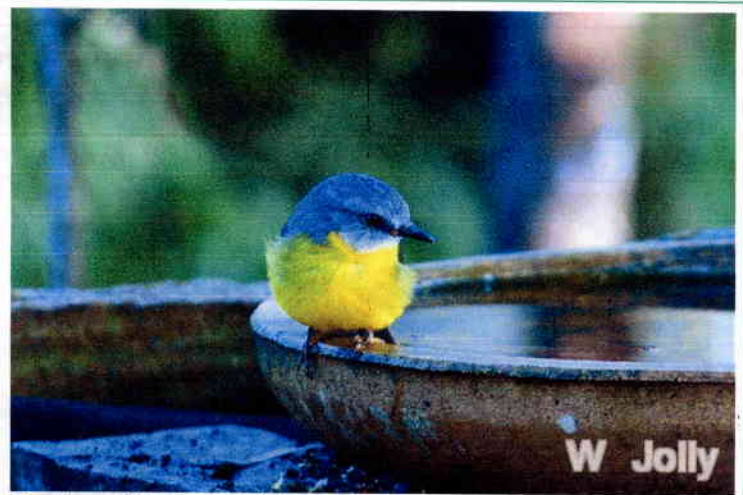


We went on a few jaunts around the district too, one trip to Hastie's Swamp, which was crammed with **Magpie Geese** and **Purple Swamphens**, with more Jabirus, sorry – **Black-necked Storks** – following the farmer working the land above the swamp. Altogether I recorded 23 birds there. I also saw a flash of bright yellow which I was sure was the colour of the breast of a Crested Shrike-Tit. However, I decided later that the identification was too tenuous to claim. We did see many **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** and Diana alerted me to the **Bridled Honeyeaters** there too.

On the Thursday, when we were on the veranda, reading after lunch, we looked up to see 'Dave', whom our hostess had mentioned, with his six chicks, strolling around the tent-cabins. He was larger than the three other Emus that had been strolling around all the time. Diana took some photos, but I think we won't be submitting them for big prizes. However they are a memento of seeing him being so solicitous of his brood. We did see our hostess feeding him grain. She said it was only for a short time while the chicks were so small, and he had probably been fasting while brooding the eggs.

We went out another day to the much publicised Granite Gorge. We had to pay to get in! And there were mobs of people too. We declined the free food for the little rock-wallabies, much to the puzzlement of the hostess there. We did take their photos, however. The poor little creatures seemed to rely on the free food and hung around, importuning every new person arriving. We did see the advertised **Squatter Pigeons** wandering about, too, which were a delight.

Almost on our last day, we went into Mareeba and more or less stumbled on the lovely park called Emerald Creek Falls. Here there was a male **Cicadabird**, not often seen by me and a **Dusky Honeyeater**, which I did remember from my Townsville days, then a dear little bird that I was sure I'd never seen before, and with a lovely little call. He had white 'parson's tabs' on his dark throat. I had to look almost right through the bird book to find him – a Fairy Gerygone, race *personata*, which occurs in Cape York Peninsular and down to the Atherton Tablelands. Ha! Not a new bird, *per se*, but definitely a new race for me! The man we'd seen on the track at Jabiru Lodge looking for Black-throated Finches had said he been photographing birds for thirty years and for the last many years had been trying to photograph all the different races! Well, I wasn't in his class, but I felt my Fairy Gerygone was special.



Eastern Yellow Robin.

Photo: Bill Jolly.

On our last afternoon we went for another walk around Clancy's Lagoon with an offshoot to sit in the shade beside a small flowing stream and see what came around. We saw some **Buff-rumped Thornbills** messing around in the pandanus, heard a **Yellow Robin** and watched 17 **Australian Pelicans** aloft, circling over the lagoon, but they flew on, not landing in 'our' lagoon. Our very last birds were an **Olive-backed Oriole**, a **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** and our definite last, a **Drongo!**

Mareeba Wetlands: Emu, Brown Quail, Wandering Whistling-Duck, Black Swan, Pink-eared Duck, Green Pygmy-goose, Grey Teal, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead, Australasian Grebe, Common Bronzewing, Peaceful Dove, Squatter Pigeon [at Granite Gorge], Australasian Darter, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Australian Pelican, Black-necked Stork, Eastern Great Egret, Intermediate Egret, Cattle Egret, Straw-necked Ibis, Whistling Kite, Black Kite, Nankeen Kestrel, Brolga, White-browed Crake, Masked Lapwing, Comb-crested Jacana, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Little Corella, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Pheasant Coucal, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Fantailed Cuckoo, Barking Owl, Southern Boobook, Laughing Kookaburra, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Forest Kingfisher, Rainbow Bee-eater, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Striated Pardalote, Yellow Honeyeater, Noisy Miner, Brown Honeyeater, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Little Friarbird, Grey-crowned Babbler, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Rufous Whistler, Australasian Figbird [at Tolga], Olive-backed Oriole, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Spangled Drongo, Willie Wagtail, Leaden Flycatcher, Magpie-lark, Yellow Robin, Welcome Swallow, Fairy Martin, Mistletoebird, Double-barred Finch, Black-throated Finch, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin.

Hastie's Swamp: Magpie Goose, Plumed Whistling-Duck, Wandering Whistling-Duck, Green Pygmy-goose, Grey Teal, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead, Australasian Grebe, Australasian Darter, Little Pied Cormorant, Cattle Egret, White-faced Heron, Australian White Ibis, Straw-necked Ibis, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Brolga, Purple Swamphen, Eurasian Coot, Australian Bustard, White-throated Gerygone, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Bridled Honeyeater, Magpie-lark.

Emerald Creek Falls: Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Sacred Kingfisher, Fairy Gerygone, White-throated Gerygone, Dusky Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, Cicadabird, Golden-headed Cisticola.

Monthly Outing – March 2012

By Kay Williams



Collared Kingfisher.

Photo: K. Williams.

The March outing at Toorbul really commenced at lunchtime on Saturday. Kevin and I were already at the caravan park when, Olive, Kylie and Charles and Janina Dove arrived, followed soon after by Gayle and Steve.

First off we went to the western end of the Esplanade. Found here were **Collared Kingfisher, Mangrove Gerygone, Brahminy Kite, Pied Oystercatcher and Peaceful Dove**. The eastern end of the Esplanade brought forth **Black-winged Stilt, Australian Pelican, Black Swan, Caspian Tern, Silver Gull, Red Knot, Great Knot, Bar-tailed Godwits,**

Whimbrels, Grey-tailed Tattlers, and White-bellied Sea-Eagle. The highlight of the afternoon was the sighting of a solo **Beach Stone-curlew**.

On our way to Buckley's Hole we paused at Bishop's Marsh hoping to see **Brolga and Jabiru** to no avail. We ventured to the bird hide as soon as we got to Buckley's Hole. We found **Comb-crested Jacana** with chicks, two **Wandering Whistling-Ducks** flew in, **Eurasian Coot, Dusky Moorhen, Australasian Grebe, Darter,** and there were a few raptors about. We also saw **Pheasant Coucal, Little Corella, Little Egret and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**. On our return to Toorbul we detoured to Meldale Road to look for **Pacific Golden Plover and Black-fronted Dotterel**. We also found **Red-capped Plover, White-breasted Woodswallow, Brown Cuckoo-dove and Mangrove Honeyeater**.

The day was not over yet, as behind the Caravan Park we found **Chestnut Teal, Royal Spoonbills, Little Egret, White Ibis and Masked Lapwing** with chicks in the marshes. In the paperbarks by the BBQ we had **Rainbow Lorikeets, Pale-headed Rosellas, Scaly-breasted Lorikeets, Pied Butcherbirds, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Galahs, Noisy Friarbirds** and more. The social hour was held by the BBQ area, with some having fish and chips and others a BBQ meal.

Sunday morning found many up early and rearing to go birding in the cool. Olive and Charles went down the back road to



Grey-tailed Tattlers.

Photo: K. Williams.

another jetty. Here they found **Purple Swamphen, Golden Whistler, Eastern Yellow Robin, Darter, Galah** and more. By 10:15 am we were all ready to go down to The Roost. On arrival we found a lot of people already there, so we joined them and started spotting. When Phil and Linda Cross arrived we had all got quite a few birds identified. As usual Phil and Linda were very helpful spotting particular species for us. Species seen here included **Bar-tailed Godwit, Pied Oystercatchers, Eastern Curlew, Caspian Tern, Great Knot, Red Knot, Grey-tailed Tattler, Whimbrel, Common Greenshank, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Osprey, Brahminy Kite and Nankeen Kestrel**. Twelve attendees came down to Toorbul from Toowoomba for the day's activities. They were Nicci and Graham Thompson, Rob and Jocelyn Wilson, Gayle Lee, Steve Zell, Olive Booth, Kylie Grose, Charles and Janina Dove and Kevin and Kay Williams. Esther Townsend was there as well.



Pacific Golden Plover.

Photo: K. Williams.

The list for Saturday 24th:

Blue-faced Honeyeater, Chestnut Teal, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Rainbow Lorikeet, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Magpie-lark, Noisy Friarbird, Royal Spoonbill, White Ibis, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Galah, Little Shrike thrush, Pheasant Coucal, Whistling Kite, Collared Kingfisher, Mangrove Gerygone, Brahminy Kite, Peaceful Dove. At the eastern end of the Esplanade were, Pelican, Black Swan, Caspian Tern, Silver Gull, Black-winged Stilt, Great Knot, Red Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Grey-tailed Tattler, White-bellied Sea-Eagle,

Striated Honeyeater, Beach Stone-curlew, Comb-crested Jacana, Eurasian Coot, Dusky Moorhen, Wandering Whistling Ducks, Australasian Grebe, Darter, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Little Corella, Little Egret, White Browed Scrub-wren, Mangrove Honeyeater, Pacific Golden Plover, Black-fronted Dotterel, Red-capped Plover, White-breasted Woodswallow, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Straw-necked Ibis.

The list for Sunday 25th:

Bar-tailed Godwit, Pied Oystercatcher, Australian Pelican, Silver Gull, Eastern Curlew, Little Egret, Masked Lapwing, Australian Wood Duck, Caspian Tern, Great and Red Knot, Grey-tailed Tattler, Black Swan, Black-winged Stilt, Whimbrel, Little Corella, Osprey, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Nankeen Kestrel, Starling, Noisy Miner, Common Greenshank, Crested Tern, Striated Pardalote, White Ibis, Royal Spoonbill, Brahminy Kite, Mistletoebird, Pale-headed Rosella, Australian Magpie, Pied Butcherbird, White-faced Heron, Great Egret, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Chestnut Teal, Grey Fantail, Purple Swamphen, Golden Whistler, Eastern Yellow Robin, Darter, Galah, Welcome Swallow, Laughing Kookaburra.

Wonderful weather and great company makes for a great outing. Thanks to you all.

New Member

By Steve Burke

Our sincere Club welcome goes out to **Joe Allen** as the Club's newest member. Joe lives at Goombungee and has already proved the value of sharp eyes and good bird knowledge with his recently accepted sighting of a pair of Turquoise Parrots in his house yard at Goombungee. Well done Joe!!

Toowoomba Field Naturalists Invitation

From an email from Lesley Beaton

May Outing - McEwan State Forest, Stoneleigh on Sunday May 6th. Leader: Rod Hobson

A 7.30am start from Neil Street to car pool then about 45 minutes to Pittsworth. If others want to travel directly out from Toowoomba we can all meet at the Post Office in the main street (Yandilla St) of Pittsworth by 8.15-8.30am. From Pittsworth it's a 15 minute drive to McEwan State Forest. We can have smoko and lunch at Jack McEwan's old hut. Tracks are mostly moderate and of varying length.

Please bring: Plenty of water, refreshments, chairs and folding tables (if you want). You will need all the gear for walking in the bush - sunhat, sunscreen, insect (tick) repellent, stout footwear, suitable clothes, etc. **There are no facilities;** the nearest toilets are in Pittsworth.

For some background information on the reserve go to:
<http://www.thechronicle.com.au/story/2011/03/21/jacks-long-pioneering-legacy-stands-tall-forest/>

Members of TFNC Inc have made a couple of trips with Rod to survey this 300+ hectares. "The ironbark forest and grasslands are home to many plants and animals, with more than 50 species of birds and a variety of reptiles" - from a media release.

Changes to the April Outing

By Kay Williams

Due to long grass and very wet areas, we have to change our venue for Saturday April 28th. We will meet at 7 am at **Duggan Park** on Leslie Street. Wear solid shoes, a hat and sunscreen. Bring morning tea and water bottle. This change of venue is for your safety.

The Toowoomba Bird Observers have been invited to join the Toowoomba Field Naturalists on a trip to McEwan State Forest near Pittsworth.

This Outing will be led by Rod Hobson, but please contact Kay to let her know how many may be attending.

Noisy Pitta gets fitta....fitter.

By Kay Williams

Recently an injured Noisy Pitta was found in a backyard in Toowoomba. Angela who is a registered wildlife carer looked after the bird until its return to the wild. The Pitta made a full recovery and has been returned to the wild.



Injured Noisy Pitta.

Photo: K. Williams.



Noisy Pitta.

Photo: K. Williams.

Trish LeeHong
Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation
Ph 07 46305208 mob 0407028540

COMING CLUB EVENTS

April Outing

Saturday 28th April 2012

Venue: Duggan Park

Time: 7 am

Meet: Leslie Street

Leader: Kevin & Kay Williams

Phone: 4659 5475/0429 465 954

May Outing

Saturday/Sunday 26th & 27th May 2012

Venue: Karara/Lake Coolmunda

Time: 7 am

Meet: Karara Hall

Leader: Steve Burke

Phone: 4693 3811/0434 397 532

June Outing

Saturday/Sunday 23rd & 24th June 2012

Venue: Raptor census

Time: When suitable

Meet: Where suitable

Leader: Pat McConnell

Phone: 4631 5573

Committee Members

President

Vice-President Sandra Wilson 0412 065 221
zandru@iprimus.com.au

Secretary Olive Booth 4633 0553
o.booth@bigpond.com

Treasurer Jenny Matheson 0435 430 224
matenny.97@gmail.com

Editor Steve Burke 0434 397 532
steveburke5@bigpond.com

Records Officer Pat McConnell 4631 5573
mccommel@usq.edu.au

Outings Coordinator & Librarian Kay Williams 4659 5475/ 0429 465 954
kevnkaywilliams@bigpond.com

Media Officer Gayle Lee 4696 2727
szell0@bigpond.com

Website Mick Atzeni 4688 1318 (Wk)
michael.atzeni@deedi.qld.gov.au

Photo Librarian Steve Burke 0434 397 532
steveburke5@bigpond.com

Committee Members Ross Begent 4697 7198
beigent@australiainmail.com

Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 20th April 2012

Please e-mail or post articles to the Editor.

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

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