

TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

No. 416
June 2012

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

Editorial

Mick Atzeni

At last a dry weekend for the monthly outing! It just happened to be an all-weekender too around Karara and Lake Coolmunda. The birding was great - and addictive. Testimony to that are the two reports in this newsletter, one from stand-in leader Kay Williams, the other from new chum Paul Laurie who enjoyed the Saturday so much he drove back out for the Sunday session.

The big news story locally is the new bird for the club area, which was found by Bill Jolly at "Abberton": a **Striated Heron**, of all things! Who would have ever thought a mangrove bird would end up here. Yet another amazing bird for Bill's property too. To add to the coastal flavour, an **Osprey** was hanging around there as well.

Another great discovery was Michael Wood's pair of **Turquoise Parrots** at Mt Peel Bushland Reserve, which were seen and photographed again yesterday by Kev and Kay Williams. By the way, it's great to have you back Michael.

If you have **Satin Bowerbirds** building bowers in your yard, the makers of a new BBC TV series *Survival* want to hear from you.

Finally, it will be business as usual for the club. We will have to cover the cost of our own insurance from now on though and this will necessitate an increase in subscriptions but more about this later.



Turquoise Parrots at Mt Peel, 19/6/12. Photo: Kev Williams.

2012 Challenge

Tally: 214 spp as of 19/6



TOOWOOMBA
BIRD OBSERVERS

(An affiliated member of Bird Observation and Conservation Australia)

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www.toowoombabirdobservers.org

MEMBERSHIP: Adult/family \$30,

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

This Issue

A New Birder's Debut
Paul Laurie

Karara / L. Coolmunda
Kay Williams

Filming Satin Bowerbirds
BBC

White-browed Scrubwrens
Gloria Glass

COMING EVENTS

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

July Outing
Sat 28th
Venue: Highfields Falls
Leader: Gayle Lee

A New Birder's Debut

By Paul Laurie

As a new member of TBO and a very inexperienced bird watcher in anything but the most casual sense, I thought it might be interesting to write down my impressions of the May club outing to Durikai, Karara and Lake Coolmunda.

With the weather wet and miserable all day Friday, the decision to go wasn't actually made until 9.30 pm. Saturday morning was cold but I was up before 5am and on the road to make the 7 o'clock rendezvous. It was still cold when I got to Karara and things didn't get much better all day. Our guide arrived and soon we were on our way in search of some **Diamond Firetails**. We did finally find one in a cow paddock but for me it was hard to tell which little lump was the Diamond Firetail, which was the **Jacky Winter** that was there as well and which was just a bit of cow poo. This was due to my shivering hands, poor quality binoculars and not having a clue what I was looking at.



Jacky Winter. Photo: M. Atzeni.

The birds were not nearly as silly as we humans on this cold morning. They were mostly tucked away somewhere warm and not at all prepared to put themselves in a position to be ogled by us. By morning tea though, we had made a few sightings, the guide, Lorraine had shown us a fossil field and I had recorded about three birds I'd never seen before not including the blur that people assured me was the Diamond Firetail.



Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Photo: Kevin Williams.

Lorraine however, turned out to be the highlight of the morning. Not only was she very knowledgeable about birds, she talked constantly about the ecology and geology of the region. Joe, another new club member and I found her fascinating. While we were having a cuppa Lorraine even found the time to give me a recipe for tomato sauce. That is another thing she is famous for. She makes sauces, chutneys and jams which she sells at markets.

As the weather warmed up a little so did the birds and we were able to record a reasonable list. The last image of the day for me was a **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater**

feeding on blossom high in a tree with the sun glinting off its plumage, a lovely sight that still lives with me nearly two weeks later.

Taking stock of the day I felt that I had had a good introduction to birding. Joe and I were able to follow the experienced birders around and regardless of how many silly questions I asked and how many sticks and dead leaves I "discovered", they never seemed to lose patience

with me. I had recorded about eight new species for my own list and had made some new friends. I drove home satisfied and determined to repeat the whole thing on Sunday.

Sunday however, was a whole new experience. Even colder than Saturday at first, the day was clear, bright and warmed up rapidly. Driving to our first destination, the boat ramp at Lake Coolmunda, we stopped a couple of times to check out birds. I had already added two first timers to my list when Kevin, in the leading car stopped fairly suddenly and called over the CB radio that there were **Blue Bonnets** on the fence. Knowing that this was a fairly rare thing to see I jumped out of the car, slammed the door and frightened them away. Not a good start.

With plenty of waterbirds about, the group's list was growing rapidly. Then, heading off to the other side of the lake we came to the spot where the Blue Bonnets had been and there they were, much more forgiving than I had any right to expect. A little more caution this time was well and truly rewarded by these beautiful creatures.

On the other side of the lake while we were having our morning coffee and some of the group were getting excited about a group of **Great Crested Grebes** out on the lake. Like the Firetails of Saturday, I couldn't see them very well so they didn't make it onto my list. I then noticed an odd looking creature cruising along not far from the shore. It swam very low in the water and dived at short intervals. I had no idea of what it was and wouldn't have been surprised if it had been some sort of mammal. Instead, it was a **Musk Duck**. That redeemed me a little.

Already Kay Williams was saying to Joe and me, "You boys are very lucky, you know." By the end of the day it had almost become a refrain as we saw special bird after special bird until the whole experience became a continuous series of images and juxtapositions. We saw **Weebills** and **Emus**. There was the ugly Musk Duck and **Red-rumped Parrots**. We saw water birds and raptors. In one twenty-five metre stretch of fence we saw a **Restless Flycatcher**, **Red-capped Robin**, **Yellow Thornbill** and some probable **White-winged Fairywrens** (they were not in breeding plumage so it looks like another trip down there later in the year is in order). We stopped for someone to show off a good site for future reference where the birding was so good we could have spent the rest of the day.



Brolgas

Photo: Kevin Williams.

By lunch I was beginning to become overwhelmed by it all and not a little bit tired. The plan was to go to see some **Brolgas** afterwards but I thought it better if I just went home. However, after sitting in the shade for a while and enjoying a good lunch I was easily persuaded to stay for the Brolgas. How glad I am that I did. We ended the day standing in a paddock with calves and goats, watching four gorgeous Brolgas.

What an amazing day. What a wonderful weekend. I realise that Sunday was an extraordinary day

but, if that's bird watching, I'll have a double serving please. Thanks to Kevin and Kay Williams, Olive Booth, Ross Begent, Mike and Al, Darryl Bleach, his mate Bob, Joe Allen and the wonderful Lorraine.

Karara/Lake Coolmunda Outing 26-27th May 2012

By Kay Williams

Due to the unavoidable absence of Steve Burke, Kay Williams was coordinator of the weekend outing. We hope your Dad is improving, Steve.

Saturday morning we met Lorraine Welsh at 7 am at the Karara Hall. What a lovely fresh morning it was too. Those attending were Joe Allen and Paul Laurie (new members), Olive Booth, Ross Begent, Darryl Bleach (from Inglewood) and Kevin and Kay Williams.

Firstly, we were shown the tree that the **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo** nests in at the hall grounds. Then it was off to look for the **Diamond Firetails** which with, not much searching we were successful, along with **Speckled Warbler, Jacky Winter, Striped Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater** and **Weebill**, just to mention a few. Back to the railway line to check on the fossilized ferns that some of us had not seen. Many also noticed the rubbish left by the railway workers.



.Little Corellas

Photo: Kevin Williams.

Wandering through the bush near the railway we found another interesting area and saw **White-eared Honeyeater, Laughing Kookaburra, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** and more **Speckled Warblers**.

Lunch was had at the Karara Hall before Lorraine took us to another new area south-west of the hall, across the Highway. The mailboxes and gateways kept us entertained, one especially, with the theme of Red-backed Spiders. The birdlife was as we had seen elsewhere. I will be returning to this area in the spring though.

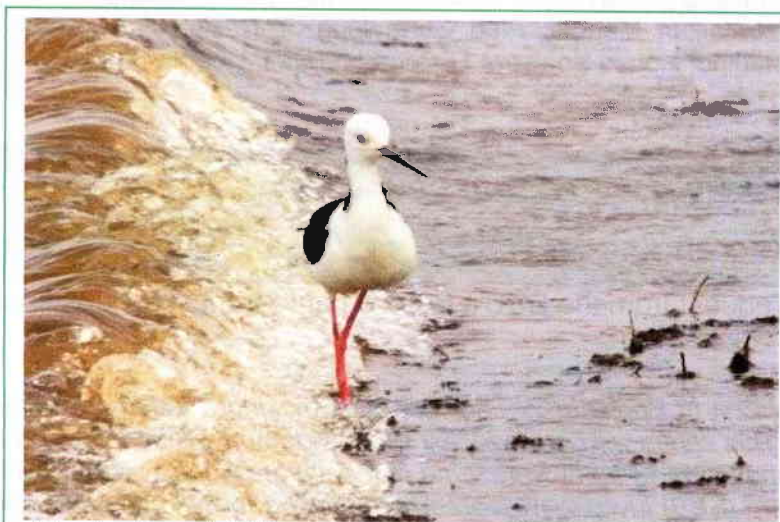
We all went our own way around 3pm with a Big Thankyou to Lorraine for another great outing. Four of us returned to the Coolmunda Caravan Park, with a stop at the Cobba da Mana entrance to see the **White-winged Fairy-wren**. The light was very poor so we left the waterbirds for the next day.

After a hot-shower, bbq tea and a natter it was off to bed for a 7:30 start on Sunday. Oh boy what a start!!! The ice on Joe Allen's ute said it all. I think Joe's sleeping bag must have been made for the Antarctic, as he said he had a cosy sleep.

This Morning we were joined by two locals, Darryl Bleach and Bob Lindner, and Eager Beaver, Paul Laurie came back for more birds to add to his ever-increasing list of lifers. Firstly, we went to see what was on the lake road down to the boat ramp area. The **Whistling Kite** was first to appear after the usual **Grey-crowned Babblers** and **Apostlebirds** at the caravan park.

Heading away from boat ramp we came upon **Blue Bonnet, Red-rumped Parrot, Yellow-rumped Thornbill** and **Straw-necked Ibis**. Just past the caravan park we found **Red-capped Robin, Nankeen Kestrel, Black Kite, Yellow-rumped Thornbill** and **Restless Flycatcher**.

We stopped at the Cobba-da-mana entrance to find Al Young and Mike McGoldrick already there, so we went in to check out the waterbirds. We saw **Musk Duck, Great Crested Grebe, Black Swan, Australian Pelican, Black winged Stilt, Black-fronted Dotterel, Australasian Grebe, Silver Gull, Gull-billed Tern** and many more.



.Black-winged Stilt

Photo: Kevin Williams.

After morning tea we left for a circuit of the Dam, via Stanthorpe Road, Limevale-Greenup Road and Tobacco Road, then back to the boat ramp for a lunch stop. Birds of interest on this stretch were: **White-winged Chough, White-necked Heron, Rufous Whistler, Restless Flycatcher** and **Dusky Moorhen**. Along Tobacco Road we stopped at the **Coolmunda Conservation Park**. This park is conserving a stand of **Glossy-leaved Ironbark**, and has many interesting trees planted within

its surrounds. Birds of note were: **Nankeen Night-Heron, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Speckled Warbler, Grey Fantail, Weebill, Spotted Pardalote, Rose Robin, Yellow-faced, White-plumed, White-eared** and **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**, and **Rufous Whistler**.

After lunch it was the locals turn to lead the way. Local Knowledge was a big help as they took us via Fosters Road to see four **Brolgas** on a feedlot, then we continued on to meet up with Mosquito Creek Road after a turn onto Grays Road . Along this interesting stretch we saw **Emu, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Little Corella** and more **Red-capped Robins**. Here, Al, Mike, Olive, Paul and Joe left us to return to Toowoomba. Darryl and Bob went on back to Inglewood. Kevin and I slowly birded our way back to the caravan park.

I would like to thank Steve for organising this outing and we wish his family good health in the future. To the members and visitors, we thank you for your input and hope you enjoyed the weekend as much as Kevin and I did. I would love to know how many lifers Joe and Paul got for the weekend.

The total for Saturday and Sunday was 103 species; excellent spotting people!

Species recorded:

Emu, Australasian Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Australian Pelican, Little Black Cormorant, Great Cormorant, Little Pied Cormorant, Australasian Darter, White-necked Heron, Eastern Great Egret, White-faced Heron, Little Egret, Nankeen Night-Heron, Straw-necked Ibis, Royal Spoonbill, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Black Swan, Australian Wood Duck, Grey Teal, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead, Musk Duck, Black-shouldered Kite, Black Kite, Whistling Kite, Nankeen Kestrel, Brown Falcon, Black Falcon, Brolga, Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Black-winged Stilt, Masked

Lapwing, Black-fronted Dotterel, Silver Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Caspian Tern, Rock Dove, Common Bronzewing, Crested Pigeon, Peaceful Dove, Galah, Little Corella, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Eastern Rosella, Pale-headed Rosella, Red-rumped Parrot, Blue Bonnet, Red-winged Parrot, Laughing Kookaburra, Fairy Martin, Welcome Swallow, Australasian Pipit, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Willie Wagtail, Grey Fantail, Restless Flycatcher, Jacky Winter, Red-capped Robin, Rose Robin, Eastern Yellow Robin, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Grey-crowned Babbler, White-winged Fairy-wren, Superb Fairy-wren, Speckled Warbler, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Yellow Thornbill, Weebill, White-throated Treecreeper, Mistletoebird, Spotted Pardalote, Silvereye, White-eared Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, Little Friarbird, Noisy Friarbird, Striped Honeyeater, Noisy Miner, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Magpie-lark, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australasian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, Australian Raven, Common Myna, Common Starling, House Sparrow, Diamond Firetail, Double-barred Finch

Filming juvenile male Satin Bowerbirds

By BBC's Sophie Lanfear

We have received the following request from the BBC's Sophie Lanfear that perhaps some of you can assist with:

I work for the BBC Natural History Unit in England. We are currently making a landmark wildlife series for the BBC called Survival. This series will be broadcast Worldwide and will hopefully be as far reaching as Planet Earth, Life and Frozen Planet were. One of the stories we are really keen to capture is that of the Satin bowerbird (SBB) juvenile males and are looking for field contacts, who may know of densely populated SBB areas. We would ideally like to come and film the Satins this year.

As far as my research has revealed, having spoken to Prof. Gerald Borgia (who runs a long-term study site in NE Queensland), the behaviour we are after is happening now and will continue until Sept/October time. We would like to find juvenile male practice bowers and film the construction and destruction of these, along with juvenile males visiting mature male bowers, where mutual learning takes place.

At the moment I have been searching the web for YouTube videos and bird groups to try and put the word out and find local contacts on the ground that can help feed information back to us. It would be great if you could help us pass the message on to see if anyone is seeing this behaviour going on in their back yard or know of a good site for this sort of thing. If you could mention what we would like to do at your local meeting or if we could feature in your current newsletter, I would be most grateful.

Look forward to hearing back from you.

Many thanks

Sophie

Sophie Lanfear

Survival

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Email: sophie.lanfear@bbc.co.uk

Annual Raptor Census

By Pat McConnell

The 2012 Raptor Census will take place on Saturday 23 June and Sunday 24 June. Please contact the leaders below if you wish to participate.

Mick Atzeni (Eastern Section)	Tel: 46 881318 (work), Mob: 0458 9489 55
Olive Booth (Western Section)	Tel: 46 330553
Ken Wells (Southern Section)	Tel: 46 612547
Pat McConnell (Northern Section)	Tel: 46 315573 (work), Mob: 0423 6096 59

Leaders are encouraged to follow the same route as in previous years.



Black-shouldered Kite
Photo: Ron Dungleison

Attack Birds – White-browed Scrubwrens

By Gloria Glass

Yes, that's what they are, attack birds! I'm sitting at my computer and I've been alerted to an attack on the verandah outside by the dull *peck-peck-peck* as one of them is attacking the clock on my bedside table. Sometimes there are two of them and they continue with their scouting around my bedlight and even my water bottle. [I'm not good at taking photos, as you know, and it would have to be through the screen door anyway, so you'll just have to imagine it.]

And that's not all. My car is also under attack by them. And the car is in a shed 50 metres or more away from the house. I've caught them at it, so I know it's not peewees or fairy-wrens. I wouldn't mind except that they leave their inevitable calling cards which probably aren't a good idea on the paint on the car. So my car has to be shrouded with old sheets to keep it safe.

But I do love them, of course. Despite their usual shyness when out in the bush, the ones around our garden behave like the fairy-wrens, out and about and in and out of the various pot plants and garden plants, though they do tend to favour the edges rather than out on the lawn. We consider ourselves highly favoured by their presence.

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
Striated Heron *	26/05/2012	"Abberton" Helidon	BJ
Great Cormorant	4/06/2012	Postman's Ridge	MA
Eastern Osprey	7/06/2012	"Abberton" Helidon	BJ
Black Kite (5)	20/05/2012	Carpendale	PM; KO
Spotted Harrier	7/06/2012	"Abberton" Helidon	BJ
Black Falcon	20/05/2012	Carpendale	PM; KO
Black Falcon	15/06/2012	Drayton	MW
Comb-crested Jacana	3/06/2012	"Abberton" Helidon	BJ
Buff-banded Rail	7/06/2012	Highfields	PM; KO
Turquoise Parrot (pair)	15/06/2012	Mount Peel Reserve	MW
Blue Bonnet (3)	18/05/2012	Old Goombungee Road	PM
Australian Owlet-Nightjar	11/05/2012	Redwood Park	MW
Western Gerygone	20/05/2012	Carpendale	PM; KO

* First record for the Club Area.

MA, M. Atzeni; BJ, B. Jolly; PM, P. McConnell; KO, K. O'Donnell; MW, M. Wood.

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

Erratum

In the McEwan State Forest report in last month's newsletter, the reference to Common Planigale should read Common Dunnart. [Ed.]

Two new birds for "Abberton"

By Bill Jolly

I must try to become more diligent with postings. Before I succeeded in getting a note out about a new species at Abberton on 26th May, another new bird turned up on 3rd June!

Firstly, on the morning of 26th May, from the verandah, I saw a Striated Heron creeping along the creek margin opposite. This bird was a long way from its usual hangout in the coastal mangroves, in fact, the furthest inland I've ever seen one - we're about 110km from the coast. It stayed around for four days, hunting, roosting and sometimes hanging from some twigs that were themselves hanging out way over the stream, repeatedly reaching way down to the water, upside-down like a lorikeet or a honeyeater dangling from hanging twigs to reach a blossom below.



Striated Heron, "Abberton", Helidon. A new bird for the property, but even more significantly, a new bird for the TBO survey area. (Photo: Bill Jolly)

Subsequently, following a couple of days of rain, the clear and sunny morning of Sunday 3rd June revealed a Comb-crested Jacana flitting between lily pads on the creek. Not an uncommon bird in the local area, but one which we hadn't previously recorded on our house list and, by the way, bringing it to 214 spp.

It was a young jacana, beginning to show the black on the sides of the breast that will eventually join to form a breast-band, and with a beautifully rufous crown, but as yet no red comb. You can get a good look at this bird's enormous feet in one of the flight photos attached.

DPN JOH!DM/C!FWF OUT!

June Outing

Sat/Sun 23rd & 24th June 2012

Venue: Raptor census

Time: When suitable

Meet: Where suitable

Leader: Pat McConnell

Phone: 4631 5573

July Outing

Saturday 28th July 2012

Venue: Highfields Falls

Time: 7.30 am

Meet: Dau Rd carpark

Leader: Gayle Lee

Phone: 4696 2727

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

Please e-mail or post articles and photos to the Acting Editor.

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Surface Mail