TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

No. 420 December 2012

> Editorial Paul Laurie

Christmas is bearing down upon us again and as reported in the November issue, here is the extra one for December. The process has been very much more enjoyable this time round without the time constraints of November and the lessons learned from it, primarily to ask for help when it's needed.

The Cambooya bird surveys have been completed and the results will be published in the January issue. Thanks to all who participated.

The 2012 Challenge tally is an impressive 242 species. That's 14 more than our previous best and we still have a few days to go. Let's hope that 2013 will be even better.

Some exciting and interesting outings have been planned for next year and I look forward to your articles, pictures and comments.

Best wishes to everyone over the Christmas, New Year period.

Good birding.



Willie Wagtail nestlings Photo: Julie Reid

2012 Challenge

242 spp as of 20/12



P.O. Box 4730, Toowoomba East 4350 www.toowoombabirdobservers.org MEMBERSHIP: Adult/family \$ 45 Pensioner/student \$ 40

This Issue

A Glorious Day Mike McGoldrick

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

Book Review: Lyrebird! Paul Laurie

Spotted Harrier Gayle Lee

Species Census Report Mick Atzeni

and more ...

OUTINGS

Sun 27 January

Venue: Highfields Falls, Dau St Highfields

Organiser: TBA. Time: 6.30am

Sat 23 February

Venue: Lake Apex, Gatton

Organiser: TBA. Time: 6.30am

A Glorious Day Mike McGoldrick

Seven keen club members gathered at the Minden-Lowood turnoff on a fine and sunny Saturday morning on the 29th September for the trek to the Mt. Glorious region, a more remote area than the usual TBO club birding venues but which promised more exciting birding. After passing through Lowood and Fernvale, we made a quick stop at Kipper Creek crossing on the eastern side of Lake Wivenhoe to sight a few water birds, among them **Pelican**, **Hardhead** and **Pacific Black Duck**, **Australasian Grebe**, **Little Black Cormorant**, **Black Swan** and a raptor which we finally identified as an immature **White bellied Sea-Eagle**. We proceeded to Red Cedars at the foot of Mount Glorious where we were rewarded with excellent close views of **Scarlet Honeyeaters** foraging for nectar among the Callistemon brushes as well as another unfamiliar honeyeater which we finally identified as **White-cheeked Honeyeater** by its prominent white cheek patches which distinguish it from the similar New Holland Honeyeater. This was a new bird for most of those present. Here we also heard the mellifluous notes of a Grey Shrike-thrush and the descending trill of a Fantailed Cuckoo calling along the creek.

We moved on to our main birding venue at Maiala N.P. after carefully negotiating the twisty bends of the Northbrook Parkway up the western slopes of Mt. Glorious. Here we stopped for our morning tea break and were joined by Ron and Sandra Dunglison from Brisbane. After entering the rainforest, we began to hear the calls of typical rainforest species such as Green Catbird, Lewin's Honeyeater, Brown Gerygone, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Brown Thornbill, Pied Currawong and Grey Shrike-thrush. We soon

spied ubiquitous species such as Australian Brushturkey, Grey Fantail, Rufous Fantail, Eastern Yellow Robin, Satin Bowerbird, Large-billed Scrubwren, and Yellow-throated Scrubwren. Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and Crimson Rosella were calling high up in the canopy.



Brown Gerygone Photo: Charles Dove

Some keen-sighted members spied a **Bassian Thrush** foraging amongst the leaf litter on the forest floor quickly followed by a **Noisy Pitta** stalking through the undergrowth which caused quite a bit of excitement as both these birds are uncommon. There was a further pulse-quickening moment when one of the group narrowly missed treading on a small brown snake on the path which was later identified as a Black-bellied Swamp Snake. Disappointedly, we dipped on the Logrunners which Ron and Sandra assured us were usually to be found at the Brown's Rd. locale.

The party then moved on over Mount Nebo to Jolly's Lookout, which has expansive views over the Samford Valley to Moreton Bay, where we adjourned for lunch. After a short walk on the Egernia track through drier sclerophyll forest where we ticked off **Spotted Pardalote**, **Grey Shrike-thrush, Brown Thornbill, Brown Gerygone and Grey Fantail** some of the group decided to head homewards. The more resolute individuals continued to Boombana N.P. which is an interesting area as it comprises a cross-section of dry sclerophyll and wet

sclerophyll rainforest accompanied by good interpretive signage pointing out the features of each vegetation type. Unfortunately, although massive strangler fig trees were present, no fruit-eating pigeons were evident. Here we heard **Spotted Pardaiote** and **Bell Miners** calling in the dry forest zone while we sighted **White-browed Scrubwren**, **Yellow-throated Scrubwren**, **Brown Gerygone**, **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **Lewin's Honeyeater**, **Satin Bowerbird** and **Green Catbird** in the wet forest zone. An interesting sighting here was close views of a **Pale-yellow Robin**, which was a new bird for most members, distinguished from its more common cousin the **Eastern Yellow Robin** by the white around its face.



After a restorative cuppa at the Mount Nebo café where Kylie and James insisted on posing for photos bedecked with lovely **King-Parrots** festooning their arms, we headed homewards after a long day but which yielded some very enjoyable birding experiences. Perhaps the club needs to consider similar birding forays like this one further afield from the usual TBO birding venues for the future.

Pale-yellow Robin Photo: Kevin Williams **Species List:** Australian Brush-turkey, Black Swan, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead, Australasian Grebe, Little Black Cormorant, Australian Pelican, Whistling Kite, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Spotted Turtle-Dove, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Crested

Pigeon, Wonga Pigeon, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Australian King-Parrot, Crimson Rosella, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Laughing Kookaburra, Noisy Pitta, White-throated Treecreeper, Variegated Fairy-wren, Spotted Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Yellowthroated Scrubwren, Large-billed Scrubwren, Brown Gerygone, Brown Thornbill, Bell Miner, Noisy Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, White-cheeked Honeyeater, Eastern Yellow Robin, Pale-yellow Robin, Grey-crowned Babbler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Restless Flycatcher, Magpie-lark, Rufous Fantail, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Black-faced Cuckooshrike, Figbird, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, Satin Bowerbird, Green Catbird, Redbrowed Finch, Welcome Swallow, Silvereye, Bassian Thrush



Kylie and friends

Book Review

Lyrebird! A True story by Jackie Kerin. Illustrated by Peter Gouldthporpe



Lyrebird, a children's book by Jackie Kerin and illustrated by Peter Gouldthorpe and recently released by Museum Victoria, sets out to tell the remarkable 'true' story of a friendship between an elderly lady, Edith and a lyrebird named James.

Ms Kerin 'is a familiar face in schools and festivals where she shares her love of spoken language and tales well told'. Her first children's book, Phar Lap the Wonder Horse, was listed as a 'notable book' in the Children's Book Council of Australia awards. Mr Gouldthorpe is an illustrator of many years standing whose work has also been recognised in the Children's Book Council of Australia awards where he won the Picture

Book category with Gary Crew for First Light. (Publisher's Notes. Further details not supplied.).

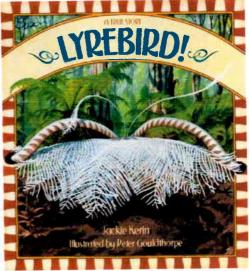
Set in the early 1930s and based on a newspaper article published in The Age on the 13th February 1932, Lyrebird! cannot strictly be labelled a 'true story' as the author has drawn heavily on her imagination and literary licence to build the character of Edith and her relationship with James. However, it is an enjoyable story well-told. At times the linguistic expressions attributed to Edith seem to jar slightly to this middle-aged writer but the evolution of spoken English in Australia in the 80 years since the original article appeared needs to be taken into account. Kerin has used language that 21st Century children will readily understand. This makes Lyrebird! a readable book for children and, perhaps more importantly, one that children will enjoy being read to them.

The story touches on some environmental issues but this is done sensitively and doesn't intrude too heavily on the telling of the tale. Also, the season by season dealing with the life of the bird highlights well the way in which birds lives are often in flux. On the other hand, Kerin's dealing with the Latinised scientific name for the Lyrebird, *Menura novaehollandiae* (Superb Lyrebird), might seem a little daunting for children (and perhaps, some adult readers). Gouldthorpe's illustrations are colourful and vividly accentuate the author's work. The inclusion of other birds (particularly the Eastern Yellow Robin) in the illustrations is a nice touch while the double page spread of common species towards the end of the book may raise the interest of children in birds in general.

Although there some minor issues Lyrebird! would make a worthy addition to any primary schooler's bookshelf. It is easy to imagine it being taken down and read and looked at regularly.



For further details contact Museum Victoria, GPO Box 666 Melbourne Vic 3001.



Members Photo Page

For all photographers... amateur, professional and anywhere in between, please send your photos in to be published in our monthly newsletter.



Juvenile White-bellied Sea-Eagle pursued by an Australian Magpie

Photo: Kevin Williams





Comb-crested Jacana Photo: Rob Wilson



Nankeen Night-Heron in backyard, Gatton. Photo: Julie Reid

Lucky Shot

Gayle Lee

On Saturday 27th October, Steve and I decided to do our own local Wyreema/Cambooya survey as a part of the October Species census for the club. We spent the early part of the morning travelling out through Umbiram in W3 sector, picking up a lot of the usual suspects along the way. We turned south along the Umbiram-Banchory Road, entering W4 sector and crossing Umbiram creek and its tributaries before turning west into Richardson Road then onto Stower Road and finally east onto Jimna Springs Road.

Cruising slowly along the gravel roads on a warm spring morning was a pleasant occupation for an avid birder and her co-driver. My attention was caught by an **Australasian Pipit** which was perched on a post fairly close to our vehicle, I instructed the co-driver to cruise up slowly towards said pipit, which seemed reluctant to move from his perch. I took several photographs and was about to instruct Steve to move on when my attention was caught by a largish bird perched on a post about 200 metres ahead of the truck. (Perhaps the cause of the pipit's reluctance to move?)

My immediate thought was "What is that?" Then I held my breath and quickly began to take photos. The large fellow ruffled his feathers, looked around casually, turned himself into the wind and launched himself off the post, whilst I feverishly took photos. He flapped his wings lazily a couple of times and soared of in a northerly direction. Wow! Now I had to identify this raptor. The field guide quickly revealed that it was probably a harrier but I wasn't sure which one - Spotted or Swamp?

A close inspection of the photos when at home in front of the computer revealed a **Spotted Harrier** in all his glory. Both species have the facial disc, smallish beaks, and yellow eyes and long thin yellow legs. The Spotted Harrier has a heavily barred tail whereas the Swamp has soft thin bars on their longish tail, and of course, the spots are the best feature for identification. I can't quite make up my mind if he was a mature adult or not, but what does that matter? He made my day.





Spotted Harrier.

Photos: Gayle Lee

October Species Census Report

Mick Atzeni

Participants: Joe Allen, Mick Atzeni, Diana Beal, Olive Booth, Pat & Dave Cleary, Gloria Glass, Dinah Greenlees, Brian Henman, Klaus Jackal, Bill Jolly, Paul Laurie, Gayle Lee, John McAlpine, Pat McConnell, Mike McGoldrick, Neil & Helen McKilligan, Daryl Mears, Kath O'Donnell, Rosalie & Jonathan Rudduck, Jenny Ryan, Alastair Silcock, Norma & Wes Sturdee, Esther Townsend, Kev & Kay Williams, Helen & Derek Wilson, Al Young

The October Species Census is traditionally well-supported and this one was no exception. The 32 participants above collectively recorded 180 species in the local survey area over the period 25-30th October. Nineteen of the 20 grids were surveyed, W2 (west of Gowrie Mountain) being the only unsurveyed grid (Figure 1). The highest number of species (122) was recorded in the Helidon area (C7). Next best was 103 species in the Murphys Creek area (N3). It was pleasing to see the Cambooya area surveyed more thoroughly this year with 60 species collectively recorded in grids W4 and S1. (We have since conducted further surveys around Cambooya on some private properties we have been given access to.).

W1	N1	N2	N3	N4
(Kingsthorpe)	(Gowrie Junction)	(Highfields)	(Murphy's Ck)	(Helidon North)
27°27'30"S	27°27'30"S	27°27'30"5	27°27'30"S	27°27'30"S
151°47′30″E	151°52′30″E	151°57'30"E	152°02'30"E	152°07'30"E
41 spp	83 spp	103 spp	91 spp	30 spp
W2	C1	C3	C5	C7
(W. of Gowrie Mtn)	(NW Toowoomba)	(NE Toowoomba)	(Withcott)	(Helidon)
27°32′30"S	27°32′30"S	27°32′30″5	27°32′30″S	27°32'30"S
151°47'30"E	151°52′30″E	151°57′30″E	152°02′30″E	152°07'30"E
	27 spp	98 spp	92 spp	122 spp
W3	C2	C4	C6	C8
(Athol/Umbiram)	(SW Toowoomba)	(SE Toowoomba)	(Upper Flagstone Ck)	(Lower Flagstone Ck)
27°37'30"S	27°37'30"S	27°37'30"S	27'37'30"S	27°37'30"S
151°47'30"E	151°52′30″E	151°57'30"E	152°02'30″E	152°07'30"E
30 spp	41 spp	72 spp	52 spp	32 spp
W4	S1	S2	S3	S4
(W. of Cambooya)	(Cambooya)	(Ramsay)	(Rockmount)	(Fordsdale)
27°42'30"S	27°42'30"5	27°42'30"5	27°42'30"S	27°42'30"S
151°47'30"E	151°52'30"E	151°57′30″E	152°02′30″E	152°07'30"E
43 spp	47 spp	70 spp	58 spp	43 spp

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

The more noteworthy species are bolded in the summary table. They include **Chestnut Teal** and **Hoary-headed Grebe** (Ashlands Drive, Postmans Ridge), **Pink-eared Duck** (Wyreema Sewage Treatment Plant), **Banded Lapwing** (breeding in Ramsay area), **Black-chinned Honeyeater** (Fifteen Mile) and **Brown Songlark** (Meringandan). But the undisputed highlight this year was the **Little**

Shrike-thrush seen by Bill Jolly in the bottom end of Redwood Park. This is the second new species for the club this year (along with Striated Heron, which Bill also discovered). We're lucky if we add one every 3-4 years nowadays so it is no mean feat and congratulations to Bill. It just goes to show - yet again - what a fabulously rich and unpredictable avifauna this region accommodates and why dedicated local clubs like ours are important for bringing this knowledge together.

There are always species you miss, or they are just not here during the census. Some noticeable dips/absentees this year were Grey Goshawk, Collared Sparrowhawk, Painted Button-Quail, Rednecked Avocet, Pallid Cuckoo, the three Bronze-cuckoos - Little, Shining and Horsfield's (that's very unusual), White-throated Needletail, Plum-headed Finch, Horsfield's Bushlark and Tree Martin.

Despite the misses, extending the census period certainly has its merits, allowing more people to participate at their convenience, more species to be recorded, and more grids to be surveyed during the best times of the day. Testimonies to this are the 71 new grid records, i.e., the first time a species has been recorded in that grid. These are indicated in the following table by a bolded grid number for those species concerned.

Thanks to everyone who contributed. Hope to see you next year.



Plum-headed Finch – a species that eluded us during the census.

Photo: Bill Jolly

Wedge-tailed Eagle	Brown Goshawk	Spotted Harrier	Whistling Kite	Black Kite	Black-shouldered Kite	Pacific Baza	Osprey	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Royal Spoonbill	Straw-necked Ibis	Australian White Ibis	Nankeen Night Heron	Cattle Egret		Great Egret	White-necked Heron	White-faced Heron	Australian Pelican	Great Cormorant	Little Black Cormorant	Little Pied Cormorant	Darter	Hoary-headed Grebe	Australasian Grebe	Hardhead	Pink-eared Duck	Chestnut Teal	Grey Teal	Pacific Black Duck	Australian Wood Duck	Black Swan	Plumed Whistling-Duck	Brown Quail	Australian Brush-turkey		Species reported
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Grid Totals	Total: 180 species	Common Blackbird	Common Myna	Common Starling	Silvereye	Golden-headed Cisticola	Brown Songlark	Rufous Songlark	Tawny Grassbird	Australian Reed-Warbler	Fairy Martin	Welcome Swallow	Mistletoebird	Chestnut-breasted Mannikin	Red-browed Finch	Double-barred Finch	Zebra Finch	House Sparrow	Australasian Pipit	Satin Bowerbird	Regent Bowerbird	Apostlebird	White-winged Chough	Torresian Crow	Pied Currawong	Australian Magpie	Pied Butcherbird	Grey Butcherbird	Dusky Woodswallow	ird	Olive-backed Oriole	Varied Triller	White-winged Triller	Ground Cuckoo-shrike	Cicadabiid
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Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 15th January 2013

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