

# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

No. 422  
February 2013

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

## Editorial

Paul Laurie

Due to ex-tropical Cyclone Oswald, there have been numerous unusual seabirds reported, not only along the coastline, but also inland, including several from the Toowoomba region, which are reported in this newsletter.

The most significant record was a **Bulwer's Petrel** found exhausted at the Oakey Aviation Centre. It's the first specimen collected in Queensland. We also have two new birds for the official Toowoomba list – **White-tailed Tropicbird** and **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** – and our first live **Sooty Tern** records. Further information and photos are on the forum and our Facebook page.

Last month's outing had to be cancelled so there's no Outing Report this issue. March, however, is turning into a very busy month with two outings, a working bee and the Hello Parks collaboration with the Friends of the Escarpment Parks planned.

Keep the fabulous material coming, and Good Birding!

### New Members

Welcome to new club member **Kate Summers** of Toowoomba.

It was great to meet you on the February outing and we hope your association with the club is a long and rewarding one.



White-tailed Tropicbird found injured at Meringandan 28/1/13

### 2013 Challenge

Tally: 177 spp as of 25 Feb

### This Issue

#### Parrot Encounters

By Kevin and Kay Williams

#### Seabirding in the Lockyer Valley

By Mick Atzeni

#### Rare Bird Report

#### Two New Toowoomba Birds

By Pat McConnell

#### Members Bird Notes

### OUTINGS

#### Sat 9 March

Hello Parks Bird Walk  
Venue: Redwood Park  
Contact: Joe Allen  
Time: 7am

#### Sat 16 March

Venue: Toorbul  
Contact: Kay Williams.  
Time: 10.30am

#### Sat 30 March

Venue: Cooby Dam  
Leader: Paul Laurie  
Time 6.30am



TOOWOOMBA  
BIRD OBSERVERS

P.O. Box 4730, Toowoomba East 4350  
[www.toowoombabirdobservers.org](http://www.toowoombabirdobservers.org)

MEMBERSHIP: Adult/family \$45  
Pensioner/student \$40



## Parrot Encounters

By Kay Williams

Photos: Kevin Williams

We have been travelling to visit our family in southwest Victoria over the last three years. We have decided to share some of the birds we see on our travels with you all. Kevin and I particularly enjoy the parrot and lorikeet families so here are just a few of them.

We do not always travel the same route south. This trip we went via Wellington NSW, and then down to meet the Hume Highway. We quite often call into Info centres and check for bird lists.

The **Superb Parrot** was found by reading such a birding list picked up at Cowra. In a little country area south of Cowra, we stopped at the Morongla cemetery. We heard 30-40 Superb Parrots before we saw them. What a sight when they flew up out of the bushes around the edge of the cemetery.



The **Gang Gang Cockatoo** has always been elusive when we visit family in the Tumut region. To my joy, while having a one night stop in Seymour VIC, we had a family of these delightful birds camp in a tree above our caravan.

Wow!! And double wow!!!!

This little **Purple Crowned Lorikeet** is usually seen in the flowering gums around the lake at Hamilton, a favourite birding spot of ours, and just a few blocks from our son's home.





This **Blue-winged Parrot** we saw for the first time with Michael Wood, whom we met up with in the small South Australian town of Naracoorte, to do some serious birding for a few days, a couple of years ago.

Local knowledge is great when trying to find new birds. We would like to thank Michael for those three great days.

The second sighting for us was at Mount Eccles National Park (about 270 km west of Melbourne) where we found this bird sitting on the fence just before the Park HQ.

These are just some of the birds we have seen in these travels. Hope to find another family for you in the near future.

## Seabirding in the Lockyer Valley

*By Mick Atzeni*

The 2013 Australia Day long weekend goes down as the most bizarre, bittersweet birding experience of my life. It started at Upper Lockyer on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> January with two suspicious terns over home. It climaxed on Wed 30<sup>th</sup> with the inspection of a small, dark, nondescript petrel taken into care by Trish LeeHong at her Murphys Creek Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation centre. In between, there were other weird and wonderful sightings and a lot of hard work for Trish as ex-tropical Cyclone Oswald's casualties came to light.

The terns over home were almost certainly adult **Sooty Terns**, and that evening Trish took in an exhausted one found on nearby Howmans Rd at Lockyer. The petrel proved to be a **Bulwer's Petrel** (pictured right) - a very rare vagrant and the first specimen (though not the first sighting) for Queensland. The bird was found exhausted at the Oakey Aviation Centre and died the next day. The specimen is now in the Queensland Museum. It was initially thought to be only the





second Australian specimen but we have since learnt there are at least four. Bulwer's Petrel breeds in tropical and subtropical Atlantic and Pacific waters, dispersing west into the Indian Ocean in the non-breeding season, so this bird was way out of range.

The 28<sup>th</sup> January kicked off with news Michael Wood had seen four Sooty Terns, including a juvenile, over a Helidon farm dam, I managed to see the juvenile, then saw an adult bird flying over the Helidon railway station on my way to Bill Jolly's place. At Bill's, while wishing a Sooty Tern his way for the "Abberton" list, a **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** obliged instead!! I'll never forget that moment it materialised over the roof of the house, before disappearing down Lockyer Creek. About an hour later on my way home, extraordinarily, it was a case of déjà vu; another shearwater, possibly the same bird, glided across a paddock and disappeared along the creek near the Postmans Ridge sub-station. Unfortunately, I didn't see it well enough to be positive it was the same species.



Later that afternoon I drove to Trish's to photograph the Sooty Tern (pictured left), which had unfortunately died overnight. En route, I found a dead Sooty Tern at Upper Lockyer, near Thomas Rd.

Not long afterwards, Pat McConnell and Kath O'Donnell delivered a live adult Sooty Tern they found at Murphy's Creek. Hot on their heels was Meringandan resident

Julie Nielson who arrived with the strange bird she found injured on her property and had phoned Trish about: an adult **White-tailed Tropicbird!**

Trish also took in an immature Sooty Tern found at Kingsthorpe, four Wedge-tailed Shearwaters (three from Toowoomba, one from Gatton), and another White-tailed Tropicbird (from Withcott). Furthermore, there was an unconfirmed report of five frigatebirds (species unknown) at Umbiram.

Thanks and congratulations must go to Trish for her huge effort under difficult circumstances in saving some of these birds, and for notifying us and keeping us in the loop.

## Rare Bird Report

Pat McConnell, Paul Laurie, Mick Atzeni

### **Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii***

**Observer:** Found by unidentified person. Taken into care by wildlife carer Trish LeeHong. Observed and photographed by Pat McConnell, and subsequently by Michael Atzeni and others.

**Date of Observation:** 30/01/2013

**Location:** Found exhausted at Oakey Aviation Centre. Taken into care at Murphys Creek same day but died next morning.

**Sighting Conditions:** Bird in hand and photographed.

**Number of Birds Observed:** One

**Description of Bird:** A small petrel 25–29 cm in length with wide 78–90 cm wingspan; mostly sooty brown in colour, with long wedge-shaped tail; legs pinkish with black webbing.

**Bulwer's Petrel** is a highly pelagic species that ranges all three major oceans, Pacific Atlantic and Indian spanning the globe in tropical or sub-tropical regions. It lives and feeds at sea only coming to land for breeding purposes. Colonies congregate on offshore islands in April or May before dispersing again after the chicks are fledged. Bulwer's Petrel is not considered a threatened species but it is very rare in Australian waters.

Although there have been sight records in Queensland, this is the first specimen for the state. It is now in the Queensland Museum. There is another specimen in the Museum of Victoria and two in the Western Australian Museum. We are unaware of any others in Australia.

(Compiled by Paul Laurie from information gathered from Birds International website, Wikipedia and notes from Mick Atzeni.)



## Two New Toowoomba Birds

Pat McConnell, TBO Records Officer

### #298. White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*

**Observers:** Pat McConnell, Kath O'Donnell and Mick Atzeni were present when the bird was brought to wildlife carer Trish LeeHong at Murphys Creek on 28/1/13. Trish also received a second live specimen next day.

**Date of Observation:** 28–29/01/2013

**Location:** First bird found injured/exhausted at 1 Hansford Rd, Meringandan, by Julie Nielson on 28/1. Second bird found injured/exhausted along Gittins Rd, Withcott, 29/1.

**Sighting Conditions:** Birds in hand, and photographed.

**Description of Bird:** Large, basically black and white sea bird. Bill yellow; head white with black marking in front of, through and behind eye; large black patches in the wings (on the scapulars, secondaries and primaries); long white tail streamer.

**How was it distinguished from similar species?** Only likely to be confused in Australia with a Red-tailed Tropicbird which has a red bill and less black in the wings. The tail streamer is also red.





**#299. Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna pacificus***

**Date:** 28/01/2013

**Location:** "Abberton", Lockyer Creek Road, Helidon

**Observers:** Bill Jolly and Michael Atzeni

**Sighting Conditions:** Clear weather with good visibility. This followed several days of rain and strong winds associated with ex-tropical Cyclone Oswald.

**Distance/Height from Bird:** Five to ten metres directly overhead, then moving away at same height.

**Duration of Observation:** Ten seconds

**Number of Birds Observed:** One

**Description of Bird:** Solidly built, broad-winged seabird, uniformly brown above and below. Bill dark. Tube-nose (noted by Michael Atzeni). Long, uniformly wide but pointed tail in flight. Clearly larger than Sooty Tern seen shortly before at another location, bulkier with broader wings. Did not observe any patches or markings breaking the uniformity of overall colour.

**Record Officers comments:**

Bill's full report has been sent to the Club's Rarities Committee and the sighting accepted. It should also be noted that four Wedge-tailed Shearwaters (plus several other seabirds) were taken into care by local wildlife carer Trish Lee Hong, after several days of strong winds and rain associated with ex-tropical Cyclone Oswald. One of the shearwaters was found in James Street, Toowoomba, near Clifford Gardens Shopping Centre. The photo supplied for this report is of that bird.

Pat McConnell  
Records Officer



## Photographers' Page

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



Eastern Rosella  
Photo: Olive Booth



Royal Spoonbill  
Photo: Charles Dove



Superb Lyrebird  
Photo: Trevor Quested



Masked Lapwing  
Photo: Russell Jenkins



## Members Bird Notes

*Pat McConnell*

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
Wandering Whistling-Duck (4)	1/01/2013	"Abberton", Helidon	BJ
Cotton Pygmy-goose	1/01/2013	"Abberton", Helidon	BJ
Musk Duck	1/01/2013	private dam, Helidon	KG; MA
Hoary-headed Grebe (4)	1/01/2013	Ashlands Dr, Postmans Ridge	KG; MA
Wedge-tailed Shearwater *	28/01/2013	"Abberton", Helidon	BJ; MA; MW
White-tailed Tropicbird **	28/01/2013	1 Hansford Rd, Meringandan	JN
Glossy Ibis	25/01/2013	"Abberton", Helidon	BJ
Square-tailed Kite	10/02/2013	Highfields	PM; KO
Black Kite (101)	4/02/2013	Old Goombungee Rd, Tmba	PM; KO
Spotted Harrier	1/01/2013	Lawlers Rd, Helidon	KG; MA
Baillon's Crake	12/01/2013	Helidon Spa	MW
Pale-vented Bush-hen ***	28/01/2013	Murphys Creek Road	PM; KO
Painted Button-quail	28/12/2012	Highfields	PM; KO
Australian Painted Snipe (2)	1/01/2013	"Abberton", Helidon	BJ
Red-necked Avocet	1/01/2013	Ashlands Drive, Postmans Ridge	KG; MA
Sooty Tern (4)	28/01/2013	private dam, Helidon	MW
Sooty Tern	28/01/2013	Murphys Creek	PM; KO
Caspian Tern (2)	29/01/2013	private dam, Helidon	BJ; MW
Blue-bonnet	4/01/2013	Old Goombungee Rd, Tmba	KO
Little Bronze-Cuckoo	7/01/2013	"Abberton", Helidon	BJ
White-eared Monarch	6/02/2013	Redwood Park	MW
Plum-headed Finch	5/01/2013	Postmans Ridge	MW

\* Four other birds were found locally and handed over to wildlife carer Trish LeeHong including one from Clifford Gardens, Toowoomba, and another from Railway St, Gatton.

\*\* Another exhausted/injured bird found on a Gittins Rd property, Withcott

\*\*\* Two adults and three young

**MA**, M. Atzeni; **KG**, K. Grose; **BJ**, B. Jolly; **PM**, P. McConnell; **KO**, K. O'Donnell; **JN**, J. Neilson; **MW**, M. Wood.

If anyone wishes to submit bird notes they can do this directly to me at [mccannel@usq.edu.au](mailto:mccannel@usq.edu.au) or via the Club's mailing address.

Thanks  
Pat McConnell

## March Outings

*A very busy month*

### **Hello Parks**

TBO and other similarly minded organisations will be joining The Friends of Escarpment Parks at a Bushland Parks Open Day on Saturday 9 March. The event will be held at the eastern entrance to Redwood Park. This is situated on the left hand side on the downward section of the Toowoomba Range Hwy, just past the 100KmH speed sign.

Various activities will be conducted including a bird walk led by Mick Atzeni starting at 7am and a barbeque at 12 noon (please bring your own meat). An animal spotlighting walk with Dr Rob Brodribb will be held at Nielsen Park, Tarlington St, in the evening (7-9pm).

TBO will have a display at Redwood Park being manned by Kay Williams, Paul Laurie and others. Any other members who wish to spend some time at the display will be most welcome. Kay and Kev Williams have prepared a CD with images of the majority of species recorded in our escarpment parks for sale for \$5. It's an excellent resource. If you would like to order a copy please contact Kay on 46595475.

Hello Parks offers the opportunity to network with other groups and should be a fun and informative day.

*For more info contact Joe Allen on 0437675516 or [theallens2010@yahoo.com.au](mailto:theallens2010@yahoo.com.au)*

### **Toorbul Outing**

For the March outing we will link with Birds Queensland's Wader Study Group on the 16th March for the annual Toorbul Waders Identification day at Waders Roost, The Esplanade Toorbul. Start time is 10:30am to catch the high tide which will reach Toorbul at 12:36pm.

To get there, travel north along the Bruce Hwy from Brisbane to the Toorbul/Donnybrook turn off. Head East over the Highway overpass and keep going until you reach Toorbul. At the T-junction, turn right then first left and then first right. You should now be on The Esplanade. Travel approximately 2Km to the end of the road. The meeting place will be on the left.

Bring the usual equipment plus lunch and water. You will need sunscreen, insect repellent, hat, binoculars or telescope (or both) a chair and field guide.

Some members will want to make a weekend of the trip. There will be plenty of bush birds and raptors to see as well as waders. There is a caravan park at Toorbul for those who wish to stay plus the usual accommodation within easy reach. The best way to find what you need in the way of a place to stay is to Google "Toorbul Accommodation".

*For those who want to go on the outing, either for the day or the weekend please contact Kay Williams on 4659 5474 or 0429 465 954.*



### **Cooby Dam outing**

Seeing that the outing to Toorbul comes early in March it has been proposed that an extra outing be added to the calendar on the last weekend of the month.

The venue is Cooby Dam. We will gather at the Loveday Cove entrance at 6:30am on **Saturday 30 March**. There is good birding near the boom gates where we will start before taking one or more of several options from there. Toilet and picnic facilities are available. Bring morning tea, water, sunscreen, insect repellent, hat, binoculars and field guide. Solid, enclosed shoes are a must for this venue.

Contact Paul Laurie on 0417 676 722 or [paullaurie15@hotmail.com](mailto:paullaurie15@hotmail.com)

### **A Helping Hand for Trish LeeHong**

**Paul Laurie**

On **Sunday 10th March** (was to be 3<sup>rd</sup> March but unfortunately it is too wet), starting at 8am, the club will be holding a working bee at Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation and Education Association at **392 Stevens Rd, Murphys Creek** to assist Trish LeeHong with planting, weeding, and a general cleanup following recent flooding, as well as erecting an enclosure for flying foxes and possibly erecting an aviary.

Trish is a friend of TBO who does an enormous amount of work rescuing, and rehabilitating sick and injured birds and animals. Currently she is caring for over 100 animals which include many birds, marsupials, and reptiles.

Please bring any tools and equipment (e.g. mowers, brush-cutters, whipper-snippers, wheelbarrows) you have that might be useful, as well as morning tea, lunch and the usual protective gear including gloves, hat, boots, sunscreen and water.

Trish relies largely on public donations to care for the wildlife and is very grateful for our assistance again, as she was after the 2011 flood, and the financial support of organisations like IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare) who have again donated (\$1000 this time) to help Trish through this latest ordeal.

Although we have postponed the main working bee, if you can still help out this **Sunday (3<sup>rd</sup> March)** with weeding in the animal enclosures and washing down cages to control mildew, you'll be welcomed with open arms.

### **Overdue Subscriptions**

Several subscriptions are still outstanding. If you have forgotten please contact Kay Williams on 4659 5475 to arrange payment or pay by direct debit into the club's account at Heritage Bank: **Account No 4312503 and BSB 638-070**. If paying by direct debit, please give your surname as your reference so we know whose subscription it is. To ensure you continue receiving the newsletter please pay your subscription by **20 March**.

## Coming Events

### February Beginners Outing

Saturday 23 February

Lockyer wetlands

Leader: Mick Atzeni 0458 948 955

Meet 6.30am at Lake Apex, Gatton

### March Outings

Saturday 16 March

Toorbul

Contact: Kay Williams 4659 5475

Saturday 30 March

Cooby Dam

Leader: Paul Laurie 041 7676 722

## Committee Members

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**Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 15th March 2013**

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

**If undeliverable return to**

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**Surface Mail**

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