

TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS



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

No. 426
June 2013

Editorial

Mick Atzeni

The popular annual raptor census is on this weekend! It promises to be a record-breaking event given the extraordinary number of **Black Kites** still gracing our region. Earlier this month, Pat McConnell and Kath O'Donnell counted at least two thousand at the Toowoomba tip. Absolutely amazing!

As the tip area won't be covered by any of the survey teams during the census, it would be greatly appreciated if one or more members could do a separate count there. The kites have also been roosting in trees nearby, e.g. along Hermitage Rd, so check there as well. Note the time you do your count and send your results to Pat to report.

Good luck everyone this weekend!

New Members

A warm welcome to Toowoomba residents Sue Jewell, and Maggie and Ross Easton.



Grey Goshawk
Primbbee, Queensland
Charles Dove

Grey Goshawk
Photo: Charles Dove
Primbbee, NSW

2013 Challenge

Tally: 222 spp as of 25/06/13

This Issue

TBO visits Tea Tree Refuge - Prenzlau

By Lee McMichael

Bird Observing from a Beginner's Eyes

By Rebekah Ostby

Bird of the Month

Crested Shrike-tit

By Paul Laurie

OUTINGS

29-30th June Weekend
Raptor Census

Venue: Various Locations
More details on last page

Saturday 27th July

Venue: Rockmount area
Leader: TBA
Contact: Mick Atzeni



TOOWOOMBA
BIRD OBSERVERS

P.O. Box 4730, Toowoomba East 4350
www.toowoombabirdobservers.org

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

past few months. They are such a placid bunch of birds that hang out around my dam and wander about the house yard. Not anything like the raucous squabbling of the **Purple Swamphens**. After a bit of a view from the back deck (now at a nice height of 3 metres after the 2011 flooding), we set off for a bit of a bush bash. The few levee banks across the property although a bane to my existence in altering the natural water flow of the property, form nice walkways to explore. It did get a little rougher as we ventured further into the forest but the **Red-backed Fairy-wrens** were just delightful and the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** spotted was a bird I had never even heard of. We did lose Trevor Page, the NRM officer from Somerset Regional Council in the bush there for a while, but we all made it through to a nice view of the large neighbouring lagoon to spot many water birds. More Pink-eared Ducks delighted me and my first look at an **Australasian Shoveler**, albeit me telling another bemused birder that I had seen a dozer duck.

Unfortunately, no Black-necked Stork sightings which excite me the most, and almost led to me wetting my pants when they first visited the property, having never seen one before. Nor did we spot the Wedge-tailed Eagle that regularly visits, scaring the feathers off the chickens and often getting a stern talking to from me to stay well away from my Australasian Grebes.

I left the crew to wander back via the levee banks and forest while I took a short cut across the paddock, well swamp really, as the deceiving swamp grass is actually growing on around a foot of water. I beat everyone back and a few of the ladies who had walked back earlier helped prepare a lovely morning tea. Mick briefed us all on what we saw, with a short interlude when a bird of prey was passing by. It amuses me immensely the excited run of Mick on sighting a bird of prey, camera at the ready. And on that note ... what is the deal with all of those enormous lenses of male birders!?



After a couple of us ladies enjoyed a glass of wine, it was time to say farewell. I had a wonderful time sharing my home with everyone and learning more about the birds that call my property their home. I hope everyone enjoyed the outing and I would have you all back anytime.

Species list: (Seen on/near Tea Trees Nature Refuge unless otherwise indicated.)

Plumed Whistling-Duck, Black Swan, Australian Wood Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Australasian Shoveler, Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal, Pink-eared Duck, Hardhead (Minden), Australasian Grebe, Darter (Minden), Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Australian Pelican, White-faced Heron, Little Egret, White-necked Heron, Great Egret, Intermediate Egret, Cattle Egret, Australian White Ibis, Straw-necked Ibis, Royal Spoonbill, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Pacific Baza (Minden), Black Kite (Gatton), Whistling Kite, Swamp Harrier, Black Falcon (Gatton), Nankeen Kestrel, Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Black-tailed Native-hen, Eurasian Coot, Black-winged Stilt, Black-fronted Dotterel, Red-kneed Dotterel, Masked Lapwing, Rock Dove, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Long-billed Corella, Cockatiel, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Red-rumped Parrot, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Sacred Kingfisher, Superb Fairy-wren, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Striated Pardalote (Minden), Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Striped Honeyeater, Noisy Miner, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater (Minden), Rufous Whistler, Magpie-lark, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Torresian Crow, Welcome Swallow, Common Myna



Whistling Kite - Prenzlau

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Whistling Kite - Prenzlau

Reports

Bird Observing from a Beginner's Eyes

By: Rebekah Ostby

Photo by: Charles Dove

It was the day before Tristan turned 13 and we had a lot to do that afternoon to prepare for the party and sleepover, but my husband, Bruce (who I did not think was very keen on observing birds), insisted we go on a bushwalk with him. You see, Bruce works as a machine operator and the company he works for has been contracted to cut out a firebreak below the Toowoomba range near the bike track below Redwood Park. While he has been cutting through the Lantana bush and when he stops the machine for a break he has been sitting there quietly observing birds, because what else is there to do? He told me he found something interesting and wanted to show Tristan and me. So we packed our binoculars, camera and bird book and we set off.

Well, being just beginners, trying to identify the birds was a challenge to say the least. I think within the first 10 minutes Bruce was getting tired of me stopping all the time and pulling out the trusty Morcombe bird guide to try and identify the bird that was flitting around in the shrubs (boy did I miss the experts to tell me what bird was what!) and every other bird I saw that morning.

About 20 minutes into the walk and getting closer to the sound of the bush I love the most, that is the elusive **Eastern Whipbird**, (which has always been our goal to spot) we came across two birds flitting about in the tree ahead of us, and there they were, a male and a female whipbird. Out came the book, I looked, and looked again, Bruce looked, Tristan looked, the couple of birds moved to a tree down the track and we followed, we got out the book and looked through the binoculars again and at the book and repeated the exercise. Then we had to confirm, yes this was a pair of whipbirds, the sound coming out of their beaks also confirmed our suspicions. I could not believe it, we found them, amazing. So, now I had reached the goal



Eastern Whipbird, Ulladulla, NSW

for the day I turned to my husband and said, well let's turn back I have seen the bird I wanted to. Bruce said "no, I have not shown you what I wanted to show you yet." So off we set further down the track. Boy did we spot some birds, and we had a lot of trouble trying to identify them all.

We came to a clearing and Bruce asked me to get out the binoculars and look straight ahead of where I was standing and their before our eyes was a nest and on top of the nest was a grey bird with a funny Mohawk, yes you guessed it, a whipbird nest. Well we were so excited that we had not only found the pair but a nest as well. Unfortunately our camera is not very good and the picture is very poor (We must get ourselves a decent camera).

Two hours later after climbing what felt like halfway up the range, we were back at the car, tired and thirsty, but it was well worth the walk. The list of birds we **could** identify that day is as follows:

Golden Whistler, Variegated Fairy-wren, Red-browed Finch, Silveryeye, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Eastern Whipbird, Rufous Whistler, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike.

The one thing I learned from that morning was how I really missed having an experienced bird observer with us to help us identify all the wonderful birds we saw and heard. (And never trust my husband when he says "just a 20 minute walk, don't bother bringing the water, we won't be long").

Bird of the Month

Crested Shrike-tit: *Falcunculus frontatus*

Dimensions: 15-19 cm

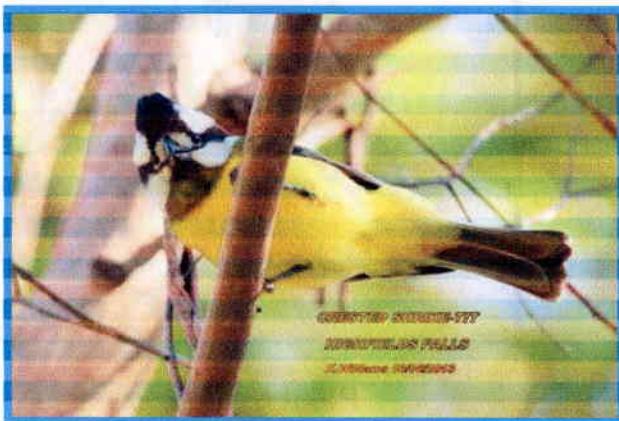
Similar species: Golden Whistler (Does not have the crest or the white markings on the face).

Photos by: Kevin Williams and Charles Dove

The Crested Shrike-tit is quite a distinctive bird with erectile crown feathers forming a crest at the top of the head. The head is black with two vivid white stripes above and below the eye. The bill is thick and strong, used to pull bark away from trees and to tear away wood to get at insect larvae etc.

The male has a black throat and chin. In the female this is olive green (as shown in these pictures) and the juvenile white. The back is olive green and the front of the bird is vivid yellow. Juveniles are a much paler colour on the front of the body. Male and female work together in rearing chicks. They are sometimes helped out by another bird, probably a chick from the previous year.

In TBO's area you might see a Crested Shrike-tit at Highfields Falls or Redwood Park in most months. Our club records indicate this is more likely in the Autumn and least likely in December.



Female Crested Shrike-tit showing olive-coloured throat and chin.
Photos by: Kev Williams (top and bottom Left); Charles Dove (bottom right)

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 Bristlebird
Barren Grounds, NSW
Photo: Charles Dove



Caspian Tern
Tallawarra, NSW
Photo: Charles Dove



**Restless Flycatcher and Fuscous
Honeyeater**
Postmans Ridge, SEQ
Photo: Mick Atzeni



Palm Cockatoo
Iron Range National Park, FNQ
Photo: Russ Jenkins

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
Black Kite (>2000)	01/06/13	Toowoomba Tip	PM, KO
Square-tailed Kite	02/05/13	Gatton	MA
Australian Bustard (2)	29/04/13	North of Mt Tyson	AS
Banded Lapwing	15/05/13	Macalister	SB
Red-winged Parrot	29/03/13	Valeview	GF, AF
Blue Bonnet	12/06/13	Mt Kent (Cambooya)	PM
Budgerigar (~ 500)	01/05/13	Leyburn	SB
Budgerigar (~200)	03/05/13	Pittsworth/Oakey Road	SB
Budgerigar (~20)	02/06/13	"Tiddalac", Upper Lockyer	MA
Budgerigar (~200)	15/06/13	Athol	PM, KO
Western Gerygone	02/06/13	"Tiddalac" Upper Lockyer	MA
Apostlebird (28)	12/06/13	Highfields	PM, KO
White-winged Chough (7)	15/06/13	Highfields	PM, KO

MA, M. Atzeni; **SB**, S. Burke; **AF**, A. Fitzpatrick; **GF**, G. Fitzpatrick; **PM**, P. McConnell; **KO**, K. O'Donnell; **AS**, A. Silcock; **MW**, M. Wood

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

Thanks
Pat McConnell

Correction to May Newsletter Cooby Dam outing report

Intermediate Egret nesting at Cooby Dam? – probably not.

The suggestion that the Intermediate Egret seen at Cooby Dam (TBO Newsletter 425) was nesting is most likely mistaken. This species nests from October to March at its nearest site at Gatton. It is a colonial nester in trees. It feeds among reeds and other aquatic vegetation, employing a slow walk as it searches. Possibly, seen at a distance, its feeding could be mistaken for nest building.

Neil McKilligan

Coming Events

June Raptor Census 29-30 June Weekend

Those wishing to take part in this year's Raptor Count should contact one of the leaders listed below. The leader for each section will give you the date and time they are leaving as well as the meeting place.

Northern Section –

Pat McConnell (Tel: 46315573 work)

Southern Section –

Ken Wells (Tel: 46612547)

Eastern Section –

Mike McGoldrick (Tel: 46357371)

Western Section –

Mick Atzeni; (Tel: 46881318; 0458948955)

Saturday, 27th July

267 Sawpit Gully Rd, Rockmount

Meet: 7:30 am

Leader: TBA

Contact: Mick Atzeni 0458948955

Committee Members

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Committee Members	Joe Allen Kylie Grose Martin	

Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 15th July 2013
Please e-mail or post articles and photos to the Editor.

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Surface Mail