

TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS



No. 429
September 2013

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

Editorial

Pat McConnell

Spring is here but it feels like summer has arrived three months early. I heard my first Eastern Koel on Sunday 22 September and then saw my first Channel-billed Cuckoo the day after. I am just waiting for the Dollarbirds to arrive at home to complete the set for Highfields. I do realise though that all three species have been seen by other members elsewhere locally.

Don't forget the AGM on Wednesday 23 October. Al Young is our guest speaker and he always does a great presentation. Our feature article this month is from Russell Jenkins on his Iron Range Trip. Also check out some wonderful photos and the Rockmount outing report. Please remember that Membership fees are due now.



Golden Whistler

Photo: Robert Ashdown
Crows Nest NP 08/13

2013 Challenge

Tally: 226 spp as of 17/09/13



TOOWOOMBA
BIRD OBSERVERS

This Issue

The Weight of Gold

By Russell Jenkins

'Bowra' Birds

By Kev & Kay Williams

Outing Report

By Mick Atzeni

Photographers' Page

Several photographers

AND MORE...

OUTINGS

September Outing

Saturday 28th 2013

Venue: Lockyer Wetlands

Meet: Lake Apex @ 7am

Contact: Mick Atzeni

0458 948 955

October Annual Census

Fri 25th- Mon 28th 2013

Venue: Local survey area

Contact: Mick Atzeni

P.O. Box 4730, Toowoomba East 4350

www.toowoombabirdobservers.org

MEMBERSHIP: Adult/family \$45

Pensioner/student \$40

Feature

Traveller's Tales & Tidbits....

From Iron Range region, Cape York, October 2012...

The Weight of Gold

By Russell Jenkins

We came out empty-handed on the first day. We also missed out with our first tries on the second day and it seemed we were going to miss out altogether. We had spread-out and were moving forth in our final search. I heard a soft sound up at the top of a tree in front of me and I began to focus my eyes on a small greenish parrot. As the second-hand ticked to the next stroke, Mick, some thirty metres to the left of me, announced, "Found them." ('On ya, Mick'. I was a second too slow. I did take a single pic of my find (left) and later confirmed it was indeed what we were looking for). Mick's find, however, was low to the ground and consisted of several birds.

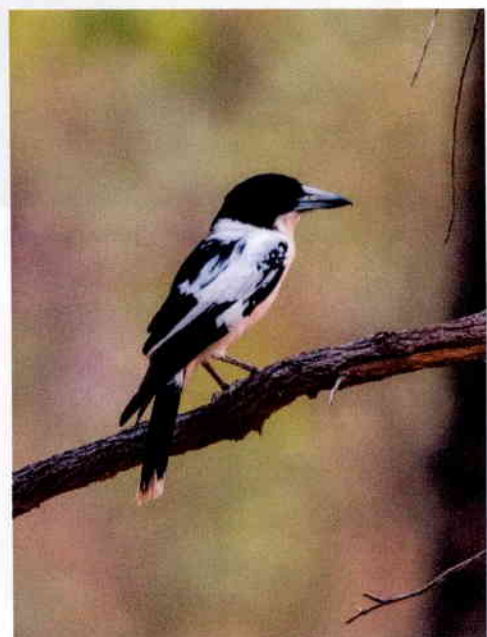


Golden-shouldered Parrot (first glimpse)

I'd done just a little research before the tour. I had learned that there were just 75 pairs of **Golden-shouldered Parrots** in the wild. All confined to special habitats of the lower reaches of Cape York. Now, almost a year later and I find estimates of 1000 to 1500 hundred individuals in the wild. It depends what you find on the internet of course so please disregard the accuracy of my estimates. It is for sure, however, that the Golden-shouldered Parrot is endangered as listed by Birdlife International. There are some small populations but all are threatened by a variety of conditions. When watching our gentle little family, I observed a couple of swoops at them by a **Black-backed Butcherbird** (which sent them flurrying) and have since found that butcherbirds certainly predate on small parrots. Predation is of course common by cats and other introduced species. I was quite excited to realise however, that our family consisted of; I think one male, but several

young birds. My delight soon became concern as our tour guide, Klaus, explained that they are usually successful at breeding but numerous birds are lost in the wet season as the dusty patches of grass seed become flooded and food becomes scarce. I have learned that this species relies on carefully timed fire that rejuvenates the grass and flowers on which they feed. Golden-shouldered Parrots nest in termite mounds and it is fascinating to think about the mounds not just protecting the eggs but maintaining a suitable temperature for the eggs success. One mound on one property is not enough, however, as nesting sites are regularly changed after each breeding season to avoid parasites etc. It must be understood that their world is delicate and can be easily destroyed by livestock, floods, ill-timed fire and predators as well as, of course, other changes to their environment. Maybe several of these factors also contributed to the disappearance of the Golden-shouldered Parrot's close relative, the **Paradise Parrot** from the Darling Downs.

My advice is not to get a new camera just before you go on a tour. Instead of concentrating on live birds at close quarters my attention



Black-backed Butcherbird

kept readjusting to the back of my camera trying to learn the menu and change focusing settings because I kept focusing on the grass in front of my subjects. I would have known instinctively how to adjust my older camera. I think it was because of this, I failed to get a decent portrait of the shy father. With any camera, I recommend practice, practice, practice.



Golden-shouldered Parrot – Adult Female

Attention away from the camera and I understand what a privilege it was to behold the family foraging for seed in the delicate vegetation just metres in front of my feet.

“Tread gently”, I told myself. I may not have the power to stop fire or rain or save a species from endangerment, but even to the slightest degree, just because I have learned of them, the weight of their

future is upon my shoulders.



Golden-shouldered Parrot - Family

References and Further Reading

<http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=1473>

http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/threatened-species/endangered/endangered-animals/goldenshouldered_parrot.html

http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=720

<http://www.arkive.org/golden-shouldered-parrot/psephotus-chrysopterygius/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden-shouldered_Parrot



Golden-shouldered Parrot - Young Male



Golden-shouldered Parrot – Young Male in flight



Golden-shouldered Parrot – Family

More travellers' tales & tidbits, this time, from Kay & Kev Williams.

'Bowra Birds' – A photographic outing report ☺



Major Mitchell's Cockatoo



Major Mitchell's Cockatoo



Red-winged Parrot (male)



Australian Ringneck



Bourke's Parrot



Red-winged Parrot (female)

Outing Report

Rockmount region, July 27th 2013

By Mick Atzeni

There were new faces left, right and centre on this outing including several Citizens of the Lockyer members who took up our invitation, my guests Brendan Marquardt and his wife, fellow Upper Lockyer residents Elsie and Imogen Caudell, and new club member Kylie Somerset.

After meeting at the Stockyard Hall, we visited the properties of Rockmount residents Carol Stephens and Tricia Walton. It's always such a joy to be able to get off the roadside and onto private property. Even better when the owners are kindred spirits, and join in, like Carol and Tricia did.

At Carol's, Grey Fantails, Superb Fairy-wrens, Red-browed Finches and Brown Thornbills were some of the more obliging species. Some luckier attendees saw a Varied Triller and Spotted Pardalote, while we all had to be content with only hearing a Wonga Pigeon.

At Tricia's, a male Regent Bowerbird flashed by but unfortunately most missed it. Plenty got to see the male Golden Whistler though, a gorgeous bird that never fails to impress. A pair of Brown Falcons courting over the valley captivated us during morning tea. Alas, for the photographers, the best opportunities came after most had left, a stunning party of male Red-backed Fairy-wrens being the highlight. A brief final stop at Stockyard Creek near the hall yielded three more species: Peaceful Dove, Hardhead and Restless Flycatcher

Thanks to Carol and Tricia for their hospitality. Overall, 66 species were recorded.

Species Lists

Carol Stephen's property, Rockmount Rd: Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Wonga Pigeon, Rainbow Lorikeet, Pheasant Coucal, Laughing Kookaburra, Rainbow Bee-eater, Superb Fairy-wren, Spotted Pardalote, Brown Thornbill, Lewin's Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, Rose Robin, Grey-crowned Babbler, Eastern Whipbird, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, Double-barred Finch, Red-browed Finch

Tricia Walton's property, Sawpit Gully Road: Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Falcon, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove, Rainbow Lorikeet, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Pheasant Coucal, Rainbow Bee-eater, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Striated Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, Rose Robin, Eastern Whipbird, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Varied Triller, Olive-backed Oriole, Figbird, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, Regent Bowerbird, Satin Bowerbird, Double-barred Finch, Red-browed Finch, Silveryeye

Stockyard Hall and Stockyard Creek: Brown Quail, Australian Wood Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead, Australasian Grebe, Straw-necked Ibis, Dusky Moorhen, Masked Lapwing, Crested Pigeon, Peaceful Dove, Galah, Pale-headed Rosella, Striped Honeyeater, Restless Flycatcher, Magpie-lark, Willie Wagtail, Australian Magpie, Zebra Finch, Mistletoebird, Welcome Swallow, Tawny Grassbird

Incidental: White-faced Heron, Black Kite, Nankeen Kestrel, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Noisy Miner

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
Pacific Baza	17/08/13	Nardoo St, Darling Heights	AY, HY
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	08/09/13	"Abberton", Helidon	BJ
Spotted Harrier	05/09/13	Helidon	BJ
Peregrine Falcon	24/08/13	Lockyer Siding	MA
Little Bronze-Cuckoo	06/09/13	"Abberton" Helidon	BJ
Little Bronze-Cuckoo	08/09/13	"Tiddalac", Upper Lockyer	MA
Eastern Koel	15/09/13	Mt Lofty, Toowoomba	MA
Channel-billed Cuckoo	14/09/13	Glen Lomond Park	BL
Southern Boobook	28/08/13	"Tiddalac", Upper Lockyer	MA
Barn Owl	20/08/13	Howmans Rd, Lockyer	MA
Masked Owl *	24/08/13	Mt Kynoch, Toowoomba	PM, KO
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	24/08/13	Thomas Rd, Upper Lockyer	MA
Ground Cuckoo-shrike (3)	03/09/13	"Abberton", Helidon	BJ
Plum-headed Finch (20+)	01/09/13	"Abberton", Helidon	MW

* Road Kill

MA, M. Atzeni; **BJ**, B. Jolly; **BL**, B. Learmonth; **PM**, P. McConnell; **KO**, K. O'Donnell; **MW**, M. Wood; **AY**, A. Young; **HY**, H. Young.

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.

Thanks
Pat McConnell