

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

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NEWS-SHEET No. 49 - JANUARY, 1980.

Long standing members of this Club will perhaps recall the incident of the Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*) in January of 1976. This bird was found dead on the Range Highway after the passage of cyclone David, doubtless borne here by the strong winds. Identification was agreed by three club members and the bird was admitted to the Club list. Certainly a most unusual bird on the list of an inland city, but nevertheless brought here by natural means (as distinct from human). I mention this now because we recently received a note from the RAOU Historical Atlas seeking verification of the sighting, which had been submitted, along with all official Club sightings, to the Atlas scheme. As Club Records Officer I have replied giving details of the record. Identification was subsequently confirmed by Don Vernon, Curator of Birds, Queensland Museum and the bird now forms part of the Museum collection of study skins.

Bird observers come from all walks of life. The truth of this was borne out recently. The Most Reverend Bishop Thomas of the Diocese of Geraldton (WA) visited Toowoomba in connection with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Toowoomba Diocese of the Catholic Church. The Bishop is a keen bird observer and was put in touch with our Club. Bill Jolly and Michael Atzeni showed him some of our birding spots and were able to provide several "firsts".

Elsewhere in this issue is a list of dates for Field Days for the coming year. I hope this will be of value in planning your birding activities. Also this month we publish the results of the Annual Bird Census conducted in October last. Sufficient here to thank all members who took part. Bird count day is a busy and tiring one but I think you will agree the value of what we achieve is well worth the effort. Thank you.

Finally, this month, I must announce that it is my intention to relinquish the post of Editor/Records Officer. This is being done for personal reasons. Although only recently re-elected to the post I find now that it would be best if I step aside. I would like to extend my sincere personal thanks to all the members who have contributed to the news-sheet in the past and would ask you to keep your contributions flowing to maintain the sheet in the future. Under the terms of the Club Constitution, such vacancies occurring between elections shall be filled by the Executive. To this end an invitation to accept the office of Editor/Records Officer has been extended to John Gregor. I am happy to say that John has accepted. It is my hope that all members will rally round and give John their support.

Ron Hopkinson,
Editor.

FLOCKING OF AUSTRALIAN MAGPIE-LARK.

One of several questions posed through this journal last year concerned the flocking of this species, apparently at certain times of the year. Ron Wilson is doing some in-depth research on the subject and we hope to publish his findings next News-sheet. The other question still awaiting comment from members is the one concerning Blue-faced Honeyeaters. Any takers?

Ron Hopkinson.

FOOTNOTE ON A FROGMOUTH.

Sadly it would seem that the Tawny Frogmouth, my sister-in-law and I had been keeping an eye on, nesting in a gum tree near her dairy, as mentioned in News-sheet No. 47 of November last, must have been sitting on an empty nest. To our certain knowledge she had been sitting for two whole months and maybe even longer for we did not see the building operations, but now she appears to have finally given up (early December).

We strongly suspect the activities of a very evident pair of Torresian Crows, nesting in a nearby and even higher gum tree; a splendid vantage point from which to overlook the frogmouths and maybe raid their eggs in an unguarded moment but of course we will never know the true story and can only hope they have better luck next time.

Ann Shore.

BIRDS AT ELANDA POINT, LAKE COOTHARABA, COOLOOLA.

We spent a very hot week before Christmas camping at Elanda beneath the ti-trees (*Melaleuca quinquenerva*) beside the shallow lake.

There were three major bird events. A pair of handsome Banded Rails emerged frequently each day from the swampy undergrowth and walked within two metres of our tent if we sat quietly. Any sudden movement, however, either by us or other birds and they would run into cover in a flash. Their tails bob incessantly like swamphens and moorhens.

Elizabeth watched a male Red-backed Wren picking ants off the bole of a blue-gum. When he'd finished we checked on the ants and they were the Pacific Brown ant (*Cecophylla megacephala*). This was a good 'balance of nature' move on his part as this species of ant may well be the Earth's most populous species of animal. He returned to this meal again on following days but always briefly - possibly the ant is a currysome morsel.

A large pendulous nest of woven leaves in the twigs of a nearby bloodwood (about 8m. above ground) was constantly attended by a pair of Noisy Friarbirds. This bellicose pair put to flight all intruders into their territory such as kookaburras, magpies and dollarbirds. One day four majestic Pelicans came beating and planing their way along the shore at tree-top height. I'd forgotten the Friarbirds until a diminutive olive form hurled itself upward at the formation of huge birds. To my amazement the formation broke and Pelicans fled headlong down to the lake. On another occasion one of the Friarbirds actually hit a crow on the back. But some birds were permitted in their territory including, to my surprise, a pair of Blue-faced Honeyeaters. Also their surveillance cannot have been quite perfect because on our last day there emerged from the nest and sat on the edge a large and well-feathered (and, no doubt, well fed) Koel fledgeling!

Our bird sightings included:-

Australian Pelican
Pied Cormorant
Black Cormorant
White-faced Heron
Osprey
Brown Quail

Buff-banded Rail
Purple Swamphen
Brown Cuckoo-dove
Aust. King Parrot
Common Koel
Pheasant Coucal

(cont/d.)

BIRDS AT ELANDA POINT (cont/d.)

Laughing Kookaburra	Eastern Whipbird
Sacred Kingfisher	Variiegated Fairy-wren
Dollarbird	Red-backed Fairy-wren
Welcome Swallow	Varied Sittella
Fairy Martin	Noisy Friarbird
Black-f. Cuckoo-shrike	Blue-f. Honeyeater
Rufous Whistler	Lewin's Honeyeater
Rufous Fantail	White-thr. Honeyeater
Grey Fantail	Silvereye
Willie Wagtail	Red-browed Firetail.

And on several occasions, a female Red-winged Parrot which presumably was an escape.

Mike and Elizabeth Russell.

FIELD TRIP REPORT - 16.12.79. -
LAKE CLARENDON AND LAKE DYER.

The Club's final field trip for 1979 took us to some familiar Lockyer Valley lagoons where the breeze across the surface of the water provided some slight but very welcome relief from the heat of the day.

The body of water close to Grantham which we have still to name held large numbers of ducks while its fringes were frequented by numerous Cattle Egrets, both Red-kneed and Black-fronted Dotterels, and alongside the stilts and swampnens just one busy Marsh Sandpiper. We were forced to halt our progression between Grantham and Gatton in order to feast our eyes upon a truly riotous display presented by wheeling parties of Rainbow Bee-eaters, Tree-martins and White-backed Swallows who were plainly finding rations aplenty in the air alongside Gattton Creek. Beneath this fast-moving scene ground-loving Richard's Pipits explored the fields, Red-backed Wrens clambered about the herbage and Australian Kestrels and Sacred Kingfishers launched sorties from power-lines in search of less high-flying comestibles.

The reward of sharing the enthusiasm of club members at that early stage of the day settled the field-trip as a success for me before we had reached either of the lakes which represented our major objectives for the day.

Scanning of the multitude of occupants of the shallows and part-submerged fence-posts at Lake Clarendon was interrupted soon after our arrival by the dramatic low level intrusion upon the scene of a White-breasted Sea-eagle who appeared at speed and close-by, causing a large-scale reorganisation of seating and feeding arrangements on the part of those birds already in residence. This finely-attired specimen of Australia's only true fish-eagle proceeded to displace several dozen Cattle Egrets as he dropped into a large and distant tree which held a huge nest of eyrie-like proportions. While we were busy separating the image of a tightly sitting Latham's Snipe from the camouflage of surrounding tussocks of vegetation a second Sea-eagle arrived upon the scene hotly pursued by crows, despite which we were not able during our brief stay to observe any objective evidence of either courtship or breeding.

Following some heavy storm-rains on Saturday evening in the Laidley area Lake Dyer was as full of water, and water-skiers, as I have ever seen it. As a result the Northern end of the lake was devoid of bird-life, such avian visitors as there were being packed into the Southern shallows beyond the sphere of influence of the boating fraternity. Here, exploring the muddy fringes we were again to find stilts, lapwings, plovers and one more Marsh Sandpiper along with a variety of ducks, spoonbills and egrets as detailed on the list which follows.

Bill Jolly.

Species List - Lake Clarendon and Lake Dyer - 16.12.79.

Australasian Grebe	Latham's Snipe
Australian Pelican	Silver Gull
Darter	Feral Pigeon
Little B. Cormorant	Crested Pigeon
Little P. Cormorant	Galah
Pacific Heron	Cockatiel
White-faced Heron	Pale-headed Rosella
Cattle Egret	Red-rumped Parrot
Great Egret	Common Koel
Glossy Ibis	Laughing Kookaburra
Sacred Ibis	Sacred Kingfisher
Straw-necked Ibis	Rainbow Bee-eater
Royal Spoonbill	Dollarbird
Yellow-b. Spoonbill	White-backed Swallow
Plumed Whist.-Duck	Welcome Swallow
Black Swan	Tree Martin
Pacific Black Duck	Richard's Pipit
Grey Teal	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Hardhead	Willie Wagtail
Maned Duck	Grey-crowned Babbler
Bl.-sh. Kite	Golden-headed Cisticola
Whistling Kite	Red-b. Fairy-wren
White-bellied Sea-eagle	Noisy Miner
Aust. Kestrel	House Sparrow
Dusky Moorhen	Common Starling
Purple Swamphen	Common Mynah
Eurasian Coot	Aust. Magpie-lark
Masked Lapwing	Grey Butcherbird
Red-kneed Dotterel	Pied Butcherbird
Bl.-fr. Plover	Australian Magpie
Bl.-winged Stilt	Torresian Crow.
Marsh Sandpiper	

FIELD DAYS FOR 1980.

As mentioned in the editorial, herewith is a list of proposed dates for Club Field Days for the upcoming year. It might be of value to record them in your diary to facilitate your birding plans.

The dates given are all Sundays but this does not preclude the possibility of week-end camps being arranged later.

27.1.80	20.7.80
24.2.80	24.8.80
23.3.80	21.9.80
27.4.80	19.10.80
25.5.80	23.11.80
22.6.80	21.12.80

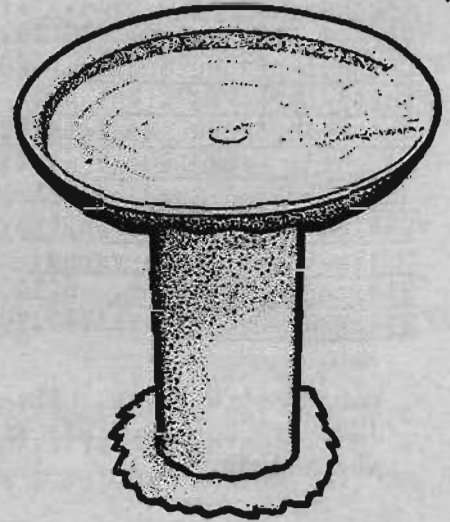
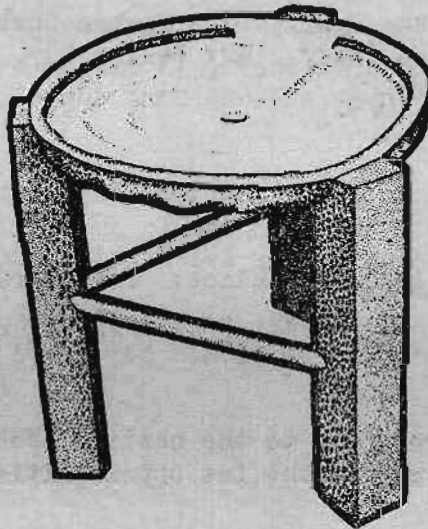
"Do-it-yourself" birdbaths

By courtesy of the RSPB Magazine "Birds" we reprint this most interesting piece. Simplicity of design and construction should make it a project any handy-man (handyperson?) could tackle.

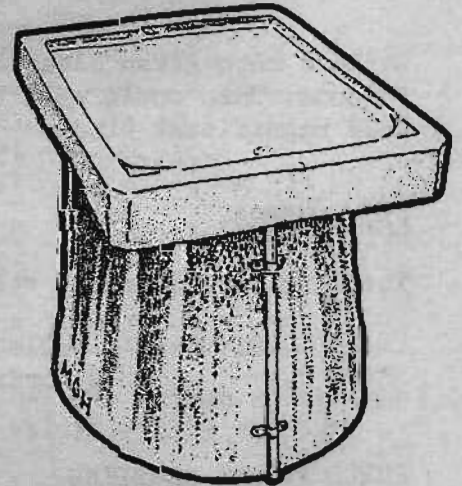
Although the remarks about the ice on cold mornings were meant for an English reader remember this is Toowoomba and July will arrive.

Ed.

With the onset of colder weather, it is time to set up your birdtables again, but don't forget that water is just as important for birds in winter, and that a birdbath will attract birds to your garden all the year round. RSPB member Mr F L Powell sent us these ideas for making three simple, inexpensive birdbaths.



2. As no. 1 except that base has been made by using a 2'6" length of 6" drain pipe, filled with stones for extra stability.



3. Dimensions 24" x 18" x 3 1/2". Concrete cast in an old table drawer. Line drawer with greaseproof paper before commencing. Fit drainage tube at deep end. Floor slopes from nil to 3". A piece of corrugated cardboard was left under gentle pressure on ramp until concrete was fully set. This makes a good cover for an old tree stump.

1. Materials:-

Old 18" dustbin lid. "Minipak" of sand and cement. Broom handle or 6' of batten. 5' x 3" fencing post. 1 1/2" length of plastic tubing with plug, cork or stopper to fit.

Saw post into three equal pieces and cut top to form support for lid. Let in three lengths of broom handle halfway up each leg to hold in position. Check that legs are correct distance apart at top to support lid. (It might be found simpler to use four legs instead of three, as they can be fixed in a square position with battens. In this case the tops must be cut on the diagonal to support the lid.)

Cut or punch hole in dustbin lid to take tubing (exact fit is not necessary). Insert tube, leaving 1" protruding on the inside. Mix sand and cement to a stiff consistency and apply a 1/2" layer to the entire inside of lid. Ensure that floor is flush with top of tubing. Build up ramp on one side for smaller birds. When partly dry, roughen surface. A pleasing effect can be obtained by pressing a piece of plastic netting into the partly set cement to form indentations. Allow to dry slowly (three to four days), keeping covered with a damp cloth. For first week empty and refill daily, afterwards as required for cleaning.

Mr Powell tells us that "all three baths are in constant use in my own and a neighbour's garden." Once set up an occasional scrub with an old brush is the only maintenance required, but do remember to break the ice on cold mornings!

"BIRDS" (R.S.P.B.) -

Autumn, 1979.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES.

Little Pied Cormorant. 10.11.79. Lions Park. SB. AT.
Little Eagle. 21.11.79. over West Street. SB.
Purple Swamphen. all December. "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ. WJ.
Masked Lapwing. 5&14.11.79. Range Street. LAB.
Common Bronzewing. 18.11.79. Wirra Glen, Highfields. SB. AT.
Channel-billed Cuckoo. 20.12.79. Rangeview. GC. JEC.
White-throated Nightjar. 1.12.79. "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ. WJ.
White-throated Needletail. (30 plus) 6.12.79. Picnic Point. GC.
Laughing Kookaburra. (nesting & 2 young) all December. "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ. WJ.
White-backed Swallow. (large party) 10.12.79. Ocean St. GC. JCC.
Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike. 5.12.79. Redwood Park. GC.
White-throated Gerygone. 30.12.79. Mango Vale, Withcott. AHS.
Striped Honeyeater. 6.12.79. "Ringmere", Withcott. EJ. WJ.
Spangled Drongo. 11.11.79. Jubilee Park. SB.

LAB: Leslie Boyce. SB: Shane Brady. GC: Graham Corbin. JCC: Jane Corbin.
JEC: Jim Corbin. EJ: Eileen Jolly. WJ: Bill Jolly. AHS: Ann Shore.
AT: Andrew Tan.

FIELD DAY FOR JANUARY.

Date: Sunday, January 27th 1980. Place: Perseverance Dam.
Assembly Point: Pigott's Car Park. Time: 8.15 a.m. for departure 8.30 a.m. sharp.

We have been given clear directions to the nesting area of a pair of Peregrine Falcons. This could well be one of the few opportunities we get for a view of this magnificent bird.

NEW MEMBERS.

The Club is pleased to welcome the following new members:

St. Mary's College (Corporate membership), West St., Toowoomba.
Co-ordinator - Ron Hamilton - ph: 32 4788.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

Q.O.S. Newsletter - November, 1979.

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FOURTH ANNUAL BIRD CENSUS - TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB - 21.10.79.

Having been asked by Bill Jolly, who organised the 1979 Annual Bird Census, if I would prepare this year's report, it has been my privilege to do so and also it marks my debut to the newsletter.

The 1979 Annual Toowoomba Bird Census was once again confined to the area studied in the previous two counts, i.e. the two 10 minute blocks, joining each other along the line of 152° east longitude. The Western block is referred to as the Uprange, the Eastern block, the Downrange. This area was divided into 20 sectors and each was visited by a small party for a limited period during the day.

Unfortunately, bleak weather in the morning undoubtedly hampered the a.m. Uprange observation. However, Downrange was fine all day.

Surprisingly, over 800 more birds were seen this year by nearly the same number of people as last year.

This year's census netted 8658 birds of 134 species. Of these species, two were new for the club, viz; Red-backed Kingfisher and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Excluding these 2 species, eight species were seen this count but not in 1977 or 1978.

As the area and sectors have been the same for the past 3 years, it is appropriate to mention that approximately 80% of the club's official list of species for the area have been seen at least once in the past 3 counts.

At this stage only broad generalizations can be made, but perhaps the following table can paint a picture of sorts. (N.B. 1976 has been omitted because it covered a different area.)

U = Uprange D = Downrange	1977	1978	1979
No. of birds seen	5947	6011	6858
No. of Species - U	104	104	103
- D	<u>92</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>105</u>
Total No. of Species	130	128	134
Species Seen U & D	66	73	74
Non Passerines	65	55	63
Passerines	<u>65</u>	<u>73</u>	<u>71</u>

Congratulations and hearty thanks to the 32 people (below) who helped on the day. Their efforts were recorded and can only be treated as valuable data for future reference.

Michael Atzeni

Participants:- Michael Atzeni, Margot Bartlett, Pete Bostock, Leslie Boyce, Shane Brady, John Coman, Graham Corbin, Jane Corbin, Jim Corbin, Coranne Dolley, Mick Dolley, John Duff, Sue Elmes, John Gregor, Gloria Hamilton, Ron Hamilton, Ron Hopkinson, Marilyn Jacobs, Bill Jolly, Eileen Jolly, Isabel Jolly, Owen Jolly, Bill McKenzie, David Newlands, Sue Patterson, Sandy Pottinger, Alwyn Powell, Gary Rogers, Elizabeth Russell, Mike Russell, Anne Shore, John Shore.

LIST OF SPECIES AND NUMBERS OBSERVED

	<u>U.</u>	<u>D.</u>	<u>T.</u>		<u>U.</u>	<u>D.</u>	<u>T.</u>
Aust. Grebe	13	14	27	Ruf. Night Heron	2	1	3
Darter	-	1	1	Glossy Ibis	-	5	5
Little P. Cormorant	2	2	4	Sacred Ibis	73	35	108
Pacific Heron	1	4	5	Straw-necked Ibis	31	79	110
White-faced Heron	7	8	15	Yellow-b. Spoonbill	1	-	1
Cattle Egret	2	1	3	Plumed Whist.-Duck	-	3	3
Great Egret	1	1	2	Pacific Black Duck	14	85	99
Intermediate Egret	-	1	1	Grey Teal	4	127	131

LIST OF SPECIES AND NUMBERS OBSERVED (Continued)

	<u>U.</u>	<u>D.</u>	<u>T.</u>		<u>U.</u>	<u>D.</u>	<u>T.</u>
Hardhead	-	46	46	Spec. Monarch	1	-	1
Maned Duck	38	62	100	Restless Flycatcher	-	8	8
Bl.-Sh. Kite	14	7	21	Rufous Fantail	5	-	5
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	-	1	Grey Fantail	7	-	7
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	4	6	Willie Wagtail	12	64	76
Aust. Hobby	1	-	1	Eastern Whipbird	12	12	24
Brown Falcon	1	-	1	Grey-crowned Babbler	-	10	10
Aust. Kestrel	36	15	51	Clamorous Reed-Warbler	7	-	7
Stubble Quail	-	1	1	Tawny Grassbird	-	1	1
Dusky Moorhen	6	14	20	Golden-headed Cisticola	6	25	31
Purple Swamphen	-	49	49	Sup. Fairy-wren	32	69	101
Eurasian Coot	-	53	53	Var. Fairy-wren	2	10	12
Comb-cr. Jacana	-	8	8	Red-b. Fairy-wren	4	26	30
Masked Lapwing	12	18	30	White-browed Scrubwren	20	2	22
Banded Lapwing	20	-	20	Speckled Warbler	2	3	5
Bl. fr. Plover	-	6	6	Weebill	1	-	1
Bl.-winged Stilt	-	16	16	Wh.-th. Gerygone	12	20	32
Latham's Snipe	-	3	3	Brown Thornbill	16	-	16
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	-	1	1	Y.-rumped Thornbill	49	2	51
White-headed Pigeon	8	-	8	Yellow Thornbill	1	-	1
Feral Pigeon	220	6	226	Striated Thornbill	7	-	7
Spotted Turtle-Dove	8	-	8	Var. Sittella	5	1	6
Br. Cuckoo-Dove	3	-	3	White-throated Treecreeper	4	1	5
Peaceful Dove	2	2	4	Noisy Friarbird	11	18	29
Bar-shouldered Dove	7	26	33	Little Friarbird	5	83	88
Emerald Dove	3	-	3	Blue-faced Honeyeater	-	2	2
Common Bronzewing	2	2	4	Noisy Miner	220	78	298
Crested Pigeon	80	48	128	Lewin's Honeyeater	26	6	32
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo	-	3	3	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	7	2	9
Galah	349	48	397	White-throated Honeyeater	1	-	1
Rainbow Lorikeet	10	-	10	White-naped Honeyeater	-	1	1
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	67	14	81	Brown Honeyeater	5	24	29
Little Lorikeet	9	8	17	Eastern Spinebill	-	1	1
Cockatiel	92	11	103	Scarlet Honeyeater	6	5	11
Pale-headed Rosella	89	67	156	Mistletoebird	-	2	2
Red-rumped Parrot	80	-	80	Spotted Pardalote	8	-	8
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	-	1	Striated Pardalote	9	10	19
Common Koel	9	13	22	Silvereve	91	27	118
Channel-billed Cuckoo	-	7	7	House Sparrow	213	10	223
Pheasant Coucal	-	4	4	Red-browed Firetail	65	25	90
Wh.-thro. Needletail	-	51	51	Zebra Finch	45	114	159
Azure Kingfisher	-	1	1	Double-barred Finch	5	211	216
Laughing Kookaburra	31	26	57	Chestnut-br. Mannikin	-	2	2
Red-backed Kingfisher	-	1	1	Common Starling	409	190	599
Sacred Kingfisher	24	30	54	Common Mynah	188	83	271
Rainbow Bee-eater	-	39	39	Olive-backed Oriole	3	15	18
Dollarbird	44	34	78	Figbird	5	10	15
Singing Bushlark	-	1	1	Satin Bowerbird	5	8	13
White-backed Swallow	5	7	12	Regent Bowerbird	2	-	2
Welcome Swallow	18	50	68	White-winged Chough	-	9	9
Tree Martin	2	1	3	Aust. Magpie-lark	128	96	224
Fairy Martin	9	17	26	B.-faced Wood-swallow	1	-	1
Richard's Pipit	5	6	11	Dusky Woodswallow	-	3	3
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	87	54	141	Grey Butcherbird	11	4	15
Eastern Yellow Robin	9	-	9	Pied Butcherbird	41	25	66
Golden Whistler	4	-	4	Australian Magpie	311	100	411
Rufous Whistler	5	3	8	Pied Currawong	154	27	181
Grey Shrike-thrush	11	-	11	Australian Raven	3	-	3
Black-f. Monarch	1	-	1	Torresian Crow	289	115	404

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1980.

Any members who have not yet remitted their subscription for 1980 are requested to complete the slip below and forward it with their subscription to the Secretary/Treasurer at the earliest opportunity.

To: The Secretary,
Toowoomba Bird Club,
"Shorelands",
Withcott, 4344.

I am enclosing herewith the sum of \$6 (\$3 for students) being my membership subscription to the Toowoomba Bird Club for the calendar year 1980.

Signed _____