

Toowoomba Bird Club



NEWS-SHEET No. 5 - FEBRUARY, 1976.

First this month we have an important letter from Club President Bill Jolly:

Dear Members,

The Toowoomba Bird Club has already become well-established. In the five months since our inaugural meeting our membership has steadily grown; we have enjoyed a number of successful meetings and outings, commenced a useful survey of bird status in our area, started in motion a few specific projects and indulged in a little club promotion and exposure through the local media.

We are in fact well on the way towards becoming an active and reliable amateur group able to encourage and popularise bird-watching whilst doing some useful basic-work in the process.

This I feel is the right time for the club to move towards setting itself on a constitutional footing; to adopt a statement of aims and a set of rules leading also to the formal election of officers. My own personal workload and other commitments are increasing rapidly at this time and I have to advise that I am stepping down from the position of Club President, a decision taken in the confident knowledge that the club is firmly on its feet and facing in the right direction.

Our Club Secretary has already prepared a draft constitution for members' consideration and that draft is attached to this news-sheet. The aim is for our club to become fully constitutional at an early date, but in any event before the first anniversary of our inaugural meeting, i.e. by October, 1976. Please be sure to attend our April meeting where the details of our proposed constitution will be the main item on the agenda.

Bill Jolly.

In the meantime our Club Executive has come to feel that the job of editing the news-sheet is over-burdening for one person and that responsibility will henceforth be shared by the full Executive acting as an Editorial Committee, the office of Editor being discontinued.

The club has received excellent promotion through Bill Jolly's interview on 4AK on Friday, 20th February. Bill spoke about birds, bird-watching, the Bird Club and its activities and the possible participation of High School students in the club.

In that connection it is felt that some contact ought to be made with science staff in Toowoomba's High Schools to tell them of our activities and to encourage their students to learn about and observe the bird-life around them through club meetings and outings. This matter will be further considered by the Executive but any suggestions from members would be most welcome.

The club has been entered onto the Toowoomba City Council's Directory of Community Organisations and the Town Library now receives our news-sheet.

Members will have seen the other promotion received, this time via The Chronicle, about Rod Hobson's discovery on the Range Highway of a dead sooty tern (*Sterna fuscata*), probably a casualty of the recent cyclone David. Such a discovery was most unusual and consequently Rod sent the specimen to the Queensland Museum in Brisbane where the species was confirmed by Don Vernon, Curator of Birds at the Museum. Rod has received a letter of thanks from Don Vernon and we feel that Rod also deserves our congratulations for his alertness to an unusual find. Members are reminded that if they keep their eyes open they too might discover some unusual specimen.

Torpidity in birds is an area of great interest and in view of this photocopies of three publications on the subject have been obtained and passed on to Steve Temple Watts in connection with his project on suspected torpidity in white-backed swallows. We wish Steve good luck in his project and trust that we shall hear more from him as the project progresses.

At our last meeting on 9th February, held at Vera Simon's home, we had a most interesting show of excellent bird colour-slides taken and presented by Marilyn Jacobs. Marilyn must have had inestimable patience to obtain these photographs and we hope that she continues with this work and will agree to show us more sometime in the future. Many thanks Marilyn and of course thank you Vera for the use of your home and your hospitality.

Also presented at the meeting were dead specimens of the following birds:-

Sooty tern - Rod Hobson
Tawny frogmouth - Alan Graham
Plumed tree-duck - Reg Eley
Crested pigeon - Vera Simon
Welcome swallow - Vera Simon
Common bronzewing - Rod Hobson

All the above-mentioned specimens have been forwarded to the Queensland Museum.

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRDS.

147 Australian raven (*Corvus coronoides*). 14.12.75. Jubilee Park. Rod Hobson & Bill Jolly.

A number of ravens regularly in a rather localised area. Rod & Bill are hoping to obtain a recording of these birds to play to members. (Refer item Crows and/or Ravens in January news-sheet).

148 Plumed tree-duck (*Dendrocygna eytoni*). 24.1.76. Kearney St. Rod & Kerrie Hobson.

149 Darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*). 24.1.76. Kearney St. Rod & Kerrie Hobson.

Sooty tern (*Sterna fuscata*). 25.1.76. Range Highway.

Found dead by Rod Hobson. Identification agreed by Rod Hobson, Bill Jolly and Ron Wilson.]

150 Pallid cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*). 7.2.76. Nelson St. Rod & Kerrie Hobson.

WASH DAY AT FLAGSTONE.

While observing superb blue wrens feeding along the side of Flagstone Creek this-afternoon I happened to notice an azure kingfisher perched on a low branch directly over the creek itself. He looked a bit ruffled, perhaps an immature I first thought, but that wasn't the case.

In the next five minutes I watched that azure kingfisher dive into the creek about fifty times! He would nose-dive in, just submerge, about-turn and shoot out again every bit as quickly as he went in. He was in the water as much as he was out and just seemed to like getting wet. He really looked to be enjoying himself, so much so that he nearly encouraged me to join in.

He was my first azure kingfisher and to see him at such close range enjoying himself added a great deal to the excitement that always accompanies the sighting of a

VERNACULAR NAMES.

The following discussion which appears in the Preface to the R.A.O.U. Interim List of Australian Songbirds by R. Schodde may explain to members the reasoning behind the several changes to vernacular usage which occur in that publication. Bill Jolly has produced a list detailing all variations in usage between the new R.A.O.U. Checklists and Peter Slater's field guides and is happy to make copies available to members on request.

"It is quite clear from publications during the last decade that problems of standardization and uniformity in the use of common names for a good number of Australian birds have not been resolved. At this stage we do not intend to discuss in detail these problems. It is enough to say that as far as possible names used in CL 1926 have not been changed, though alternative names have been eschewed in principle. In spite of this conservative approach, some names of CL 1926 are no longer acceptable for one reason or another. If changes have been made, they have been based on the following principles set out in order of priority:

- (i) Traditional names or those widely used are respected, even perhaps to the extent of re-instating names that enshrine history. This explains the reluctance to abandon the first choice of names given in CL 1926.
- (ii) For species that range beyond Australia, the name most widely or authoritatively used internationally ought to be adopted. For instance, Australian Reed Warbler becomes Clamorous Reed Warbler because that is the name for *Acrocephalus stentoreus* throughout most of its range, in south-eastern Asia and the Malay Archipelago.
- (iii) If taxonomic change submerges one species in another, the name for the submerged species ought no longer to be used. For instance, now that *Colluricincla parvula* becomes a subspecies of *C. megarrhyncha*, the name Little Shrike-thrush is suppressed.
NB It is important to recognize the principle that vernacular names ought not to be given to subspecies (see Tucker (1949) and Purchase (1973) for reasons), unless perhaps exceptions are very occasionally made for a few distinctive subspecies.
- (iv) If the name for an Australian species duplicates a well-established name for another species that does not occur in Australia, the name for our species ought to be changed. For instance, *Coracina striata* of south-eastern Asia is generally known as the Barred Cuckoo-shrike, a name which therefore ought not to be applied to *Coracina lineata*.
- (v) If the name is inaccurate or inappropriate (e.g. Yellow-fronted Honeyeater for *Lichenostomus plumulus*, which is better described as Grey-fronted Honeyeater) change ought to be made, specially if a simple, descriptively appropriate name is already available (e.g. Sandstone Shrike-thrush instead of Brown-breasted Shrike-thrush for *Colluricincla woodwardi*).
- (vi) If a name discloses the regional or taxonomic affinities or both of a species, it ought to be used, e.g. Australian Regentbird instead of Regent Bowerbird for *Sericulus chrysocephalus*.
- (vii) Eponymous names ought to be avoided if reasonable to do so, specially for species rarely seen, whose names are therefore seldom used, e.g. Dorothy's Grasswren for *Amytornis dorotheae*.
- (viii) Group-names ought not to be used for a species without qualification. For example, Shrike-tit alone is not acceptable for *Falcunculus frontatus* because there are other species of the group elsewhere.

In addition, there are some matters of printing style and presentation that are in dispute. Briefly, the principles followed here are that eponymous names ought to be spelt in the standard English manner with 's and that double-barrelled epithets and group-names ought to be hyphenated. Similarly, some terms used in CL 1926 are properly changed, e.g. Yellow-tailed Thornbill becomes Yellow-rumped Thornbill.

It is planned to publish a review and discussion of vernacular nomenclature for all Australian birds, giving detailed reasons for the choice of names officially recommended, wherever they are needed."

BIRD CASUALTIES.

The Queensland Museum has already expressed its appreciation of members' new-found enthusiasm for removing dead birds from the highways and specimens thus obtained have been welcome contributions at our recent meetings.

I am sure it is the case however that for every dead specimen collected there is at least one other (perhaps many others) in a condition sufficiently unwholesome as to preclude its removal from the roadside.

We can none-the-less collect the data if not the bird and I am proposing that we commence a register of all such records, noting the species and its location. Over a period we shall doubtless come to learn something of bird status and distribution along well-identified stretches of road and an annual review of such a register may prove to be of some value.

Where this exercise may take us is not altogether clear. Trends may show within a species, or we may encounter significant differences between species known to maintain roughly similar populations in an area. We may only learn that traffic densities are all the time increasing, but I am rather more hopeful than that.

Evidence gathered may lead us to narrow our survey to cover only specific roads travelled by members on a regular basis, but to begin with it would be appreciated if members would make a note of the species and location of all dead birds encountered on the roads and would pass this information on to the club's Records Officer.

Bill Jolly.

FEBRUARY OUTING.

The report on our February outing to Flagstone Creek has been held over to next month.

OUTING FOR MARCH, 1976.

Sunday, 14th March, 1976. Oakey.

Meet at 9.15 a.m. Oakey Butter Factory, on main highway near the railway crossing in Oakey (or at 9.00 a.m. at Steve Temple Watts' home).

We will be visiting Keong's Lagoon and Peter Ford's property where Peter is providing meat and lettuce for a barbecue lunch. Peter has indicated that his swamp is presently covered with birds so a good day seems assured. Those wishing to make a day of it are invited to return to Steve Temple Watts' for a barbecue tea (once again meat and lettuce provided) and to view some slides and paintings in the evening.

MEETING FOR APRIL, 1976.

Monday, 5th April, 1976. 7.30 p.m. at 445, West Street, Toowoomba. (Marilyn Jacobs' home). The main item on the agenda will be the detailed consideration of the draft constitution.

NEW MEMBERS.

The club is pleased to welcome the following new members:-

- Ian Cowan, Railway Street, Helidon, 4344.
- Reg & Chris Eley, 2, Gilmore St., Leichardt, Ipswich.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

"Does the Poor-Will Hibernate?", E.C. Jaeger, CONDOR, 50 (1948), 45.

"Further Observations on the Hibernation of the Poor-Will", E.C. Jaeger, CONDOR, 51 (1949), 105.

"Torpidity in the White-throated Swift, Anna Hummingbird and Poor-Will", E.C. Jaeger, CONDOR, 50 (1957), 145.

A SUMMARY OF MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS IN TOOWOOMBA DURING

JANUARY, FEBRUARY & MARCH 1976 WILL BE

PRINTED TO OUR APRIL 1976 NEWS SHEET.

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DUTIES OF EXECUTIVE AND OFFICERS (cont/d.):

- (d) Secretary shall attend meetings and take minutes of proceedings of the Club and Executive; make necessary arrangements of meetings; arrange for despatch of the Club News-Sheet; prepare agenda paper for meetings; conduct correspondence and generally to transact ordinary routine business.
- (e) Editorial Committee to prepare papers for publication and to be responsible for the issue of the News-Sheet.

MEETINGS:

- (a) Meetings to consist of Annual, Ordinary and Special.
- (b) Annual Meetings to be held on second Monday in October, at which the report of the President and the Treasurer's audited financial statement for the preceding year shall be presented and the officers for the ensuing year elected.
- (c) Ordinary Meetings to be held each month on the second Monday; minutes of previous Ordinary Meeting to be presented; correspondence read and outing arrangements finalised.
- (d) Special Meetings may be convened at any time by the Executive, either at their own instance or on the receipt of a requisition in writing setting forth in full the object of such meeting, and signed by not fewer than five members. On receipt of such requisition or when instructed by the Executive the Secretary shall give not less than fourteen days notice of the date and the object of the meeting, and the meeting shall be held within one month of the date of the requisition.
- (e) At an Ordinary Meeting six members, and at a Special Meeting, twelve members shall form a quorum.
- (f) The Club shall have power to appoint sub-committees and such appointees need not necessarily be members of the Club.

OUTINGS:

- (a) The Executive shall arrange a programme of outings which shall be held monthly as determined by the Executive.
- (b) A leader shall be appointed for each outing.
- (c) The leader shall be responsible for the preparation of a report on the activities of the outing; the report to be given to the Editorial Committee.

PUBLICATION:

The Toowoomba Bird Club News-Sheet shall be published monthly and despatched to financial members. The Editorial Committee shall be responsible for receiving and editing all the material for publication. The following matters shall be published.

- (a) Names of all officers.
- (b) Precis of business of previous meeting.
- (c) Details of next meeting.
- (d) Report of address at meeting.
- (e) Outing report.
- (f) Names and addresses of new members.
- (g) Details of next outing.

AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION:

Constitution may be amended or added to at any meeting provided one month's notice of such amendment or addition has been given.