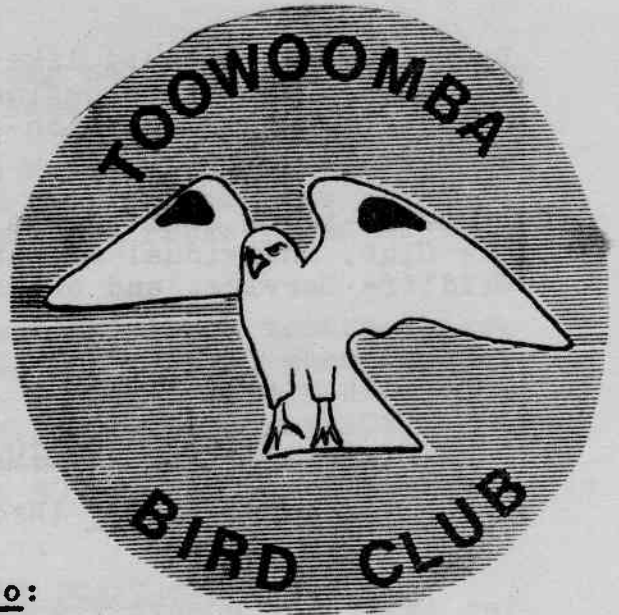


"To encourage the observation and study of the birds of the Toowoomba area."

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NEWS-SHEET NO. 53 - MAY, 1980.

Last month I mentioned that Ron and I had spoken with Paul Sheehy, the local representative of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

As you no doubt realize, the National Parks and Wildlife Service is devoted to the conservation and management of the flora and fauna of Australia. Societies and clubs like ours can help in this mammoth task, and by making our Annual Bird Census and Annual Bird Summary records available to the Service, this Club is already doing so.

During our meeting, Paul mentioned an area in which he feels we may be able to help further. This is with respect to the open season declared annually on various bird species.

This is done under the provisions of the Fauna Conservation Act 1974-1979 and the species affected are:-

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Pacific Black Duck | Maned Duck |
| Grey Teal | Plumed Whistling-Duck |
| Wandering Whistling-Duck | Hardhead |
| Stubble Quail | Brown Quail |
| Latham's Snipe | Swinhoe's Snipe |

Anyone issued with an "Open Season Fauna Permit" has the right to shoot specified numbers of these birds. For instance, a Permit holder may shoot six Latham's Snipes within any twenty-four hour period during the season. I feel sure that anyone at all interested in birds would be concerned about the consequences of such a system. In fact, little has been done in recent years in the way of monitoring the affected species to determine the results of the annual declaration of an open season upon them.

In an attempt to obtain some information - however little - on this matter, it is proposed that this Club commence a study of the affected species.

To this end, we would like to hear from members who would be interested in participating in such a study. A meeting could then be convened at which a plan of operation could then be formed.

It seems to us that such a scheme could be of great benefit to the Club, individual members, and to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and of course, to the birds.

John Gregor,
Editor.

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRDS

208. Turquoise Parrot (*Neophema pulchella*). 17/4/80. Echo Valley
Michael Atzeni, Shane Brady.

Two pairs (or possibly the same pair seen twice) seen at different times feeding on the ground. Both birds characterized by grass-green backs, blue faces and yellow underparts. Male identified by the presence of a red-brown shoulder patch. Very tame and undisturbed by our presence, preferring to walk away rather than fly.

209. Scarlet Robin (*Petroica multicolor*) 27/4/80. Nelson St.
David Newlands, Joe Deuble.

One bird observed about 7.30 a.m. - bright scarlet breast, white forehead and a black coat with a white band down each wing.

CATTLE EGRET ROOKERY NEAR GATTON

The rookery is about 6 km north-east of Gatton in an approx. 0.5 ha closed forest of *Melaleuca tamarascina* on the edge of an earth dam. According to local residents (B. Smith and A. Jankhe) cattle egrets (*Ardeola ibis*) were first seen in the area in 1974 and nested in October of that year. The breeding season extends from October to March.

The progress of the rookery has been followed by myself and other members of the Toowoomba Field Naturalist Club since February, 1977. Club members have counted the nests each year, and in 1978 J Walter erected a hide within the rookery to permit closer observation of the birds' breeding behaviour. The following details are compiled from published reports in the Queensland Ornithological Society Newsletter (8(4)) and the Toowoomba Field Naturalist Club Newsletter (313).

About 50 pairs bred in the 1974-75 season but "thousands" were said to breed in the 1975-76 and the 1976-77 seasons (B. Smith pers. comm.). The T.F.N.C. count in March 1977 revealed 1429 nests. Similar counts were made in 1978 and 1979 but it was obvious during the 1979 count that many nests had been blown down in a fierce wind storm a week before counting took place, and therefore nest numbers were artificially low. It was decided that little confidence could be placed in nest numbers obtained so late in the breeding season and that future counts should take place at the height of breeding in early December.

Providing this was done before the young had progressed from the nestling stage, there would be no adverse effect on the rookery.

The December 1979 count revealed 3616 nests. The contents of about 200 nests sampled by me at that time showed that 97.7% had eggs and/or nestlings. This means the rookery had at least 3569 breeding pairs of egrets.

The Egrets nest in both living and dead *Melaleuca tamarascinas*. The latter were killed prior to the Egrets arrival when the dam first filled and flooded their roots. In 1976-77 41% of the nests were in dead trees but there has been a progressive shift in preference since then and in 1979-80 96% were in live trees. Nesting tree heights range from about 5.2 to 7.4 m and nest heights from 3.7m upwards.

Neil McKilligan

WHITE-BACKED MAGPIE

Last weekend, 23 March, at "Maryland", we had a great surprise. While glancing down the paddock, from the verandah, I saw a strange looking magpie. After rushing for binoculars and much close inspecting, this magpie proved to be a female White-backed Magpie. This is the first sighting of a White-backed Magpie at Maryland, two miles from Stanthorpe although bird notes have been taken there for the last thirty years. Has the White-backed Magpie been seen around here?

Another exciting occurrence was finding a pair of Crested Shrike-tits near the cattle yards. After watching for awhile we saw these birds tearing at the tree bark and flying off to feed their young. These birds have not been sighted so close to the house before.

Margaret and Brough Warren.

Editor's note: The White-backed Magpie is now regarded as a race of the Australian Magpie, not as a separate species.

FIELD DAY REPORT -27/4/80-MURPHYS CREEK.

Sunday morning dawned bright and sunny so considering the very dry conditions existing, we feared that it might not prove to be a very profitable bird-watching occasion.

We stopped firstly at Mt. Kynoch, briefly on the right of the main road and then walked up around the reservoirs of the water treatment plant. Here, looking to the West, over the trees and undergrowth there was plenty of bird activity and members saw the attractive Spotted and Striated Pardalotes at close quarters. Also of note were the Eastern Spinebill, Pale-headed Rosellas, Rufous Whistlers and a Yellow-faced Honeyeater.

Turning down the Murphy's Creek Road with its steep drop and splendid views down range to the East, our first stop was at the site of the old station at Ballard: then again, lower, as we got among taller tree cover. There, the air humming with bees, the

gums busy with Noisy Miners and other Honeyeaters, we spent some minutes watching, but alas, not finally identifying a probable Cuckoo preening itself on a tree across a gully.

Continuing, we turned left, over the embryo creek and up to Spring Bluff. This is a charming spot, last station on the line from Brisbane to Toowoomba and hidden away above and overlooking the head of the valley. Birds were not much in evidence, probably because it was just too dry, so we continued down the creek. We paused briefly here and there watching a number of Torresian Crows making a commotion off to the right, possibly caused by some bird of prey. We passed through the few scattered houses and farms of Murphy's Creek and followed the road South through progressively more arid and unproductive country.

We ate our picnic lunch beside the small but pleasant and still flowing Lockyer Creek and there were rewarded by our best sightings of the morning: Azure Kingfishers fishing from branches overhanging the water and a Rose Robin darting among the Casuarina bushes. The vivid plumage of each was a brilliant and welcome splash of colour. Before leaving we sighted a Brown Falcon circling lazily overhead and a little further along we stopped to see Purple Swamphens and Pacific Black Duck on a rapidly diminishing dam. Earlier fears of few birds to be seen had soon been allayed and our enthusiastic group had spent a very enjoyable morning.

Ann Shore.

SPECIES LIST- MURPHY'S CREEK FIELD DAY.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Australasian Grebe | Golden-hd. Cisticola |
| White-faced Heron | Variiegated Fairy-wren |
| Straw-necked Ibis | Red-bkd. Fairy-wren |
| Pacific Black Duck | White-browed Scrub-wren |
| Black-shld. Kite | Speckled Warbler |
| Brown Falcon | Brown Thornbill |
| Australian Kestrel | Yellow-rmpd. Thornbill |
| Dusky Moorhen | Striped Honeyeater |
| Purple Swamphen | Noisy Miner |
| Peaceful Dove | Lewin's Honeyeater |
| Crested Pigeon | Yellow-fcd. Honeyeater |
| Galah | Eastern Spinebill |
| Cockatiel | Spotted Pardalote |
| Pale-hd. Rosella | Striated Pardalote |
| Azure Kingfisher | Silvereye |
| Laughing Kookaburra | House Sparrow |
| Rainbow Bee-eater | Double-barred Finch |
| Welcome Swallow | Common Starling |
| Fairy Martin | Common Mynah |
| Richard's Pipit | Olive-backed Oriole |
| Black-fcd. Cickoo-shrike | Aust. Magpie-lark |
| Rose Robin | Grey Butcherbird |
| Jacky Winter | Pied Butcherbird |
| Rufous Whistler | Australian Magpie |
| Grey Shrike-thrush | Pied Currawong |
| Grey Fantail | Australian Raven |
| Willie Wagtail | Torresian Crow |
| Eastern Whipbird | |

MEMBERS BIRD NOTES.

Black-faced Cormorant. 2.3.80. Fossil Head Tas. WJ.
Yellow-billed Spoonbill. 20.4.80. Murphy's Ck. AHS.
Black Kite. 7.4.80. Ocean St. GC. JCC. JEC.
Wedge-tailed Eagle (pair). 5.4.80. Highfields. DN.
Brown Falcon. 27.4.80. Murphy's Ck. AHS.
Australian Brush-turkey. 9.2.80. Redwood Park. MA. SB.
Sooty Oystercatcher. 2.3.80. Wynyard. WJ.
Hooded Plover. 2.3.80. Fossil Head. Tas. WJ.
Red-necked Avocet (8). 3.5.80. Near Gatton. MA. SB.
Topknot Pigeon. 27.4.80. Goomburra. JG.
White-headed Pigeon. 27.4.80. Goomburra. JG.
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo. 27.4.80. Goomburra. JG.
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo. 5.1.80. Goomburra. MJ. SP.
" " " " 27.4.80. Goomburra. JG.
Blue-winged Parrot. 3.3.80. Notley Fern Gorge. WJ.
Fan-tailed Cuckoo. 13.4.80. Hodgson Vale. MA. SA.
Barn Owl. 5.4.80. Blanchview. GC. JCC. JEC.
Tawny Frogmouth. 5.4.80. Blanchview. GC. JCC. JEC.
Aust. Owlet-nightjar. 6.4.80. Hodgson Vale. MA. SB. JG. REH.
Azure Kingfisher. 9.2.80. Redwood Park. MA. SA. SB.
" " 27.4.80. Murphy's Ck. AHS.
Noisy Pitta. 9.3.80. Ravensbourne Nat. Pk. SB.
Cicadabird. 14.3.80. Jubilee Pk. MA. SB. AT.
Rose Robin. 27.4.80. Murphy's Ck. AHS.
Crested Shrike-tit. 9.2.80. Redwood Pk. MA. SA. SB.
Grey Shrike-thrush. 20.4.80. Murphy's Ck. AHS.
Large-billed Scrubwren. 9.2.80. Redwood Pk. MA.
Brown Treecreeper. 12.4.80. Crows Nest. MA.
Red Wattlebird. 27.4.80. Nelson St. DN. JD.
Yellow-bcd. Honeyeater. 27.4.80. Mt. Kynoch. AHS.
Yellow-throated Honeyeater. 3.3.80. Notley Fern Gorge. WJ.
Striated Pardalote. 27.4.80. Mt. Kynoch. AHS.
Regent Bowerbird. 9.2.80. Redwood Park. MA. SA. SB.
MA: Michael Atzeni. SA: Simon Atzeni. SB: Shane Bradey. GC: Graham
Corbin. JCC: Jane Corbin. JEC: Jim Corbin. JD: Joe Deuble.
JG: John Gregor. REH: Ron Hopkinson. MJ: Marilyn Jacobs. WJ: Bill
Jolly. DN: David Newlands. SP: Sandy Pottinger. AHS: Ann Shore
AT: Andrew Tan.

FIELD DAY FOR MAY.

Date: Sunday, May 25th. 1980. Place: Boodua.
Assembly Point: Pigott's Car Park.
Time: 8.15am for departure 8.30am Sharp.

NEW MEMBERS.

The Club is pleased to welcome the following new members:
Mrs. Susan B. Mann. 74 MacKenzie St. Toowoomba.
Mr. Ron Colpus. P.O. Box 654, Toowoomba.
Mr. Dave Dowling. 7 Tracey St. Toowoomba.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

The Bird Observer. April, 1980.
QOS Newsletter. April 1980.
Urimbirra. April 1980.

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