

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

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NEWS-SHEET No. 56-AUGUST, 1980.

Details of the atlassing trip mentioned last month are now available. It is definitely on the week-end of 13/14th September under the leadership of Sue Elmes, Queensland Regional Organiser for the Atlas. Sue will be setting out and signposting the trail on Friday 12th using "arrows" with QOS stencilled on them (Sue is also a member of the Queensland Ornithological Society). In case the arrows disappear rough directions are as follows:

Just before Kingaroy, on the Kingaroy-Brisbane road (D'Aguilar Highway) turn left to Kumbia. Then take the turn to Burrandowan and travel past Kingaroy golf links for 13 km. Next turn right, again to Burrandowan, and travel 26km to campsite on the Boyne River.

This year the Annual General Meeting is to be held on Saturday, October 18th and Bird Count Day will be on Sunday, October 26th. Note that this is a change from the date set down for field trips in the January News-sheet. Bird Count Day is THE day of the year when YOUR presence is required, so PLEASE turn up ready for a full day of birding.

Given the small membership of this Club, I suppose the announcement that it will not be possible to go ahead with the game-bird survey was almost inevitable. Quite possibly the whole idea was a little ambitious to begin with. However, this does not prevent you from keeping an eye out for these birds (listed in News-sheet No. 53).

To help identify the ducks and to gain helpful information about them, you could do worse than to purchase the booklet entitled "Wild Ducks and Other Waterfowl in Queensland" by H.J. Lavery. This publication is available from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 190, North Quay, Brisbane 4000, at a cost of \$1.65 plus postage at 40c.

John Gregor, Editor.

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRDS.

211. Brown Gerygone (*Gerygone mouki*). 6/7/1980. Redwood Park.

Ron Hopkinson. Michael Atzeni. Shane Brady.

Groups of this species moving through the foliage--hovering at leaves--olive-brownish upperparts--pale white eyebrow--underparts greyish--white spots at tail tip--no white on base of tail.

AUSTRALIAN MAGPIE.

Some notes on observations made at 43 Jennifer Crescent, Toowoomba.

When we moved into our new residence at 43 Jennifer Crescent, Darling Heights, Toowoomba, just on a year ago, it became obvious that we were intruders on an area used as a foraging and feeding ground by Australian Magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*). Among other areas our backyard and a vacant allotment immediately behind it seemed to be one of their favourite haunts in this particular area.

However it appears that the magpies have accepted us and turned a number of gardening practices to their advantage. The timber stakes supporting the shrubs make a vantage point for perching and preening and as a source for cleaning the beak. The woodchips and bark used around the shrubs for mulching are just ideal to keep a magpie interested in seeing how many it can spread over the lawn whilst it looks for worms under them. The garden sprinkler would appear to have been invented especially to shower and provide a drink for hot, thirsty magpies and untying the knots in the cords with which the shrubs are tied provides endless entertainment for a number of our friends.

In the twelve months the birds have been under observation, the number at any time of observation has varied between a minimum of three and a maximum of twentyone birds on the ground, whilst approximately thirty-four were counted in the air on one occasion. There have been two periods when birds in grey immature plumage have been among the group, since we've been here, that being in the months toward the end of last year and early this year and at present.

Being so close to a number of birds over a period of time, an observer becomes aware of many differences between them, which at first glance are not obvious, particularly in varying overall sizes. The size and shape of the beak, differences in wing and tail feathering, noticeably the white feathers and the timidity or otherwise of the birds when one is among them, are but a few.

Whilst some will never come closer than about a metre to an outstretched hand, some will come right up and take food from the hand in a most confident manner as if it was a perfectly natural thing to do. It has been noted that of five birds who regularly feed from the hand and who may all be present at the same time, to date, only the bird being offered the food takes it and each of the others waits its turn to be fed. Not so, however, in the case of the rest where food thrown to them becomes a case of first in, most food.

A bird having been given a piece of food will take it and brush it on the ground to break it up into smaller pieces and will not return for more until it has eaten all these smaller pieces.

One of the immatures last year and yet another one at present are quite good mimics and have been heard mimicking a pied butcher bird, a noisy miner, a parrot who lives in a cage nearby and what sounds like a person whistling.

It is interesting, in my experience, to note that magpies regurgitate pellets and have been observed doing this both while feeding and resting. While feeding, the bird stops, fluffs its feathers, opens its beak wide, appears as though it is about to choke, then discharges the pellet from the beak, shakes itself and settles the feathers and continues feeding.

AUSTRALIAN MAGPIE (cont/d)

The frequency of regurgitation by any one bird during my observations is not known but two pellets collected at random recently, measured 37mm x 13mm, and 33mm x 17mm, respectively.

The birds observed spend a good deal of time at play, the most common form of which noted has been where one bird lies on its back with feet up in the air, one or two other birds then try to get past its guard and nip wing or tail feathers or feet. The game frequently ends in ruffled feathers or a fight if an "outsider" joins the game.

A number of birds have been noted over the last year showing lameness and on one occasion, three were in this condition at the same time. It is difficult to figure what has caused this lameness. Two collisions with wire fences have been observed when one bird was chasing another and in each case some feathers and skin were missing but in neither instance was the bird involved lame afterwards.

In spending such an interesting period, to date, observing these magpies I am continually reminded of how much still remains for me to learn about these birds who are among our most common and closest to man. Not the least rewarding experience of Nature's adaptability is to look out on a cold winter morning with a strong southwesterly wind blowing to see a "chorus" of magpies lined up in the sun in front of the garden shed, in a place out of the wind, carolling their heads off as if this were the most natural place in the world for them to be.

Ron Wilson.

BIRD MOVEMENT IN THE TOOWOOMBA AREA.

Part 1--Passerines.

The Toowoomba Bird Club has been active since 1975 and up until now has issued four annual summaries of bird species recorded in the local study area. I have felt it might be appropriate, at this stage, to combine these summaries in order to gain a rough indication of bird movement through our Club study area. This consists of the two blocks with centre point co-ordinates of 27 degrees 35 minutes South, 151 degrees 55 minutes East and 27 degrees 35 minutes South, 152 degrees 5 minutes East, respectively.

To do this I have simply totalled the number of years a species has been observed for each month. In doing so I have not included any 1980 sightings. Hence for any month a species will have a score ranging from 0 to 4. From this I have prepared a table of the majority of birds showing evidence of movement through our area.

From the table can be seen the regular movement of the north-south migrants eg. movement of Cicadabird, Monarch species, Rufous Fantail is quite clear-cut. These arrive August-October and depart March-April. Similarly the arrival of southerners during winter, such as the Rose Robin is shown. Less obvious winter visitors are the Eastern Spinebill and Red Wattlebird whose records suggest some individuals may be present all year. The Red-capped Robin (which turned up in force this year) is probably an occasional winter visitor from the west, depending on weather conditions.

Of interest are the records of the listed honeyeaters. It would appear they are all rare or absent in the area in the November-February period.

BIRD MOVEMENT (c/td)

However, this is amended with the spring-summer visitors from the north. It seems reasonable to believe our area is invaded by honey-eaters in search of winter flowers.

Nomadic movement of passerines is also evident and their appearance in our area would be influenced mainly by food availability and weather conditions. Examples are the Ground Cuckoo-Shrike, Crested Shrike-Tit and Striped Honeyeater. The White-Winged Triller, Brown & Rufous Songlarks are probably instances of irregular Summer-Winter migration.

Undoubtedly, there are discrepancies disclosed by the data (or lack of it) which suggests the possible migration (or hibernation) of another species - BIRDWATCHERS!

One noticeable feature is the lack of sightings in the Nov-Feb period of the North-South migrants e.g. Spectacled and Black-Faced Monarchs, Leaden and Satin Flycatchers, Cicadabird and Yellow-Eyed Cuckoo-Shrike. Theoretically, this period should be the best of the year because it's "smack-bang" in the middle of most of these species' breeding seasons. I would even venture to say that the elusive Noisy Pitta is amongst these regular visitors but has escaped our notice yearly since 1976.

A number of birds not included have extremely patchy records but are known to be sedentary and have therefore just been poorly recorded. These include Spotted Quail-Thrush, Large-Billed Scrub-Wren, Weebill, Yellow Thornbill and the latest inclusion to the Club List, the Brown Gerygone. Other excluded species with very scant records are the Spiny-Cheeked Honeyeater, White-Winged Chough and the Wood-Swallows (excluding the Dusky Wood-Swallows) officially recorded in the area. These are probably very irregular nomads.

The other birds listed, I will leave to your interpretation but certainly the list provides a rough indication of when to expect the visitors to our area and also a clue to what months need to be monitored more carefully for each particular species.

Michael Atzeni.

References: Reader's Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds.  
Storr, G.M., List of Queensland Birds.

ANNUAL BIRD COUNT

As stated in the editorial, this year's bird count will take place on Sunday, October 26. This will be the fifth census conducted by this Club. The hard work done by members over the past four years is starting to pay off in that any census to be of value needs to be done for a period of years so that the information gained can be used to form comparisons.

Although the number of members regularly attending Field Days is small, I do hope that everyone can and will volunteer their services and make the effort to participate in the count this year. It would be a pity if, through lack of willing members, this year's count could not take place. This would sadly negate the work of the previous four years. If you can help please let me know.

Ron Hopkinson

TABLE OF BIRD MOVEMENT

SPECIES	J	F	M	MONTH		J	J	A	S	O	N	D
				A	M							
Singing Bushlark	1	1					1	1	1	2	2	2
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike			2	2								
Yellowed-eyed Cuckoo-shrike										1		3
Cicadabird	1	1	1	2							2	2
Ground Cuckoo-shrike	1			1		1	1			1	1	1
White-winged Triller	1	1	1	1					1			
Rose Robin				1	4	3	4	3		1		
Red-capped Robin						1						
Crested Shrike-tit		1	1				1	1				
Black-faced Monarch	2	2	2	1				1		4	2	2
Spectacled Monarch	1	2	1	1				1		3	2	
Leaden Flycatcher		1	1	1				1	3	3	2	3
Satin Flycatcher			2	2		1		1	3	1	1	
Restless Flycatcher	3	2	3	4	3	4	4	3	2	3	2	1
Rufous Fantail	2	3	3	2	1		1		1	3	2	4
Clamorous Reed Warbler	1	1	1		1		1	3	1	2	3	
Tawny Grassbird		1	3				1	1		2		
Rufous Songlark	1	1	1	1						2	1	
Brown Songlark	1	1	2	1						1		
Red Wattlebird	1		1	1	1		2	1	3	2	1	
Striped Honeyeater	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	1		1
Yellow-faced Honeyeater		1	2	3	4	2	3	4	4	4	2	3
White-throated Honeyeater									1	2	1	1
White-naped Honeyeater		1	1	3	1	2	1	4	3	1	1	1
Eastern Spinebill	1	2	1	2	2	4	4	4	3	2	1	1
Scarlet Honeyeater			1	1			2	3	2	3	2	3
Spotted Pardalote	1	1	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	2
Spangled Drongo	3	4	4	4	1		1	1	2	3	3	3

FIELD DAY REPORT 6/7/80

Perfect weather prevailed for the trip to Oakey and beyond. Clear skies gave good visibility and the generally mild conditions made it a good day to be out birding. Four cars made the journey with a total of eight birders. This seems to be about average for this club lately and while small numbers are sometimes better from a birding point of view, it does seem a pity that more members cannot get along to what is the monthly meeting of their club.

A total of 59 species were recorded. This includes birds seen en route as well as at stopping points. A few "firsts" were recorded for a couple of members.

Brookvale Park is showing signs of the current dry spell and few species were recorded there. However, a pleasant lunch hour was shared with the Superb Fairy-Wrens.

Ron Hopkinson

SPECIES LIST - OAKEY - BROOKVALE PARK 6/7/80

Little Pied Cormorant	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Pacific Heron	White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike
White-faced Heron	Rufous Whistler
Intermediate Egret	Restless Flycatcher
Sacred Ibis	Willie Wagtail
Straw-necked Ibis	Golden-headed Cisticola
Pacific Black Duck	Superb Fairy-Wren
Black-shouldered Kite	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
Brown Falcon	Striped Honeyeater
Australian Kestrel	Noisy Friarbird
Dusky Moorhen	Noisy Miner
Eurasian Coot	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Masked Lapwing	Brown Honeyeater
Banded Lapwing	Mistletoebird
Black-winged Stilt	Striated Pardalote
Silver Gull	Silvereye
Feral Pigeon	House Sparrow
Peaceful Dove	Zebra Finch
Bar-shouldered Dove	Double-barred Finch
Crested Pigeon	Chestnut-breasted Mannikin
Galah	Common Starling
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Common Mynah
Rainbow Lorikeet	Figbird
Little Lorikeet	Australian Magpie-lark
Cockatiel	Grey Butcherbird
Pale-headed Rosella	Pied Butcherbird
Red-rumped Parrot	Australian Magpie
Laughing Kookaburra	Australian Raven
Welcome Swallow	Torresian Crow
Richard's Pipit	

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

Collared Sparrowhawk. 6.7.80. Redwood Park. MA. SB. REH.  
Little Eagle. 10.7.80. Ocean Street. GC. JEC. JCC.  
Australian Brush-turkey. 14.7.80. Echo Valley. JD.  
Emerald Dove. 6.7.80. Redwood Park. MA. SB. REH.  
Spinifex Pigeon. 1.7.80. Croydon, NQ. RGH.  
Varied Lorikeet. 1.7.80. Croydon, NQ. RGH.  
Gould's Bronze-cuckoo. 29.6.80. Croydon, NQ. RGH.  
Ground Cuckoo-shrike. 12.7.80. Frew Street. JG.  
Red-capped Robin. 7.7.80. Baker Street. JG.  
Purple-crowned Fairy-Wren. 29.6.80. Croydon, NQ. RGH.  
Silver-crowned Friarbird. 2.7.80. Croydon, NQ. RGH.  
White-gaped Honeyeater. 29.6.80. Croydon, NQ. RGH.  
Yellow-tinted Honeyeater. 29.6.80. Croydon, NQ. RGH.  
Eastern Spinebill (pair). 20.7.80. Campbell Street. JD.  
Red-browed Pardalote. 29.6.80. Croydon, NQ. RGH.

MA: Michael Atzeni. SB: Shane Brady. GC: Graham Corbin. JCC: Jane Corbin.  
JEC: Jim Corbin. JD: Joe Deuble. JG: John Gregor. RGH: Rod Hobsón.  
REH: Ron Hopkinson.

FIELD DAY FOR AUGUST

Date: Sunday, 24 August, 1980. Place: South-west Toowoomba (including  
Cemetery, Spring Creek and Lions Park.)  
Assembly Point: Pigott's Car Park. Time: 8.15 am for departure 8.30 am.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Q.O.S. Newsletter - June, July 1980.  
Bird Observer - July 1980.  
Urimbirra - July 1980.