

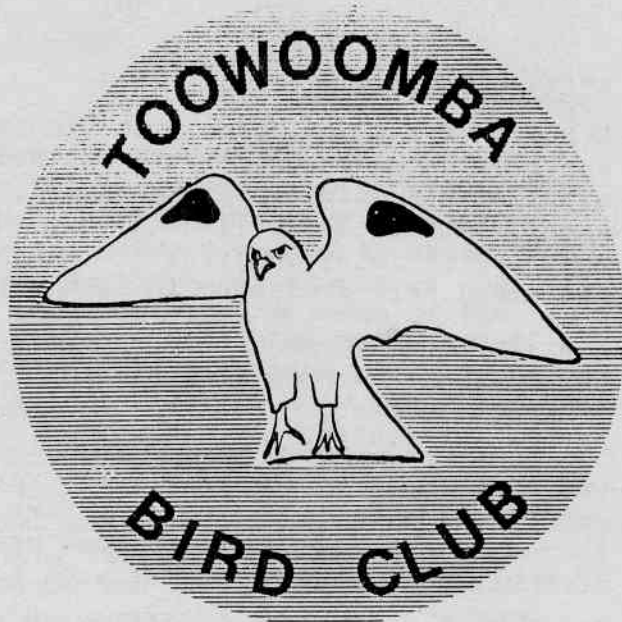
"To encourage the observation and study of the birds of the Toowoomba area."

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NEWS - SHEET No. 58-OCTOBER 1980.

As mentioned in the last News-sheet, the Annual General Meeting is to be held at 7.30pm on Saturday 18th of this month at 2 Loch street. Make sure you come along to cast your vote and to swap a few bird yarns.

The other important date this month is Annual Bird Census on Sunday 26th. Headquarters for the day will be 2 Loch street, where participants will be able to check out the boundaries of the sectors to be covered and to collect record sheets. Anyone wishing to make an early start can check boundaries and collect sheets prior to the 26th.

The success or failure of these two events may determine the future of your Club-- so be sure to give your support.

John Gregor- Editor.

TAXIDERMISTRY.

I am requesting, urgently, carcasses of birds (road kills or any other dead birds) for stuffing and mounting. I am in great need of practice and the more birds that are brought in, the better results I will have.

If one is found (in good condition) please freeze it and ring me (phone 35 3192) or bring it to one of the Field days.

Shane Brady.

ATLAS TRIP TO FAR WESTERN QUEENSLAND.

Six members of the Toowoomba Bird Club were among the 50 people who attended the Atlas of Australian Birds camp at Davenport Downs Station on the Diamantina River in August. Neil and Helen McKilligan, and John and Ruth Walter and their families travelled west with three other families from Brisbane and Phil and Sue Elmes went out a week later on their own.

The camp was organised by the writer and was intended to cover a number of grids not previously covered. This has now been well and truly done by those present. Somewhere in the vicinity of 60 ten minute grids were covered, most of which had had no previous records.

ATLAS CAMP (c/td)

Members of the camp came from Victoria, N.S.W. and Queensland and it was good to meet some of the southern people. Camp facilities were supplied and maintained by the Qld. Ornithological Society; fresh water, a trailer for firewood and rubbish, and a fuel pump were supplied by Peter McNeven, the manager of Davenport Downs. Petrol and bread were freighted in from Winton some 300 km. away.

I will not attempt to give a full list of birds seen but will pick out those birds that were either new to myself, unusual or out of accepted range. A full list will be available later, on request, to anyone interested.

One side light to the trip was a very quick look at some areas where others had made possible Night Parrot sightings. None were seen, of course, but I have compiled some useful data from several people as to their observations in the area southwest of Windorah.

Individuals travelled by differing routes to Davenport to get the widest possible grid coverage, depending on what time they had to spend. Our party went out via St. George and Eulo. At the Beardmore Dam we observed a party of Orange Chats working over mud flats on the edge of the receding dam. This is unusual as these chats are usually in samphire or other low vegetation. Both Orange and Crimson Chats periodically reach the St. George area.

Nine Mile Bore at Eulo was the next stop and 44 species were recorded in the ten minute grid. This was the highest total in any one grid apart from the Davenport camp area. Conditions throughout were extremely dry, apart from a small area around Cunnamulla- Eulo.

Our new bird here was Bourke's Parrot, a small party feeding on open ground between Gidgee (Acacia cambagei). Southern Whitefaces were also on the open ground and in low trees. All Woodswallows were in this grid, apart from the Dusky, the Black-faced being predominant. Crested Bellbirds were also seen.

Dynevor Lakes, an area usually prolific with bird life, was dry or very nearly so. Chestnut-rumped Thornbills and Variegated Fairy-wrens were nesting there. Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo in a flock of 20 were seen in the Eucalyptus camaldulensis at Cooper's Creek, one female emerged from a tree spout.

Cuddapan Station, the property of Herb and Pearl Rabig, west of Windorah did not produce the usual good supply of species. The most interesting item was Herb's old Tiger Moth which he still uses around the property. Currawilla waterhole produced the first really sizeable flock of Little Corellas. Between Palpararra and Davenport Downs Gibberbirds were seen by most birders. Not so fortunate were the Elmes' who struck a strong following wind when traversing the bulldust section and arrived at camp in a dusty Cortina looking like red indians!

Also on this stretch a number of people saw Orange Chats and a lesser number of Crimsons but the occasional Flock Bronzewing created the real excitement. Australian Bustards were also here, around the camp and to the north of Davenport in ones, twos and small parties. Cockatiels were seen at the camp on two occasions and were thought to be unusual. They were also seen later at Coorabulka further west. Red-winged Parrots were occasional visitors to the camp area.

Spotted Harriers were present on the "Downs" area of Davenport, Springvale and Coorabulka. The "Downs" are vast areas of open Mitchell Grass

ATLAS CAMP(c/td)

plains interspersed with lightly timbered watercourses and areas of gibber (more correctly, ironstone plains as against true gibber). Marsh Harriers were also seen on Coorabulka. Both Harriers were in fair numbers and will no doubt attract a query later from the Atlas as they were well west of their accepted range. In the early stages of the scheme they were queried from around Longreach on the basis of the distribution in current field guides. This I know is wrong as I and others have recorded them from here in the past and serves to illustrate the usefulness of the Atlas when finished.

Coorabulka was the highlight of the trip for me and, I think, for all the others who made it there. On the way from Davenport, time was taken to stalk numerous Inland Dotterel and the largest flock of Brolga seen (100+) on Diamantina Lakes Station. For the Walter family, the Yellow Chat was our last to be discovered and was to be the culmination of a years planning for the camp and the trip out. Acting on information supplied by Bill Horton of Brisbane, we went to what is known as Coorabulka No. 2 bore on the map but which is known locally as No. 12.

This bore was where Bill had banded Chats in the early 1970's. When we arrived the bore was flowing strongly into the bore drain and beside it was a bullrush roofed shelter shed. The drain was devoid of vegetation of any kind. The surrounding Mitchell grass plains were completely treeless except adjacent to a nearby watercourse (Whitewood Creek) which had an open cover of Acacia farnesiana. It was immediately obvious to us that there had been a complete change to the environment around the bore, for Yellow Chat habitat there was not!! (Refer Readers Digest). However it was ideal for Flock Bronzewing and right on the dot of 5.30pm (which was when all other sightings had been made elsewhere) they came in ones and twos, then small parties and finally in a flock estimated to be about 50 birds. They are beautiful birds when observed at close range. When flying they appeared to be a fairly dumpy, direct flying pigeon.

Following the assumption that nearby bores might yield chats we journeyed another 20km or so south to Coorabulka No. 5 bore where it was noted that in the distance the cattle were up to their bellies in dry grass and that there appeared to be green patches in the watercourse at the end of the bore drain. Investigation there led us eventually to the chats. Approximately 20 were seen after wading through the swamp. I will not attempt to describe the birds here as this is in preparation for another journal, but I can say that Richard Noske's photo in Readers Digest, although blurred, is a truer indication of the colour of the birds we saw than Slater's drawings. There seems no doubt that the habitat described in the Readers Digest by Parker refers to this particular bore (see also Ford and Parker, Emu 74).

On the return journey some of our group observed Hall's Babbler in the Grey Range and the Elmes' saw them at Cowley bore near Quilpie. Spinifex Pigeon was also recorded on the Grey Range and Chestnut-crowned Babbler near Adavale. Earlier, the biggest flock of Pink Cockatoo I have seen were near Komanikie's kangaroo works at St. George. Estimated at 300+, they were also seen in small numbers at Eulo and Charleville.

Altogether a satisfying trip for the Atlas and the individuals involved, even if there were not many breeding records because of the dry conditions.

Other birds of interest not mentioned in the text are:
Common Sandpiper. One bird at Beardmore Dam, St. George.
Australian Pratincole: In small groups in the Diamantina area.
Caspian Tern and Silver Gull: Tanbar Station waterhole, S.W. of Windorah.

ATLAS CAMP(c/td)

Diamond Dove: At Davenport Downs.
Squatter Pigeon: Between Adavale and Charleville.
Budgerigar: Small flocks west of Windorah.
Pallid Cuckoo: 9 mile bore, Eulo.
Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo: 9 mile bore, Eulo.
Little Grassbird: Coorabulka No. 5.
Rufous Songlark: Coorabulka No. 5.
Varied Sittella (Black-capped race): Springvale Station.
Red-browed Pardalote: West of Windorah.

References: Readers Digest.

Field Guide to Australian Birds. Vol. 1 and 2. Slater.
Birds of Australia: Macdonald.
List of the Birds of Queensland. Storr.
Ford and Parker in Emu, Vol. 74 189. R.A.O.J.
Rare and Vanishing Birds: Slater.

John C. Walter.

BIRD WATCHING AT CLOSE RANGE.

New member Ron Colpus told me this story of an encounter he had with a vulture. I'm sure he won't mind if I retell it here.

Ron, at the time, was on service with the British Army in India and one day was driving a Land Rover and had the windscreen folded down for coolness. As is common there, a party of vultures was feeding at the roadside and lifted off as he approached. One bird, however, was a little late and its flight path took it through the open front of the vehicle onto the seat next to Ron.

Large, flapping wings were beating Ron about the head and face as the bird frantically tried to get airborne from the confined space of the cab. In an effort to reduce its weight for take off, the bird regurgitated its meal into Ron's lap.

At this point, Ron's patience was, understandably, worn a bit thin, so he drew his .38 calibre Service revolver and despatched the bird.

One thing I'm not certain of is whether Ron then took the opportunity to make some investigation of the bird's diet. At such close range some very accurate observations could be made.

Ron Hopkinson.

FIELD DAY REPORT.

Atlas trip to Acland area.

Sunday September 21st saw the usual small party of six members meet at Pigott's for the monthly Field Day.

This day was undertaken in an effort to fill in a few blank blocks on the Atlas grid of observations. It is hoped, for the new year, to arrange a week-end camp in the area which would permit coverage in greater depth. The Atlas scheme concludes in December 1981, so perhaps our club will undertake more trips of this nature.

However, on this particular day the two cars convoyed as far as the turn off to Brymaroo (near Rosalie Plains landing ground) at which point one car continued to just beyond Kulpi and thence returned, over various roads in the area, through Goombungee.

The second car proceeded westwards to Brymaroo and district and returned via Bowenville. More cars would have enabled better coverage but perhaps next time a bigger turn out will make this possible.

Ron Hopkinson.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES.

Pink-eared Duck. 15.8.80. Dyer's Lagoon. GC. JCC.
Pacific Baza. 26.9.80. Echo Valley. MA.
Brahminy Kite. 24.8.80. Broadbeach. SB.
Collared Sparrowhawk. 5.8.80. GC.
Red-kneed Dotterel. 15.8.80. Apex Lake. GC. JCC.
Red-capped Plover. 22.8.80. Currumbin Estuary. SB.
Gull-billed Tern. 21.8.80. Mermaid Beach. SB.
White-headed Pigeon. 25.9.80. Dudley St. JD.
Emerald Dove. 30.9.80. Range St. DM.
Rainbow Bee-eater. 26.8.80. Berghofer Dr. MA.
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike.(light and dark phase).4.8.80.Ocean St.JCC.JEC.
White-winged Triller. 29.9.80. Memory St. MA. SB.
Red-capped Robin. 3/4.8.80. Ocean St. GC.JCC.
Crested Shrike-tit. 26.8.80. Redwood Park. MA.
Rufous Fantail. 1.9.80. Echo Valley. MA.
Rufous Songlark. 20/28.9.80. Postman's Ridge. MA.
Brown Gerygone. 19.8.80. Redwood Park. MA. SB.
Scarlet Honeyeater. 28.8.80. Highfields. GC. JCC.
Masked Woodswallow. 29.8.80. Echo Valley. MA.
White-browed Woodswallow. 29.8.80. Echo Valley. MA.

MA: Michael Atzeni. SB: Shane Brady. GC: Graham Corbin. JCC: Jane Corbin.
JEC: Jim Corbin. JD: Joe Deuble. DM: D. Mears.

FIELD DAY FOR OCTOBER.

Date: SUNDAY October 26th 1980.

ANNUAL BIRD CENSUS.

Headquarters: 2 Loch St.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

Bird Observer. September. 1980.

Urimbirra. September. 1980.

The Darling Downs Naturalist. September. 1980.

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