

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

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NEWS-SHEET No. 78 - JUNE 1982

Half way through the year! Doesn't time fly when you're having fun? A personal opinion is, that it has been a successful first six months for the club. We have added eight new birds to our list and eight new members. For a small club I believe this is a good step forward.

Once again I have not recognized the author of an article. Marilyn Jacobs wrote last month's field day report. I feel very badly if I do this, as I really appreciate the articles and reports that members submit.

Remember our film night, 23rd July. At least three films will be shown and it should be a good night for all. It's really great to have a chat to those members that one doesn't see that often. Please support your club by coming yourself and bringing family and friends. You'll find it is worthwhile.

Lately there has been a keen interest in the members' bird notes with several members submitting their 'sightings' of the month. I always find these fascinating as this often the only time we keep in touch with some of our far-flung members. It is an opportunity to read what kind of birdlife some lucky people are seeing. Perhaps a bird that was exciting for you to see may stir a memory with other birdos. Please share your experiences and don't be shy or afraid that people might scoff. Birdwatching is the most exhilarating pastime, full of beauty, charm and wonder!

Lesley Ball

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 * FILM EVENING *
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 * When: Friday, 23rd July at 7.30 p.m. for 7.45 p.m. *
 * Where: Toowoomba Education Centre, Baker St., T'mba. *
 * What: "The Two Christmases" - a film made in 1980 *
 * about the birdlife on the Christmas Islands. *
 * "Waddensea: A Bird's Paradise" - birds of the *
 * wetlands of Holland. *
 * "Wanderings of a Naturalist" - this film lasts *
 * for 27 minutes and is about birds of New *
 * Zealand and Australia. *
 * Who: Toowoomba Bird Club members, guests and other *
 * interested people of the community. *
 * Members, please bring a plate! *
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NATUREWATCH - HOW ALERT ARE WE?

How many of you nature lovers and conservationists know about this snippet of information Michael Atzeni found in the Courier Mail, 31/5/82?

"FORESTS GONE BY THE YEAR 2000

Around the world, night and day, 60 ha. of rain forest disappears irretrievably every minute, mostly owing to commercial logging.

Less than a tenth of what exist today (itself a fraction of the original extent) will remain standing by the year 2000. Wildlife will become extinct, science will lose a massive source of material, some people will lose their way of life and others their sense of wonder, all for the sake of a modest, ephemeral and very private gain which our children will neither benefit from, nor forgive.

It seems baffling that we spend millions on programs to explore and explain space, a barren and to all intents and purposes lifeless environment; yet all around us the rain forests, so rich and complex in life and form that we have barely begun to explore and explain them, are coming down forever, largely with the official approval of the world's governments.

ICBP is deeply involved in the promotion of rain forest conservation, and we were therefore alarmed to learn of the proposed logging schedule that now threatens the heart of the Conandale Range forests 84 km. north-west of Brisbane.

This will completely isolate the two existing national parks and, because rain forest constitute a massive inter-connecting web of relationships, we can expect that the character of the two parks will deteriorate as a consequence. Many animal species require much larger tracts of forest than these two "island" parks are likely to provide, and will probably become extinct there.

Far from felling the 5000 ha. between the two parks, every effort needs to be made to expand the parks to cover this whole area as one major reserve, safe for the recreational, educational, scientific (including medical: much pharmacological progress depends on studies of little-known plants), and aesthetic needs of future generations.

BIRDWATCHING cont'd

We hope the people and Government of Queensland will accept the responsibility and recognise the privilege of being custodians of this important and remarkable area. - C. Imboden, director, International Council for Bird Preservation, Cambridge, England."

Michael Atzeni

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BIRDING TECHNIQUES

I thought you may be interested in an aspect of birdwatching techniques which I use now from experience rather than from expediency or comfort in obtaining results. It first occurred when we (my wife and I) were staying in the Tinaroo Dam area on the Atherton Tableland. Opposite the caravan park the ground sloped away to the lake, and we noticed a group of waterbirds grazing in the grass. We took the van off the road and towards the birds to a distance of about fifteen metres from where I considered I would get a good identification with the binoculars. The opening and shutting of the door didn't worry them at all, but my stepping down did, and they sort of sidled off kind of sideways as though they weren't doing anything and slithered almost imperceptibly into the water. The whole time I was given the impression that they were keeping a watchful eye over their shoulders as to what I was doing. I walked down towards them and their bow waves became stronger; I stopped and they slowed down, I returned to the van and they stopped. I got into the van and they returned to shore, waddled up the bank and back to the grass or seed eating. I got out again and the same performance took place. It then occurred to us that this area was well used at the week-ends and holiday time for picnics and where people come to water-ski and sail and that we had seen a fair number of cars down by the water's edge. So we started up and drove slowly towards them and they didn't take the slightest notice. I stopped about five metres away and got a perfect sighting - Wood Ducks.

Another vehicular sighting occurred as we were going into Atherton one day. I happened to notice a shape that looked birdlike in the long grass on our side of the road. Not unusual for us in these circumstances to slap on the anchors - even if we're being tailgated by timberjinkers. Before getting out I noticed that the bird had come out onto the road behind us and was busy pecking away at something. I got out as discreetly as possible, binocs at the ready -- swisssssh -- like the roadrunner it was back in the long grass. I approached the spot slowly only to see it rustling its way up a bank, through a hedge and disappear in the long grass of the adjoining paddock. So I returned to the van and drove away for a small distance down the road, turned round and we sat and waited to see if it would reappear. We were almost on the point of giving up when I noticed it was back on the road again as large as life, but behind us; so it must have travelled a fair distance down the paddock before reappearing. I had by this time discovered what was the reason for its interest in the road; there had been a reasonable spillage of wheat which it was busy tucking into.

BIRDING TECHNIQUES cont'd

Although this was a country road and fairly quiet there occurred one of those instances when the road became suddenly quite busy in either direction, and I cursed a bit as I thought here goes my chances of getting a good look. I was most surprised and amused to watch the performance in the mirror. It almost totally ignored the vehicles wizzing past it - in fact it looked almost as if it were playing 'chicken' with them. Depending on what side of the road the vehicle was approaching the bird neatly judged on which side of the road it had to be, and you could practically see the passing draught ruffle its feathers as it went by with only a few inches to spare - and not paying the slightest attention to the cars but just being busy picking up the grain. Eventually it came up past the van and I got a good sighting after letting it get far enough away to focus the binocs - a Banded Land-Rail (Slater), a Buff-banded Rail according to the Readers Digest. After that little episode I think you might appreciate our amusement when reading the opening paragraph on this bird in the R.D. "This shy, retiring rail is seldom seen, even though it is common in swamps, lagoons, wet grasslands and along water courses, wherever abundant vegetation provides cover" !

A Tassie van sighting was seen by my wife as we were approaching Beaconsfield (old gold mining town). She asked me had I seen the starling on a fencepost as we rounded a bend. Again slap on anchors and into reverse as it was apparently feeding its young. Decided this was not a good stopping point as this really was International, Mercedes, Mack, White, etc timberjinker country, getting in as many trips as possible in the day. So we pulled up at a safer point and walked back to investigate. There was no evidence of the parent bird, but this post was so near the road that we could have reached out and touched it as we went by. The post was a big one- about thirty centimetres across but it was hollow with a straight, vertical hole about eight to ten centimetres in diameter. When my wife saw the parent bird, it was then on her eye level in the van, she saw this little beak appearing out of the hole to be fed. This was quite incredible as the hole was a good arm's length deep and when peering into the gloom one could just discern three baby birds. How they scrambled up to the top of the hole to be fed seems almost unbelievable but there was no other access. I can't imagine they took it in turns - 'nature ain't like that' - but I can imagine the two that didn't get up to be fed crouching and ducking as the one up top came tumbling down again into the nest.

Roy Beaton

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FIELD DAY REPORT - PITTSWORTH AREA. 23.5.82

A small convoy of four cars and two new faces enjoyed a pleasant morning's birdwatching on a round trip between Toowoomba and the area east of Pittsworth.

Although nothing extraordinary was seen in the total of 57 species, undoubtedly the most noteworthy sighting was that of a number of Black Kites in the Linthorpe area, this species being rather uncommon locally.

FIELD DAY REPORT cont'd

The Pittsworth Environmental Park was our major stop and, although there was little activity along the creek, bush birds were prominent on the surrounding hillsides. These included Jacky Winters, Speckled Warblers, Weebills and excellent looks at Yellow Thornbills. On returning to the creek, a Restless Flycatcher, Striped Honeyeater and female Rose Robin were glassed in quick succession.

Travelling further along the Linthorpe Road we could see an area of sky speckled with raptors as well as their perched forms on the powerlines - they were all Brown Falcons. I had never seen them in such large numbers and for me, as well as others, it was a memorable sighting. We don't know what was the attraction for them.

The trip home along the Cecil Plains Road yielded next to nothing, although we had hoped for a Spotted Harrier.

Those who attended were Michael Atzeni (and friend), Lesley Ball, Ron Colpus, Graham and Jane Corbin, Pat McConnell and new member Tony Venaglia.

Sincerest thanks to Lesley for reconnoitring the area the day before. Considering the habitats we fared quite well under Lesley's guidance.

Michael Atzeni

Species list:

Little Pied Cormorant, Pacific Heron, White-faced Heron, Straw-necked Ibis, Pacific Black Duck, Maned Duck, Black-shouldered Kite, Black Kite, Brown Goshawk, Brown Falcon, Australian Kestrel, Feral Pigeon, Peaceful Dove, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Cockateil, Pale-headed Rosella, Red-rumped Parrot, Kookaburra, Welcome Swallow, Richard's Pipit, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Rose Robin, Eastern Yellow Robin, Jacky Winter, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Restless Flycatcher, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Golden-headed Cisticola, Superb Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, Speckled Warbler, Weebill, Brown Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Yellow Thornbill, White-throated Treecreeper, Striped Honeyeater, Noisy Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, Silvereye, House Sparrow, Zebra Finch, Double-barred Finch, Starling, Mynah, Magpie-lark, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Magpie, Currawong, Crow.

57 species

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MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

Australasian Shoveller. 15.5.82. Hood's Lagoon. MA., PM.
White-breasted Sea-eagle. 2.5.82. Atkinson's Dam. LB., JB.
Little Eagle. 16.4.82. Gowrie Junction. TR.
Marsh Harrier. 30.5.82. Hood's Lagoon. TR., BF., PM.
Spotted Harrier. 26.5.82. Wellcamp Road. LB.
Australian Bustard. 24.4.82. Eulo. TR., PM.
Red-necked Avocet. 24.4.82. Eulo. TR., PM.
Red-necked Avocet. 15.5.82. Perseverance Dam. PM. (and 18.5.82)
White-headed Pigeon.(2) 22.5.82. Hume St. (between Bridge & Campbell). JEC.
Emerald Dove. 3.4.82. Redwood Park. LB., JB.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES cont'd

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. 9.5.82. Lyons Park. MJ., SP.
Bourke's Parrot. 24.4.82. Eulo. TR., PM.
Blue-winged Kookaburra. 16.5.82. Fernvale Bridge, Brisbane River,
LB., JB.
Crested Shrike-tit. 3.4.82. Redwood Park. LB., JB.
Chirruping Wedgebill. 25.4.82. Eulo. TR., PM.
Hall's Babbler. 26.4.82. Eulo. TR., PM.
Chestnut-crowned Babbler. 25.4.82. Eulo. TR., PM.
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill. 24.4.82. Eulo. TR., PM.
Plum-headed Finch. 3.5.82. Coolmunda Dam. MA., TR., BF., TV.

MA: Michael Atzeni. JB: John Ball. LB: Lesley Ball. JEC: Jim
Corbin. BF: Brian Foulis. MJ: Marilyn Jacobs. PM: Pat McConnell.
SP: Sandy Pottinger. TR: Terry Reis. TV: Tony Venaglia.

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FIELD DAY FOR JUNE

Date: Sunday, 27th June, 1982. Place: Dyer's Lagoon, Laidley.
Assembly Point: Pigott's Car Park. Time: 7.15 a.m. for departure
at 7.30 a.m. sharp.

This is a waterbird outing, calling at several lagoons and small
dams on the way to Dyer's Lagoon. Bring a picnic lunch and have a
casual day.

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NEW MEMBERS

Thank you to those members that have introduced two new faces to
the club. Welcome to the new members and we wish you good birding.

Tony Venaglia, 4 Kirkless St., Toowoomba.

Ray Viljoen, 315 Margaret St., Toowoomba.

Tony we have already seen on our May field day. While anybody who
is in the photographic club will have seen Ray's very fine bird
photographs. Maybe we can persuade you to show them to us one
evening, Ray.

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PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

For those members who were involved in the RAOU bird atlas in any
way, either with gold checklists or in our annual bird count, may
be interested in the RAOU newsletter for March. It has a special
section on the bird atlas and other projects that you may wish to
be involved in.

ECOS. Winter 1982. (CSIRO Environmental Research.)

RAOU Newsletter. March 1982. (Royal Australasian Ornithologists
Union)

Urimbirra. May, 1982. (Chinchilla Field Naturalists's Club)

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T.B.C. Publication Deadline

Articles for the Toowoomba Bird Club news-sheet have a deadline of
the fourth Sunday of the month. This coincides with the Field Day
and can be mailed to the Editor or handed to any of the Executive.