

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

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NEWS-SHEET No. 81 - SEPTEMBER 1982

Our warmer weather is returning and with it many of the birds that leave us during the winter months. It is a great time to go bird-watching and I hope you have the time to make the most of it. The marvellous attribute of birding is that you can snatch a half an hour or an hour during the week and still have some good sightings.

I'm sure many of you would have seen the article in 'The Chronicle' of September 7th, concerning the waterbird habitat for East Creek. It is the brainchild of the Toowoomba Field Naturalist Club for the area of creek south of Alderley Street. It is their suggestion that the Toowoomba City Council with the aid of community organisations develop the swampland as a project to mark Australia's bi-centenary celebrations. A tremendous amount of forethought and care has gone into this submission and I entreat all our members to support this project. Please write to 'The Chronicle' and to your alderman on this matter. Your help may see this dream become a reality. Ken Ferrier, spokesman for the Field Naturalist Club, has given Ron Hopkinson a copy of this proposal and once executive has perused it we will be deciding the best way that we can support this scheme as a club.

The date of our Annual General Meeting has been changed because some members of the executive are unable to make it on the original date. It is now Tuesday, 19th October at 7.30 pm. We will be meeting at the Atzeni home in 2 Memory Street and hope to make it more of a social affair than a business meeting. Try to make that date and have a say in the running of your club. Nomination forms for the election of officers are at the end of this news-sheet. Executive positions are President, Secretary/Treasurer, Records Officer/Librarian and Editor. Please get in touch with the executive if you wish to find out what responsibilities are entailed in these positions.

Lesley Ball, Editor

BACKYARD BIRDING 2 - FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Back door birdwatching? Yes it is true, back door, back yard, who needs to go far afield in this fascinating country to watch birds? When I first arrived in Australia, fresh from Central London, where to hear and see a Blackbird singing from the rooftops made the occasion a red-letter day, I was immediately struck by the wealth of Australian bird life. Previously I had thought the English countryside to be rich in birds but had in no way been prepared for what I was to find here.

Waking up on my first morning at my brother's home east of Sydney to a chorus of exciting new voices outside, my first words were "What is that bird?..... and that..... and that?" But sadly they had few answers for me then, though I now know they were Magpie-larks, Magpies, Galahs and Indian Mynahs, and later, on our way up to Queensland, the unmistakable tinkling of the Bellbirds.

Once settled in Queensland a few months later, I was delighted to find that my cousin Maggie and her brother John, now my husband, were well aware of the birds around them and had taken a great interest in them all their lives. So slowly my endless questions were answered, even though sometimes the local and pet terms took a little sorting out when one tried to tie them up with the more prosaic names and descriptions in the bird books! My interest was soon further stimulated on meeting Bill and Eileen Jolly, close neighbours and friends of John's, who lost no time in pulling me in to join the Club, since when I've been well and truly 'hooked'.

Shorelands, with its haven of old trees and shrubs around the house proved a splendid learning area for a beginner. I put up a bird table in full view of our kitchen windows hoping to attract the smaller birds for closer sighting and the Butcherbirds which give us so much pleasure with their songs, but although both Pied and Grey Butcherbirds duly came and feasted so also did the Magpies and eventually numbers of Currawongs, gobbling up everything in sight like lightning and chasing off the smaller fry.

One of our most colourful visitors is the Banana Bird or Blue-faced Honeyeater, whose brilliant face patches cause him to stand out well against the preponderance of black and white birds. Another bright one is the Pale-headed Rosella and at other times the Mistletoebird, Sacred Kingfisher and the Superb Blue Wrens. Once the mulberries ripen there are an abundance of 'fruit birds', eventually identified as Olive-backed Orioles, Figbirds, the noisy Koel, and - great excitement - the Channel-billed Cuckoo! In the winter it is a different story; finches galore, Zebras, Chestnut-breasted Mannikins, Double-bars, also Yellow-rumped Thornbills and Pipits. Overhead the Black-shouldered Kites and Australian Kestrels were at first much in evidence, even occasionally the majestic Wedge-tailed Eagles and often, after rain, large numbers of Ibis, circling in the thermal currents to gain height to take them up and over the Range. Once - special joy - a small flight of Pelicans; even a Boobook Owl sitting solemnly on a post. At certain times numbers of Welcome Swallows and Fairy Martins or the swift scimitar-winged White-throated Needletails. These interested me as here they appear to be silent, while the swifts that I was accustomed to in Europe, outwardly so similar, are characterised by their frantic, high-pitched screams as they wheel and hurtle through the air intent on their insect chasing or is it just from sheer exuberance?

I have noticed a subtle change in the birds seen at Shorelands even in the short time I have lived there. Now that the area is fast becoming built-up, habitats are changing too. The once open farm

BACKYARD BIRDING CONT'D

acres are now housing land, already planted here and there with trees and shrubs; populated also with the ugly power poles and lines and different birds are appearing. Within recent months I have seen Striped and Brown Honeyeaters, Dusky Woodswallows, Jackie Winters and whole flocks of Chestnut-breasted Mannikins instead of the earlier odd pair if one was lucky - Kestrels are rare now; Black-shouldered Kites even more so; Eagles non-existent. However, binoculars always at hand or, hopefully, slung around the neck and ears cocked, who knows what surprises may still be in store?

Ann Shore

--ooOoo--

TASMANIAN NOTES

During our wanderings in Tasmania Roy and I have very much wanted to see the Beautiful Firetail, or Firetailed Finch, Emblema bella.

As we tell people of this wish we have been directed to many places: 'Sure to see them! All through the bush there! Dozens of them' but unfortunately when we visit the region pointed out to us, they are conspicuous by their absence!

Last week we were walking through the Asbestos Range National Park at West Head, not really birdwatching, when we saw a flash of red! Could it be? Or was it the Scarlet or Flame Robin? We waited quietly and yes! the Beautiful Firetail came down on the trail, drank from a pool on the track, eyed us, preened, had another drink and flew off.

A beautiful sighting: no need for binoculars as it was only about 2 metres (6ft) away.

Seeing this made us even keener to see the other bird we had looked for in vain and much wanted to see: the Pink Robin or Magenta-breasted Robin, Petroica rodinogaster.

We had been told by Trevor Waites, the bird photographer, that why we had seen so many females and immatures, but no pink breasted male, was that it takes five years for an immature to gain his beautiful pink vest and that a fully coloured male was the most beautiful of all the robins. We had looked for it in vain whilst staying at his sanctuary at Sisters Beach so now we decided to return to Mount Field National Park and wander through the beautiful 'manferns' (as the Tasmanians call the Tree Ferns) below the Russell and Lady Barron Falls and see if our luck would hold.

Often as I walk through these wooded areas I am mortified to hear so many calls:- whistles, tweets, twirrings and see so few birds! I have, though, sat on a log on the Russell Falls track and visited with a Dusky Robin who perched on the same log about 1½ metres (4ft) from me, cheerfully eye-ing me the while.

But this day was to be, again, a lucky day. Perched on a branch by the track was a male Pink Robin, a beautiful sight, and a beautiful sighting, again with no need for binoculars, as we watched him busily searching for food occasionally stopping to look at us (Do birds 'human-watch'?).

Delighted as I am to have seen the Pink Robin I cannot say he is the most beautiful of robins, as out of the 12 Australian robins I have only seen 4 and I love the flaunting gaiety of the Flame and Scarlet Robins.

TASMANIAN NOTES CONT'D

However to have seen these 2 birds, the Beautiful Firetail Finch and the Pink Robin, as our Tasmanian Tour comes to an end has been a great thrill.

Now can anyone tell me where I might see a Forty-spotted Pardalote?

Peggie Beaton

---ooOoo---

FIELD DAY REPORT - PRINCE HENRY DRIVE, REDWOOD PARK, WITHCOTT 22.8.82.

Only two cars and five members took advantage of the fine weather on the August field day and ignoring suggestions that the State strikes had spread to the Bird Club we set off for Prince Henry Drive. Out of the total of 24 birds noted Regent Bowerbirds - male and female - were perhaps the 'bird of the walk'. Then on to Redwood Park where another 11 species were recorded plus, of course, some repeats from P.H. Dr. After a refreshment-stop at John and Ann's place, we set off for the nearby creek that leads to the 'Caves'. Before long we were 'up the creek' in the pleasanter meaning of the expression as we spotted thirty different species of birdlife, of which 17 were new notings for the day with possibly two Azure Kingfishers taking pride of place.

Those who attended were Lesley Ball, Ron Colpus, Graham Corbin and Ann and John Shore.

Ron Colpus

Species list:

White-faced Heron, Straw-necked Ibis, Australian Kestrel, Masked Lapwing, White-headed Pigeon, Peaceful Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove, Emerald Dove, Crested Pigeon, Pale-headed Rosella, Azure Kingfisher, Kookaburra, Rainbow Bee-eater, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Varied Triller, Rose Robin, Eastern Yellow Robin, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Eastern Whipbird, Grey-crowned Babbler, Superb Fairy-wren, Variegated Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Gerygone, Striated Thornbill, Varied Sitella, White-throated Treecreeper, Noisy Friarbird, Little Friarbird, Noisy Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Mistletoebird, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, Silvereye, House Sparrow, Red-browed Firetail, Double-barred Finch, Regent Bowerbird, Magpie-lark, Pied Butcherbird, Magpie, Currawong, Crow.

48 species

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MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

White-tailed Tropicbird. 18.7.82. Michaelmas Cay. RGH.
Wandering Whistling-Duck. 11.8.82. Hood's Lagoon. LB.
Black-breasted Buzzard. 31.7.82. Princess Charlotte Bay. RGH.
Red Goshawk. 21.7.82. Coen. RGH.
Orange-footed Scrubfowl. 12.8.82. Mission Beach. RGH.
Red-necked Rail. 3.8.82. Julatten. RGH.
Marsh Crake. 25.8.82. Hood's Lagoon. MA.
Silver Gull. 10.8.82. Cathro Park (overhead). JD.
Roseate Tern. 18.7.82. Michaelmas Cay. RGH.
White-headed Pigeon. 22.8.82. Redwood Park. AHS.
Palm Cockatoo. 22/24.7.82. Bramwell Station, Cape York. RGH.
Spotted Nightjar. 21.7.82. Bramwell Station, Cape York. RGH.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES CONT'D

White-throated Nightjar. 11.8.82. Seventeen Mile Rd., Helidon. LB.
Noisy Pitta. 11.8.82. Redwood Park. MA, PM.
Ground Cuckoo-shrike. 11.8.82. Hood's Lagoon. MA, LB, PM.
Rose Robin. 27.8.82. Mt. Field National Park, Tas. PB, RRB.
Rufous Whistler. 3.8.82. Flinders St. JD.
Tawny Grassbird. 25.8.82. Rangeview. JEC.
Little Wattlebird. 29.8.82. Taylor Rd., Sth Withcott. AHS.
White-naped Honeyeater. 22.8.82. Redwood Park. AHS.
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater. 17.8.82. D.D.I.A.E. MA.
Beautiful Firetail. 19.8.82. West Head, Asbestos Range N.P., Tas.
PB, RRB.

MA: Michael Atzeni. LB: Lesley Ball. PB: Peggie Beaton. RRB:
Roy Beaton. JEC: Jim Corbin. JD: Joe Deuble. RGH: Rod Hobson.
PM: Pat McConnell. AHS: Ann Shore.

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FIELD DAY FOR SEPTEMBER

Date: Sunday, 26th September, 1982. Place: Goomburra State
Forest

Assembly Point: Pigott's Car Park.

Time: 7.15 a.m. for departure at 7.30 a.m. sharp.

This should be an excellent time of year to foray into this area.
The little bit of rain we've just had could make it quite pleasant.

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PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Two very fine leaflets have been sent from The Bird Observers Club.
They are 'Birdwatching for the Disabled' and 'Seabirds need your
help ...'. You may borrow them from Michael Atzeni as usual. Other
articles this month are an explanation of the Rolling Bird Survey
and a trip to Salvator Rosa National Park.

Q.O.S. Newsletter. September 1982. (Queensland Ornithological
Society)

Urimbirra. August 1982. (Chinchilla Field Naturalists' 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 may be handed to any of the Executive or mailed to the Editor.

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TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB ANNUAL MEETING

VENUE: 2 Memory St., Toowoomba.

DATE: Tuesday, 19th October, 1982.

TIME: 7.30 p.m.

AGENDA

- 1) Minutes of previous meeting.
 - 2) President's Report.
 - 3) Editor's Report.
 - 4) Treasurer's Report.
 - 5) Business arising from the minutes.
 - 6) Election of Officers.
 - 7) General business.
 - 8) Finalisation of arrangements for Seventh Annual Bird Count.
- Meeting Closes.

To be followed by supper and time for a quiet chat.

Members please bring a plate.

NOMINATION FOR OFFICE

I nominate _____ for the office of _____
in the Toowoomba Bird Club for the year 1982/83. Date _____

(Nominator)

I accept nomination for the office of _____ in the
Toowoomba Bird Club for the year 1982/83. Date _____

(Nominee)