



NEWS-SHEET No. 88

APRIL 1983

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

toowoomba bird club

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB

Postal Address

P.O. Box 67, DARLING HEIGHTS. Q. 4350

Club Officers

President:

Marilyn Jacobs.
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Secretary/Treasurer:

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Michael Atzeni.
2 Memory St, T'mba. 4350
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Editor:

Lesley Ball.
15 Dunmore St, T'mba. 4350
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Activities

Field Outing and Monthly Meeting - 4th Sunday of each month
- usually leave from Pigott's Car Park at 7.30 am.

Camping Trips - 2 or 3 times per year.

Film and Slide Evenings - 2 or 3 times a year.

Annual Subscription

Ordinary/Family membership \$8.00
Student membership \$4.00

News-sheet

Published monthly, before the outing.

Deadline

Articles for the news-sheet have a deadline of the fourth
Sunday of the month. This coincides with the field outing
and may be handed to any member of the executive or mailed
to the editor.

EDITORIAL

As you can see the Executive has been putting their heads together in order to get a front page for our newsletter. There are two reasons behind this move - 1) to give the news-sheet a more dynamic outlook, and 2) to make typing the news-sheet easier. I hope you, as members, approve. Please let us know your feelings or even suggestions.

Our slide evening was really excellent, and it is a pity more members were not able to avail themselves of the opportunity to, not only to see Len's slides, but also to listen to his very entertaining commentary. We are indebted to Len Harvey for the time and trouble he went to and exceedingly pleased to hear that he is willing to show us some more of his slides later in the year, perhaps on small bush birds.

Members who were able to make the evening were Michael Atzeni, Ron Colpus, Jane, Jim and Graham Corbin, Don Gaydon, Marilyn Jacobs, Audrey Sorensen and myself. Two welcome visitors were Angela and Kev Kilmartin.

Lesley Ball, Editor

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NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRDS

236. Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo (Calyptorhynchus funereus).
8.4.83. Pampas Estate, south of Murphy's Creek. Michael Atzeni,
Don Gaydon.

A single bird seen flying. A black Cockatoo identified by the pale cheek patch and 'wheela' call. No colour was seen in the tail. (This species was seen by Lesley Ball over Dunmore St, T'mba on 10.10.81. and Rod Hobson reported seeing them in our club area prior to the formation of our club.)

237. Brown-headed Honeyeater (Melithreptis brevirostris). 8.4.83.
Helidon Rest Area. Michael Atzeni, Don Gaydon.

A feeding party of about 20 birds. Brown head extending to mantle; buffish-white nape and eyebrow; pale greyish buff underparts; back and wings brown to dull green; legs pink-brown; call, a repeated 'chick'.

I would like to thank Len Harvey who had a hand in the recording of (both) the above species. I am also grateful for information passed on to me by Len concerning species not yet recorded or rarely reported by the club that he has seen in or near our study area.

Michael Atzeni

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NOTE SWAPPING - BIRD TRAITS

The following sighting took place over a year ago at Port Douglas, on the coast, 75km north of Cairns. As part of a public park near the small fishing harbour is an area known as the Basin. It is a man-made, semi-circular wall of stones built out into the sea, with a hole at its base to allow the entry of the tide and thus form a swimming pool; the original for the local populace. It has now fallen largely into disuse for this purpose, but when the tide is out, its mangrove, weed-ridden, muddy bottom provides a good

NOTE SWAPPING - BIRD TRAITS CONT'D

hunting ground for some of the local birds.

The bird concerned is the Black-fronted Dotterel (Black-fronted Plover). A pair were first observed and later joined by four more birds and the sightings took place over a period of 7-8 weeks, and all birds practised this food gathering technique. When the bottom of the pool was newly uncovered the birds seemed to feed quite normally by moving swiftly with small steps and stopping abruptly pecking here and there in the mud and slime and gathering some small sea creatures. I was able to sight at close quarters, - slightly in excess of 5-6 metres (18 ft) but never discovered what the food was.

After a period of time, say $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 hour, food appeared to be less plentiful. Whether this was due to natural factors such as the amount of time the mud had been uncovered by water, or the heat of the sun, is speculation, as is the idea that the prey were aware by this time that their enemies were covering the area pretty thoroughly, so were seeking greater depth for protection. At this stage the birds' normal hurried, jerky movements of running a few fast steps and then stopping to peck about changed to one of more unhastened food gathering. The bird would balance itself on one leg and extend the other, stiff and straight in a line of about 45° and the foot a few millimetres above the mud, rather like a soldier making the movement for the slow march step. The foot from the ankle was then vibrated at very high speed. It was certainly not perceptible by eye; one was just aware of a fuzzy blur at the end of the leg. Although there was no audible sound it was assumed that the foot was tapping the mud at high speed, for perhaps a second or two. The foot would stop, the head jerked in several directions and invariably a lunge and a snap and one assumed another small sea creature's life had ended. It is assumed that the tapping attracts the prey to the surface of the mud to find out "what's going on", and that's sufficient inquisitiveness for the hunter to achieve its objective. It was interesting to note that this vibration of the mud by the Dotterel seemed to produce results up to 30cm or so and it was necessary for the bird to make a jerky observation of approximately 180° to see where the prey was going to 'pop up', and in order to pounce the bird often had to make a few quick steps for the lunge with the beak. Another peculiarity was that as though the birds had been given a command, this activity would stop almost instantly and unanimously and they would freeze, staring straight ahead and this would last for 15 to 20 minutes before hunting would start again.

The other instance of a bird using a foot technique to produce food concerned a Silver Gull which I observed in Adventure Bay on Bruny Is. south Tasmania. Two birds alighted within eyeshot, one which I assumed was an immature and the other an adult. The former landed above the tide's edge on dry sand, the adult, just within the water so that its legs were in about 3-4cm. The sand was very soft, and its feet soon sank in the sand to a centimetre or so, and as the water of the last small wave receded it shuffled its legs backwards and forwards without shifting position. This obviously produces a subterranean vibration which attracted some buried prey since it was quickly snapped up and the adult flew a metre or so to its offspring and fed it. This procedure was repeated several times until either it got no results or it thought its youngster had had enough - a doubtful thought when considering Silver Gulls.

Roy Beaton.

THE BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB

The Bird Observers Club has been in operation for nearly eighty years. It is based in Victoria but is looked upon as the 'national' club. Our club receives the B.O.C. newsletter and it is available to our members to borrow. We have been sent a leaflet from the B.O.C. requesting us to "... please help us to protect Australia's birds?" by inviting others to become members of the B.O.C. If any of our members should like to join and support this worthy society the annual membership for interstate members is \$7.50 and for full time students to 25 years it is \$5.00 per year. The leaflet explains all the amenities and projects to do with the club. Copies of the leaflet can be obtained from the editor.

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PERCY THE PELICAN

Did anyone read the small item of news in 'The Chronicle', Saturday 2nd April? Last November Percy was discovered with his upper bill shattered by a gunshot, so a Newcastle veterinarian gave him a fibreglass transplant. This, it seems, was not strong enough to cope with the tug-o-wars that these birds get into over ownership of a fish, and another operation had to be performed. Stainless steel has been used to reinforce a new fibreglass bill and it is hoped this will be more successful.

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ROADSIDE FLORA AND FAUNA SURVEY

The following is from a circular sent to us by the Bird Observers Club.

"The Bird Observers Club and the Roadside Conservation Committee are preparing an Audio-Visual Cassette Programme for borrowing by community groups to raise public awareness of the importance throughout Australia of roadside vegetation and of the animals and birds which use it. In conjunction with the cassette a Roadside Flora and Fauna Survey is being conducted."

They are asking for information on birds using the roadsides and for donations of slides showing "significant roadside vegetation (or lack of any), birds and other animals seen, close-ups of vegetation, plantations, roadside signs indicating flora and fauna, aerial shots and, of course, examples of roadside uses." Any member at all interested should contact me, the editor, for more details and copies of the survey.

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SNIPPETS

I've had a Black-shouldered Kite at East Creek - just across the road from my place - for the last week. Definitely not a Letter-wing as I've had close-ups with it hovering overhead and it is plain white underneath. Turns up about 4 pm. quite regularly, length of stay depends on success it has in hunting.

Joe Deuble may be interested in my sightings of formation flying by pelicans in the Coorong area on Princes highway between Adelaide and Mt Gambier. On two occasions 'V' formations of the birds approaching me performed the same aerobatics. The landward side of the 'V' slowed their speed and joined onto the end of the seaward half just as it came directly over the shoreline wherupon the whole did a simultaneous left turn seawards and dived down to get on with their fishing.

~~I suggest that Joe contacts the Sub-Dept. of Ornithology, Tring~~

SNIPPETS CONT'D

I suggest that Joe contacts the:-

Sub-Dept. of Ornithology,
Tring Museum,
TRING, Hertfordshire HP23 6Ap,
ENGLAND.

to get their comments on 'Goose Power'.

Ron Colpus

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FIELD DAY REPORT - AUDREY SORENSEN'S PROPERTY, SUNDAY 27th MARCH 1983

The March outing looked most promising when quite a large number of club members made their way down the rough to Audrey Sorensen's property. Stops on the way proved to yield very little except a party of noisily feeding Grey-crowned Babblers, giving us a good view and demonstrating their unique noises. Any lack of birdlife at this point was more than made up by the beautiful views across the vallies on either side of the road.

Audrey's property proved to be quite a surprise being in the middle of a small patch of rainforest. A short walk up the road and we had seen the nests of numerous birds. Although these nests were only a few feet off the road and quite obvious, they had to be pointed out to us as we missed nest after nest. The most surprising of these was the small cup nest of the Whipbird, a tiny nest for such a large bird. We also saw the frail nest of a pigeon, thought to be that of a Wonga and the numerous grass nests of Double-bar Finches. One bush contained the breeding and roosting nest where we were shown that the roosting nest lacks the entrance spout of the breeding nest. Several of the small hanging nests of the Black-faced Monarch were seen which were made of cobweb and camouflaged with lichen and small pieces of leaf.

Feeding in a large fig tree was a beautiful black and gold Regent Bowerbird together with several of his drab wives, calling occasionally to tell us that they were there among the leaves. A Rufous Fantail flitted through the bushes displaying his rufous colouring for all to see. An immature Fan-tailed Cuckoo took some time before it was correctly identified, while overhead Mistletoe-birds called with their high pitched whistles, but would not allow themselves to be seen.

Back at Audrey's house, birdfeeders and birdbaths gave us good views of numerous Double-bar Finches, Lewin's Honeyeaters and a lone Scarlet Honeyeater. Thanks to Audrey for allowing us to share the peace and beauty of her property and the knowledge of the habits of the birds who live there.

The lucky people on this outing were Lesley Ball, Peggie and Roy Beaton, Ron Colpus, Graham and Jane Corbin, Don Gaydon, Len Harvey (visitor), Marilyn Jacobs, Audrey Sorensen.

Graham Corbin

Species list:

Black-shouldered Kite, White-headed Pigeon, Bar-shouldered Dove,

FIELD DAY REPORT CONT'D

~~Little Lorikeet~~, Pale-headed Rosella, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Kookaburra, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Varied Triller, Eastern Yellow Robin, Grey Shrike-thrush, Rufous Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Eastern Whipbird, Grey-crowned Babbler, Superb Fairy-wren, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Large-billed Scrubwren, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Gerygone (Warbler), Brown Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Noisy Friarbird, Noisy Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Scarlet Honey-eater, Mistletoebird, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, Silvereye, Red-browed Firetail, Double-barred Finch, Starling, Mynah, Olive-backed Oriole, Figbird, Spangled Drongo, Regent Bowerbird, Magpie-lark, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Magpie, Raven, Crow.
46 species

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MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

Australian Shelduck. 2.3.83. Dyer's Lagoon, Laidley. MA, LB, DG.
Black-breasted Buzzard. 1.4.83. Quipie. MA, PM, TR.
Black Kite. 25.3.83. Grenier St. LB.
Grey Goshawk. 16.3.83. 8 Ocean St. JCC, JEC.
Peregrine Falcon. 26.3.83. Hood's Lagoon. MA, TR.
Black Falcon (2). 9.4.83. Karrasch's Lagoon. BF, TR.
Buff-banded Rail (dead). D.D.I.A.E. Campus. MJ, SP. 21.3.83.
Red-necked Avocet. 2.3.83. Dyer's Lagoon. LB.
Brush Cuckoo. 7.2.83. Echo Valley. JD.
Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike. 8.4.83. Helidon Rest Area. MA, DG.
Redthroat. 3.4.83. Adavale/Charleville Rd. MA, PM, TR.
Diamond Firetail. 12.3.83. Preston/Sugarloaf Rd. LB, JB.
Australian Magpie (White-backed). 16.3.83. Moloney St. DG.

MA: Michael Atzeni, JB: John Ball, LB: Lesley Ball, JCC: Jane Corbin, JCC: Jim Corbin, JD: Joe Deuble, BF: Brian Foulis, DG: Don Gaydon, MJ: Marilyn Jacobs, PM: Pat McConnell, SP: Sandy Pottinger, TR: Terry Reis.

New member- Audrey Sorensen, Ms 464, Helidon

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PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

The Bird Observer. March 1983.
Birds. Winter 1982.
The Darling Downs Naturalist. December 1982.
Queensland Ornithological Society Newsletter. March & April 1983.
The Sunbird. December 1982.
Urimbirra. March 1983.

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FIELD OUTING FOR APRIL

Date: 23rd, 24th & 25th April, 1983. Place: Girraween National Park, Stanthorpe.

Assembly Point: Girraween National Park.

Time: 2.00 pm. for afternoon walk.

The Stanthorpe area is well known for its variety of birds and should be a successful camp. Day-trippers on Sunday are very welcome.

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