



NEWS-SHEET No. 94
OCTOBER 1983

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

toowoomba bird club

Postal Address

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Club Officers

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Annual Subscription

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

Activities

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

Camping trips, film and slide evenings.

News-sheet

Published monthly, before the outing. Articles have a
deadline of the last day of the month and should be
mailed to the editor.

EDITORIAL

The Beginners' Bird Outing was a great success. Wide media coverage and good weather, together with welcome support from members meant that 26 people were on the outing. It was refreshing to see such members as Graham and Craig Weldon from Laidley, Lydia Lyndon and Poppy Levonis. Everybody had rewarding birdwatching and an exceptionally social outing which is what club outings are all about. 52 species were seen with some particularly good views.

I hope some of you are catching the bird calls being broadcast on the ABC radio. Denis Beard is playing them at 7.20am. on his breakfast session. They are produced by Helen Horton in Brisbane, and as well as some lesser known birds there are several old favourites. Helen gives a brief description of the bird and its idiosyncrasies with a recording of its call.

It may have come to your notice in a couple of recent newspaper items that I have changed my surname. For philosophical reasons I have reverted to my family name of Beaton. (P.S. John and I are still happily married and living in Dunmore St.)

Lesley Beaton, Editor

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REFLECTING ON OUR LEAST SEEN SPECIES

Since October 1975, when members began recording species for our Toowoomba area, certain species have emerged as rarities, at least in these parts.

A number of waterbirds and waders fall into this category. To date we have only one record each of the Great Crested Grebe (2.7.81.), Cotton Pygmy-Goose (7.1.82), Black-tailed Native-hen (28.11.82.), Marsh Sandpiper (4.12.82.) and Curlew Sandpiper (Oct. 82). All these sightings were at Hood's Lagoon at Helidon, probably the only suitable local habitat for these species as well as the Magpie Goose, Wandering Whistling Duck and Freckled Duck which made their temporary appearances during the drought last year and early this year. The Great Crested Grebe and Cotton Pygmy Goose were seen when the water level was particularly high. Presently, Hood's could be suitable for both species to reappear. As for the other species mentioned, I think it will be some time before we record them again with the drought over.

Recently, only the second local sighting of the Jabiru was made at Hood's. The previous record was in April, 1979.

The Club has only one record of the Red Goshawk. It was seen on 10th April, 1977 flying over the Ruthven St South area. Recent reports of this species near Stockyard are encouraging and the area is well worth spending time in.

Turquoise Parrots have been seen once (April 1980). This was in hilly country near Echo Valley Racetrack. The only other mention of this species was in the Cabarlah area (June 1978), which is just outside our boundaries.

Oriental Cuckoos have proved an elusive species for members. Three records exist - Withcott (Feb. 1977), Blanchview (29.1.79.) and Jubilee Park (Oct. 1978).

Two records of the Barking Owl exist. One was seen in Redwood Park and a pair were seen on Glen Lomond Creek (15.4.79.). The latter area may be worth a visit at night to listen for "wook-wooks" emanating from trees.

REFLECTING ON OUR LEAST SEEN SPECIES CONT'D

Of the passerines, the Spotted Quail-thrush and White's Thrush, although probably resident, are rarely seen. Three records exist for both species. The quail-thrush has only been seen in the Ballard region while the White's Thrush has been recorded once at Picnic Point and twice in Redwood Park. I have no doubts both species are not as rare as our few sightings indicate.

The Scarlet Robin, Little Grassbird and White-breasted Woodswallow have only been reported once for our area. The sites were below Nelson St (South Toowoomba), Hood's Lagoon and Withcott respectively. The Little Grassbird took up residence when the reeds were well established. It would appear the other two species are rare visitors even though the area seems suitable for both species.

Michael Atzeni, Records
Officer

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SWALLOWS

One or two of the more intelligent swallows at the D.D.I.A.E. are using coir matting as reinforcement for their nests this year instead of the usual grass etc. This reminds me of the pair at Darlington, England who, in a dry period, were seen to use wet cement from a building site and finished up with an all-cement residence. To quote the old saying "They builded better than they knew".

Ron Colpus

--ooOoo--

BIRDING HOLIDAY DOWN SOUTH - CONT'D FROM LAST MONTH

Thick-billed Grasswren - The Artful Dodger

Between Iron Knob and Whyalla we were shown a site for these grass-wrens - a paddock of bluebush and blackbush. Undoubtedly, this was the most frustrating bird of the trip. After four and a half hours search only two people had glimpsed the bird but we had found a nest with an egg after a cuckoo flushed from the same blackbush it was in. No amount of waiting and looking near the nest worked. Two days later we spent three hours searching and eventually we all saw it. No more than three of us saw a bird at any one time. The frustration over, we all agreed what great value grasswrens are. The few species in this habitat include White-winged Fairy-wren, Redthroat, Samphire Thornbill and Black-eared Cuckoo.

Lincoln National Park

Kevin could only reasonably expect 3 new species, namely Rock Parrot, Ostrich and Western Whipbird, in this park. The latter was high on the priority list and is resident in Lincoln N.P. but without a tape recorder would have been extremely difficult to see. Sitting quietly on a track, we taped its distinct call and played it back. The bird circled us several times, usually out of view, stopping to call before moving on. We obtained excellent views and the Western Whipbird remains one of the highlights of the trip.

Other noteworthy species:

Brush Bronzewing
Port Lincoln Parrot
Southern Scrub-Robin

Western Yellow Robin
Yellow-rumped Pardalote
Purple-gaped Honeyeater

A search for Rock Parrots failed but we decided to try Coffin Bay next morning. Things sounded rosy as we listened to the owner of the local caravan park give a perfect description of Rock Parrots

BIRDING HOLIDAY DOWN SOUTH CONT'D

visiting the park. Hopes nosedived when she said they only turn up in summer! Still we tried at Point Avoid and were on the verge of giving up when Tony saw one flying. We hastened in its direction and found a feeding group of 60+. These attractive Neophemas are remarkably tame so we obtained crippling looks.

A Touch of Africa

After returning to Port Augusta we approached the owner of 'Emeroo' north of the town who obligingly let us on what used to be an ostrich farm established in 1883. We were told that the feral population would probably die out since droughts and inbreeding had sent their numbers plummeting.

After three and a half hours of no ostriches we were ready to give in but tried one more area and finally glassed one. Probably, seven birds were seen in all.

Into the Mallee

We drove on to Comet Bore south of Pinaroo but it was unusually quiet and only Owlet-Nightjar and Shy Heathwren were of interest.

Along the Big Desert Road (Vic.) we chanced upon the Black-eared (Dusky) Miner before moving on to Hattah Lakes. Regent Parrots, Pink Cockatoos and Yellow Rosellas were seen around the lake while in the porcupine grass we saw the Mallee Emu-wren and the Striated Grasswren. Although slightly easier to track down than the Thick-billed Grasswren, the Striated required two days for all to see it.

Two species we dipped on in the Mallee were the Mallee Fowl and the Red-ored Whistler. Need some excuse to return.

Melbourne-bound, we saw our only Gilbert's Whistlers at Knowsley State Forest west of Heathcote.

Achieving our Main Goal

Our prime concern, Orange-bellied Parrots, regularly winter at Werribee Sewage Farm. We assigned two and a half days to finding them - if past experiences were any guide, we might need that long. Luck had changed. After ten minutes we flushed a flock of eight birds which emitted their buzzing call on rising. We glassed them after they settled again. The ease of finding them took much of the thrill away but who's complaining. We saw many Blue-billed Ducks here but the tide beat us to a Lewin Rail site.

Next stop was Port Addis for the Rufous Bristlebird, also high on our priority list. Again the taperecorder was invaluable. On playing its call one obligingly ran across the bitumen in front of us. At Port Henry we obtained good views of Fairy Terns.

Our visit to Toolangi State Forest was hampered by rain. We left without Pink Robin and Pilotbird but did see Superb Lyrebird and Crescent Honeyeater.

Michael Atzeni, Pat McConnell

Once again I have not enough room to conclude Michael and Pat's article. If you are enjoying it as much as I you'll be looking forward to next month Ed.

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FIELD DAY REPORT 25.9.83. BEGINNERS' MORNING, FLAGSTONE CREEK

Vanishing clouds and a cool easterly breeze made for delightful conditions when fifteen members and eleven visitors attended the Beginners' Morning outing at Flagstone Creek on September 25.

FIELD DAY REPORT CONT'D

The event was an unqualified success. There was plenty of birdlife about, and an unusual amount of aerial to-ing and fro-ing due, no doubt, to seasonal preoccupation of feathered people with nests and young. Indeed, we were able to watch, through binoculars, a nestful of magpie-larks being fed by an exceedingly busy pair of parent birds, as well as crows, magpies and Noisy Miners, all hard at work tending and protecting their young.

But the variety of birds we saw! I, although a tyro at the game, was able to note 35 different species of the 52 recorded, and some of the specimens were beauties. We went straight into business the moment we parked our vehicles at Flagstone Creek for there, on a branch above the water, was a magnificent Azure Kingfisher who gave us plenty of time to observe him. He was a brilliant royal blue, relieved by white and orange. We had been there only a few minutes when we noticed two Crested Hawks (Pacific Baza) performing aerial gymnastics close at hand, and we soon spotted their home --high up in a big clump of mistletoe near a treetop. Their swoopings and dives were very interesting to watch, and in their plumage of blue-grey, they showed up well against the dark mountainside.

In contrast, were some outstanding examples of beauty among the small scrub birds; for instance, the brilliant blue of a Superb Blue Wren (Superb Fairy-wren), and the flash of a bright little Red-backed Fairy-wren, with, later, a blaze of colour as Scarlet Honeyeaters darted among the green leaves.

These were but some of the highlights. Space does not permit mention of the whole parade of activity and bird beauty, from Rainbow Bee-eaters, pigeons and parrots, to finches, pardalotes and orioles, swallows and plover.

We even had a long-range view of, high up in a tree, a fat and very sleepy-looking koala!

Morning tea of tea or coffee and sandwiches was enjoyed with the same bird activity going on all round us. Altogether, it was a morning of delight in the bird world against a glorious background of green ranges and rippling streams.

Bert Pottinger

Numbers: Peggie and Roy Beaton, Ron Colpus, Jane and Graham Corbin, Marilyn Jacobs, Poppy Levonis, Lydia Lyndon, Bert, Margo and Sandy Pottinger, Ann and John Shore, Craig and Graham Welden.

Species list:

Maned (Wood) Duck, Crested Hawk (Pacific Baza), Wedge-tailed Eagle, Kestrel, Masked Lapwing (Plover), Feral Pigeon, Bar-shouldered Dove, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Cockateil, Pale-headed Rosella, Pheasant Coucal, Azure Kingfisher, Kookaburra, Sacred Kingfisher, Rainbow Bee-eater, White-backed Swallow, Welcome Swallow, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Rufous Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Eastern Whipbird, Superb Fairy-wren, Red-backed Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, White-throated Gerygone (Warbler), Brown Thornbill, Striped Honeyeater, Noisy Friarbird, Little Friarbird, Noisy Miner, Lewin's Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, Mistletoe-bird, Striated Pardalote, Silvereye, Sparrow, Red-browed Firetail, Double-barred Finch, Starling, Mynah, Olive-backed Oriole, Figbird, Magpie-lark, Grey & Pied Butcherbird, Magpie, Currawong, Crow.

52 species

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

Ostrich (feral). - .7.83. North of Port Augusta. MA, BF, PM, TR.
Royal Albatross. 17.7.83. Port McDonnell (S.A.). MA, BF, PM, TR.
Great-winged Petrel. 17.7.83. Port McDonnell. MA, BF, PM, TR.
Blue Petrel (dead). 3.8.83. Norman Bay, Wilson's Prom. MA, BF,
PM, TR.
Slender-billed Prion. 17.7.83. Port McDonnell. MA, BF, PM, TR.
Grey-backed Storm Petrel. 17.7.83. Port McDonnell. MA, BF, PM, TR.
Black-necked Stork (Jabiru). 2.10.83. Hood's Lagoon. MA, LA, DG.
Cape Barren Goose. 2.8.83. Sandy Point (vic.). MA, BF, PM, TR.
Pacific Baza. 7.8.83. north of Gilgandra (N.S.W.). MA, BF, PM, TR.
" " 25.9.83. Flagstone Creek. A.H.S.
Spotless Crake. 6.8.83. Deniliquin. MA, BF, PM, TR.
Redshank. 19.7.83. I.C.I. Saltworks, Adelaide. MA, BF, PM, TR.
Kelp Gull. 4.8.83. Seal Rocks, Phillip Is. MA, BF, PM, TR.
Superb Parrot. 6.8.83. Gulpa Siding (N.S.W.). MA, BF, PM, TR.
Regent Parrot. 26.7.83. Hattah Lake N.P. (Vic.). MA, BF, PM, TR.
Rock Parrot. 23.7.83. Point Avoid via Coffin Bay. MA, BF, PM, TR.
Orange-bellied Parrot. 29.7.83. Werribee (Kirk Point). MA, BF,
PM, TR.
Noisy Pitta. 11 & 24.9.83. Redwood. MA, G.
White's Thrush. 11.9.83. Redwood. MA, DG.
Crested Shrike-tit. 2.10.83. Redwood. LA, MA, DG.
Satin Bowerbird (male). 3.9.83. Middle Ridge Golf Links. JD.
LA: Laurie Atzeni, MA: Michael Atzeni, JD: Joe Deuble, DG: Don
Gaydon, AHS: Ann Shore.

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FIELD OUTING FOR OCTOBER

Annual Bird Count as detailed at the A.G.M.

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On Tuesday, 18th October the Club has its Annual General Meeting. This is an opportunity for you to come and air your views on any aspect of the and its activities, vote for and meet the incoming executive.

If you wish to nominate any financial member for an office on the executive, please use the nomination form at the bottom of the following page. The offices open for election are President, Secretary/Treasurer, Records Officer and Editor.

As I wrote last month, accept this as a personal invitation - meet some of your fellow members and enjoy an excellent slide presentation by Ray Viljoen.

Members, please provide a small plate.

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

The Bird Observer. September 1983. (The Bird Observers' Club)

The Darling Downs Naturalist. August & September 1983. (Newsletter of the Toowoomba Field Naturalist Club)

Q.O.S. Newsletter. October 1983. (Queensland Ornithological Society)

Urimbirra. September 1983. (Newsletter of the Chinchilla Field Naturalists' Club)

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

VENUE: 15 Dunmore St, Toowoomba.

DATE: Tuesday, 18th October, 1983.

TIME: 7.15 pm. for 7.30 pm. start.

AGENDA

- 1) Apologies.
- 2) Minutes of previous A.G.M. (taken as read sa per News-sheet No. 83, November 1982.)
- 3) Business arising from the minutes.
- 4) Correspondence.
- 5) Officers' Reports. (President, Treasurer, Records & Editor)
- 6) Election of Officers.
- 7) Arrangements for Eighth Annual Bird Count.
- 8) 8.30 pm. - Slide presentation by Ray Vijoen.

"Comparisons and Similarities of Australian
and South African Birds"

To be followed by supper and a chat.
Members, please provide a small plate.

Anyone requiring transport, please contact Ann 30 3207.

NOMINATION FORM

FOR THE EXECUTIVE OF THE TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB

I nominate to the Office of
(Print please)

..... of the Toowoomba Bird Club in 1983.

signed

name

date

I accept the above nomination to the Toowoomba Bird Club Executive.

signed date