



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

NEWSLETTER

TO ENCOURAGE THE OBSERVATION AND STUDY OF THE BIRDS IN THE TOOWOOMBA AREA

MARCH 2022

EDITION 477

BIRD OF THE MONTH

IN THIS ISSUE



Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo *Toowoomba 2021*

Outings Report	P1 – P2
May Outing & Outing Schedule	P 3
Powerful Owls Season	P 4
From Members	P 5
Shining Bronze Cuckoo NZ	P 6
Bird of the Month	P 7
Weird Willie Wagtails	P 8



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OUTINGS 2022

**Saturday
April 30th
8am**

**Highfields Falls/Williams Park
Search for the Powerful Owls**
Charles Dove 0417 422 302
Outings details Page 3

The Toowoomba Bird Observers Newsletter
Is published monthly.

**The deadline for the next Newsletter
will be the 8th May**

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2022 CHALLENGE

Get your sightings in.

OUTINGS REPORT

TOOWOOMBA JOINT OUTING – 27th March

Toowoomba Bird Observers Club – Illawarra Bird Observers Club
Lockyer Valley

I had the pleasure in leading a combined outing with 3 members of TBOC and 25 members of IBOC which I am a member of both clubs. By Sunday most of the Illawarra group had arrived after battling through the stormy weather to arrive with a couple not making it till later. Sunday's outing was to three dams in the Lockyer Valley. Despite early drizzle in the morning, it had cleared up by Lake Clarendon and was a pleasant morning. A good list of birds was seen here including lots of Golden-headed Cisticolas, Red-backed Fairy-wrens, Grey-crowned Babblers, Royal Spoonbills, Plumbed Whistling Ducks and Great-crested Grebes amongst others. We moved on to Lake Galletly in the campus of the University of Queensland at Gatton. Here we mainly saw a large number of the Whistling Ducks being stirred up by a Brown Goshawk. Lunch was partaken at Lake Apex where there were many nesting Egrets and Cormorants.

Charles Dove and Anna Knowlson IBOC

LAKE CLARENDON Sunday 27 th 1 ^s stop			
Brown Quail	Intermediate Egret	Masked Lapwing	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Plumed Whistling-Duck	Cattle Egret	Galah	Pied Butcherbird
Black Swan	White-faced Heron	Little Corella	Australian Magpie
Australasian Shoveler	Australian White Ibis	Pale-headed Rosella	Willie Wagtail
Grey Teal	Straw-necked Ibis	Red-rumped Parrot	Magpie-lark
Pacific Black Duck	Royal Spoonbill	Laughing Kookaburra	Golden-headed Cisticola
Hardhead	Whistling Kite	Sacred Kingfisher	Little Grassbird
Australasian Grebe	Black Kite	Red-backed Fairy-wren	Welcome Swallow
Great Crested Grebe	Wedge-tailed Eagle	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Tree Martin
Australasian Darter	Nankeen Kestrel	Spotted Pardalote	Australasian Pipit
Little Pied Cormorant	Purple Swamphen	Striated Pardalote	
Australian Pelican	Dusky Moorhen	Blue-faced Honeyeater	
Eastern Great Egret	Eurasian Coot	Grey-crowned Babbler	

LAKE GALLETLY Sunday 27 th 2 nd stop			
White-necked Heron	Purple Swamphen	Laughing Kookaburra	Australian Magpie
Intermediate Egret	Buff-banded Rail	Striated Pardalote	Willie Wagtail
Australian White Ibis	Rainbow Lorikeet	Noisy Miner	
Straw-necked Ibis	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	Grey Butcherbird	
Brown Goshawk	Pale-headed Rosella	Pied Butcherbird	

LAKE APEX Sunday 27 th 3 rd stop			
Magpie Goose	Australasian Darter	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Little Corella
Plumed Whistling-Duck	Little Black Cormorant	Whistling Kite	Red-backed Fairy-wren
Australian Wood Duck	Eastern Great Egret	Wedge-tailed Eagle	Noisy Miner
Pacific Black Duck	Cattle Egret	Purple Swamphen	Grey Butcherbird
Australasian Grebe	Australian White Ibis	Dusky Moorhen	Australian Magpie
Crested Pigeon	Royal Spoonbill	Eurasian Coot	Torresian Crow

SOME IMAGES FROM THE LOCKYER OUTING 2022



Blue-faced Honeyeater



Grey-crowned Babbler



Red-backed Fairy-wren



Brown Goshawk



Some of the combined group



Laughing Kookaburra

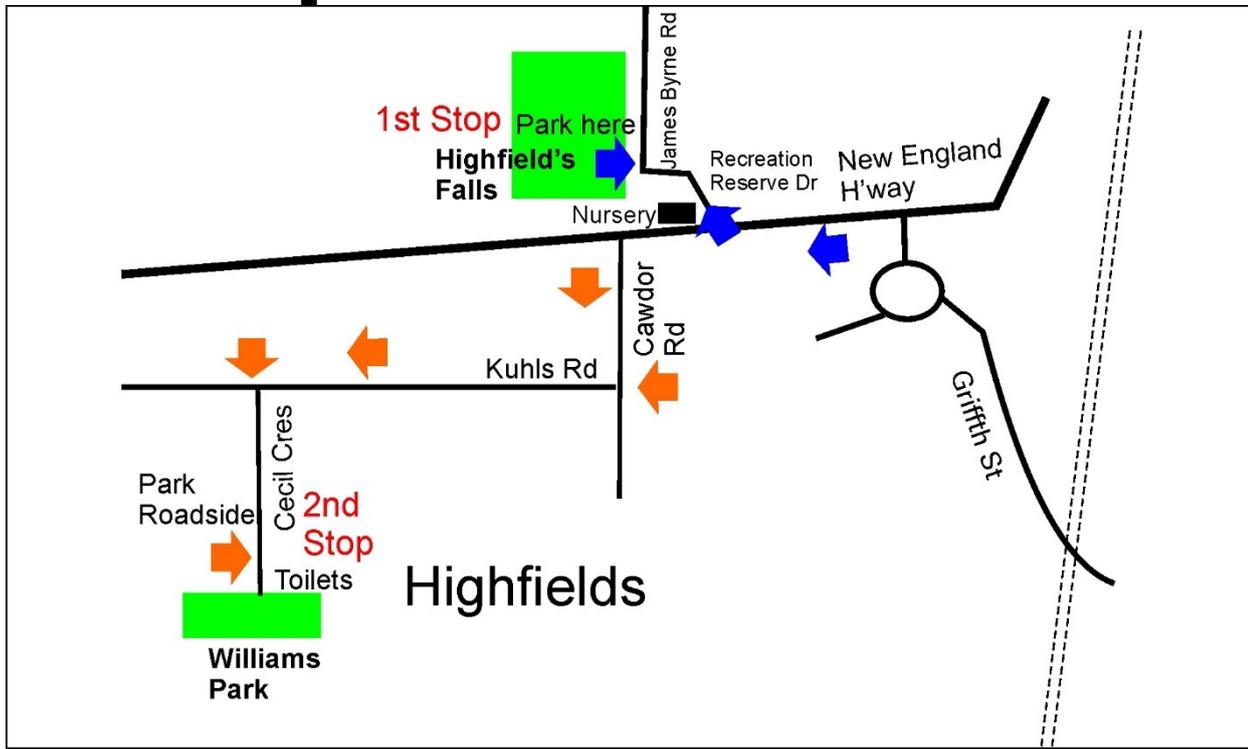


Golden Whistler pectoralis ssp at Williams Park by Charles Dove

OUTING: Saturday 30th April

- 1 Highfields Falls - 8.00am *no toilets*
- 2 Williams Park - 10am Morning Tea and Toilets

Location map



NOTICES

Proposed Schedule of outings 2022

- April 30th Highfields Falls/Williams Park – Search for the Powerful Owls (Charles Dove)
- May 29th Crows Nest National Park (Mick Atzeni)
- July 01st - 03rd Raptor Census (Pat McConnell)
- July 30th Toowoomba Escarpment Parks - Swift Parrot Survey (Mick Atzeni)
- September 17th Sam's Track Cecil Plains
- October 28th - 31st Species Survey (Pat McConnell)
- November 26th Jondaryan -Painted Honeyeater

This schedule has been developed to ensure that there is no clash with the Birdlife Calendar.

We will be negotiating a joint Campout at Durikai State Forest on 23-24 July

Powerful Owl breeding season

Brett Coleman's an old school mate, who's actively involved in the Powerful Owl Project in Brisbane. Last year, he spent some time monitoring the Redwood Park with Kay and Hugh Krenske, myself and Ann Alcock, but we were unable to confirm the breeding hollow.

He has advised me the Powerful Owls in Brisbane have already started calling and investigating hollows. One of his local pairs have been copulating and nest inspecting/cleaning since mid-March but he thinks they started earlier than most other pairs. He has given me some timely monitoring tips to encourage those TBO members who would like to get involved, and I quote:



Juvenile powerful Owls, Williams Park, Highfields, Oct 2021. Photo: Mick Atzeni

"It seems like my other pairs have moved in roosting areas close to the nest tree so it's probably a good time to get out and try to spot them as they move to hollows and start cleaning them out in readiness for breeding. The typical timing I'm seeing at the moment is the birds waking up and starting to preen and move around (and maybe calling) during the twilight period. I normally hear calling or chatting 10 or 15 minutes after sunset. My local pair move to the nest close to the end of twilight or even 10 or 15 minutes after twilight.

It would be great if you had folks up there in the TBO that you can get to observe one or two pairs on a regular basis so that we uncover or confirm the hollow they are using and also get a rough date when the female hits the nest to breed. This will allow you to calculate when to go back and observe chicks either still in the hollow or newly fledged."

The Powerful Owl project data is entered into BirdData. Brett's happy to enter any collected survey information on behalf of others should they not want to register and do it themselves. The information required is:

- Number of observers
- Geo location of the survey
- How long did the survey take?
- How far did you go from the survey point?
- Was the survey point a known roost or known nest or simply an incidental survey to look for birds?
- Number of owls seen or heard
- Adults or chicks?
- Any behaviours noted, e.g. male entered the hollow at 6:04 for 2 minutes

There are 5 known pairs around Toowoomba so the current thinking is 10 pairs is not out of the question.

Could anyone interested in helping please contact me. There will be a Powerful Owl Project workshop in Brisbane soon. Brett will pass on the details when finalised.

Mick Atzeni

A BIT FROM OUR MEMBERS

A few images by Joe Scalon



Brown Honeyeater



Brown Thornbill



Eastern Yellow Robin



Grey Fantail



Rufous Fantail



Superb Fairy-wren

[sunshinecoastbirds](#)

with permission of Greg Roberts

**A natural history blog by Greg Roberts, Sunshine Coast, Australia
Wednesday, 29 January 2020**

New Zealand race of Shining Bronze Cuckoo in South-East Queensland

Richard Noske

The New Zealand-breeding Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, *Chalcites luidus luidus*, appears to be much more numerous in south-east Queensland than is generally believed. University of Queensland adjunct research fellow Richard Noske discusses the status of this likely contender for a split in a paper just published in the Birds Queensland journal *Sunbird*. Richard points out that birds are recorded in Queensland and NSW mainly during March-April and September-October, coinciding with their presumed passage migration to and from wintering grounds in northern Melanesia. However, several records in June and July suggest some birds may over-winter in Australia.

Richard documents 38 records of *luidus* since 2008 in South-East Queensland that are substantiated by descriptions or photographs. A further 22 records were listed in eBird, mostly from 2019, with no supporting evidence. The furthest inland records were from the Great Dividing Range and the northernmost record was from Bundaberg. Of 78 Shining Bronze-Cuckoos banded at 11 sites in South-east Queensland by Jon Coleman and his team since 2007, six birds (7.7%) from four sites were identified as *luidus*.

Many birds are overlooked presumably because migratory birds would be largely silent and observers are generally unaware of the marked sexual dimorphism of the subspecies, so females would be passed off as our resident subspecies *Chalcites luidus plagosus*. The great majority of records of *luidus luidus* in Australia are males. Another problem is that birders are not inclined to take much notice of subspecies. In similar fashion to the cuckoos, for instance, few look for the distinctive Tasmanian race of Striated Pardalote - a scarce but regular winter visitor to South-East Queensland. In the 1970s, I and others documented multiple records in the region of what was formerly called the Yellow-tipped Pardalote.

According to Richard: "Records since 2014 suggest that New Zealand *luidus* is more common in South-east Queensland than previously thought, and... they visit just as much during their southbound (spring) passage, ie en route to New Zealand, as during their northbound (autumn) passage. In South-East Queensland, the earliest record during the autumn passage was 17 February, and the latest during spring passage was 26 October."

Noting that a little-known identification feature of *luidus* is its wider bill, Richard concludes: Given our incomplete understanding of the occurrence of New Zealand birds in Queensland, I urge birders to check the identity of all Shining Bronze-Cuckoos they encounter, and if possible secure photographs, especially of their bills."



These 2 photos of the NZ Shining Bronze-cuckoo images were taken at Dingo Mountain
by Charles Dove 20/03/1922

YELLOW-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOO

Scientific Name: *Calyptorhynchus funereus*
Atlas Number: 267

Image by Charles dove

Text courtesy <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/>

Description:

The Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo is a large cockatoo. It is easily identified by its mostly black plumage, with most body feathers edged with yellow, not visible at a distance. It has a yellow cheek patch and yellow panels on the tail. The female has a larger yellow cheek patch, pale grey eye-ring (pink in males), white upper bill (grey-black in males) and black marks in the yellow tail panels. Young birds resemble the adult female, but young males have a smaller cheek patch.



Similar species:

Until recently, the Short-billed Black-Cockatoo, *C. latirostris*, found in south-western Australia, was considered a subspecies of the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo. This species has white, instead of yellow, panels in the tail. Another similarly sized black-coloured cockatoo is the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, *C. magnificus*. This species overlaps with the range of the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo in south-eastern Queensland. It has red panels in the tail, and spotting on the body and head. The smaller (48 cm) [Glossy Black-Cockatoo](#), *C. lathami*, also has red panels in the tail.

Habitat:

The Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo inhabits a variety of habitat types, but favours eucalypt woodland and pine plantations. Small to large flocks can be seen in these areas, either perched or flying on slowly flapping wings.

Distribution:

The Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo is found in south-eastern Australia, from Eyre Peninsula, South Australia to south and central eastern Queensland.

Feeding:

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos feed in small to large, noisy flocks. The favoured food is seeds of native trees and pinecones, but birds also feed on the seeds of ground plants. Some insects are also eaten.

Breeding:

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos have a long breeding season, which varies throughout their range. Both sexes construct the nest, which is a large tree hollow, lined with wood chips. The female alone incubates the eggs, while the male supplies her with food. Usually only one chick survives, and this will stay in the care of its parents for about six months.

A Tale of two weird Willie Wagtails?

Over the years, several examples of wild birds with plumage colour aberrations have been reported to the club. These have included instances of leucism (loss of melanin from part or all the plumage, resulting in partial or completely white plumage), melanism (excessive melanin production resulting in darker, sometimes entirely black plumage), and albinism (a congenital condition where no melanin is produced, resulting in white-plumaged, pink-eyed individuals, with pale bare parts, i.e. albinos). Therefore, leucism and albinism are not the same condition and, to avoid any confusion, the terms should not be used interchangeably. A bird with an aberrant, totally white plumage, but lacking pink-coloured eyes, is leucistic—not an albino.

In the past year, I've been alerted to singular instances of leucism and melanism in Willie Wagtails. Although a familiar, common, and easily observed species, it would appear plumage colour aberrations are particularly rare in this species—I only found two other examples in a Google search—hence the reason for this article.

The first was a leucistic Willie Wagtail reported by Rod Hobson on 8 May 2021 at Lowes Rd dam, Placid Hills. I was pleased to see the bird myself in November. It's leucism is evidenced by its white primaries with brownish tips, white tail with brown tips, and a white chin. It's a particularly striking bird, especially in flight, and worth checking out if it's still present.

In February, a friend, Peter Granfield, sent me images of an odd Willie Wagtail he photographed in his Hope Island yard. He thought it was a young bird until he saw it feeding a juvenile and realised it was an adult. I determined this bird is melanistic because of the black splotching on its belly and more extensive black on sides of chest.

I would contend aberrant plumages go largely unreported. Those that are reported are typically the most obvious examples in the most familiar species, e.g. albino magpies, black kookaburras. Relatively subtle expressions of leucism and melanism, like in these Willie Wagtail examples, can be easily overlooked, or dismissed as a simple variation in plumage.

I'm going to make a point of looking more closely at the plumage of Willie Wagtails in future.

I've also decided to monitor the Crested Pigeons at home having noticed the odd melanistic bird. That way I can gauge the incidence, and identify possible factors. These could be such things as diet, disease and age.

Mick Atzeni

Reference: Guay, P. J., Potvin, D. A., & Robinson, R. W. (2012). Aberrations in plumage coloration in birds. *Australian Field Ornithology*, 29(1), 23-30.



Fig 1. Leucistic Willie Wagtail, Lowes Rd, Placid Hills, 27/11/21. Photograph: Mick Atzeni



Fig 2. Leucistic Willie Wagtail, Lowes Rd, Placid Hills, 27/11/21. Photograph: Mick Atzeni



Fig 3. Leucistic Willie Wagtail, Lowes Rd, Placid Hills, 27/11/21. Photograph: Mick Atzeni



Fig 4. Melanistic Willie Wagtail, Hope Island, 10 Feb 2022. Photograph: Peter Granfield



Fig 5. Melanistic Willie Wagtail with juvenile, Hope Island, 10 Feb 2022. Photograph: Peter Granfield



Fig 6. Melanistic Willie Wagtail feeding juvenile, Hope Island, 10 Feb 2022. Photograph: Peter Granfield