



# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

## NEWSLETTER

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

MAY 2022

EDITION 479

### BIRD OF THE MONTH



**Torresian Crow**  
*West Creek Toowoomba 2021*

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### OUTINGS 2022

<b>Saturday - Sunday</b> July 02-03	Raptor Census (Pat McConnell) 0457 422 082
<b>Saturday July 30</b>	Toowoomba escarpment parks - Swift Parrot survey (Mick Atzeni) 0499 395 485

PLEASE CONTACT THE LEADER IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND

The Toowoomba Bird Observers Newsletter  
is published monthly.

**The deadline for the next Newsletter  
is 28<sup>th</sup> June**

Charles [powerart@bigpond.net.au](mailto:powerart@bigpond.net.au)

### 2022 CHALLENGE

176 species as of the end of May.

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	Mick Atzeni
	Ann Alcock

## OUTING REPORT

### Crows Nest National Park, 29 May 2022

It was heartening to have 15 on the outing, including three new members and two visitors. While we waited for everyone to arrive, the birdlife was in short supply, which continued to be the case for the first 200 metres or so of the walk; Grey Fantail, Galah, Noisy Miner and Torresian Crow the only birds from memory. An unexpected sighting was a rat in the grass on the edge of the track—I suspect a species of native rat going by its warmer brown coat colour, although I couldn't see whether its tail was shorter. It seemed preoccupied before retreating to the undercover. There were a number of small diggings where it had been but not sure if it was the culprit.

Near the first creek stop (the Kauyoo Pool), a small party of 'brown' Red-backed Fairy-wrens in the undergrowth frustrated the photographers until some more obliging subjects showed, including Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, a Grey Fantail, and female Rufous Whistler. A couple of Buff-rumped Thornbills and a female Rose Robin appeared fleetingly. The photographers scored a bonus when they latched on to a Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby on the opposite side of the creek.

Birding in this park is relatively difficult and it was not helped by the overcast, windy conditions, but we still managed 31 species, including Australian Raven, a rare visitor around Toowoomba (only a handful of accepted records in our official survey area) but perhaps an uncommon resident around Crows Nest.

To round off the outing, we visited Bullocky's Rest and Hartmann Park in Crows Nest where we recorded seven more species including Australian King-Parrot, Mistletoebird and Eastern Spinebill. Several of the latter were feeding on the profusely flowering banksias along the creek, near the entry to the new Dingo Mountain reserve.

Mick Atzeni

Species record at Crows Nest NP			
Australian Brush-turkey	Red-backed Fairy-wren	Eastern Whipbird	Willie Wagtail
Australian Wood Duck	White-browed Scrubwren	Golden Whistler	Australian Raven
Pacific Black Duck	Buff-rumped Thornbill	Rufous Whistler	Torresian Crow
Galah	Brown Thornbill	Grey Butcherbird	Rose Robin
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	Lewin's Honeyeater	Pied Butcherbird	Eastern Yellow Robin
Pale-headed Rosella	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Australian Magpie	Silvereye
Laughing Kookaburra	Noisy Miner	Pied Currawong	Red-browed Finch
White-throated Treecreeper	White-throated Honeyeater	Grey Fantail	

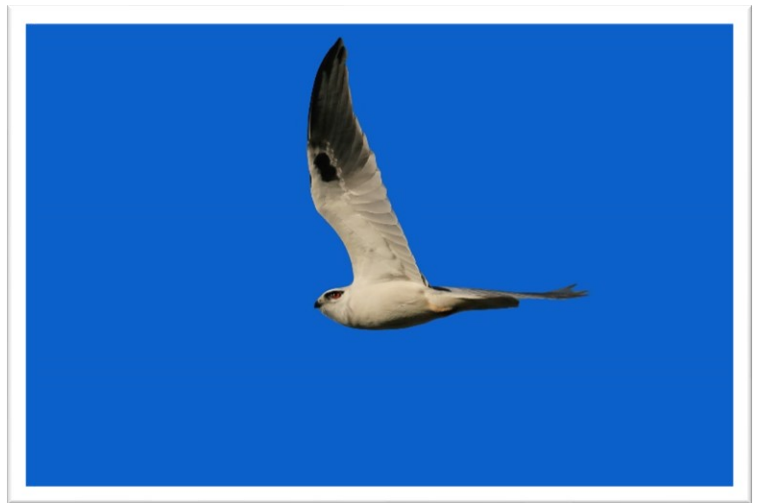
Additional species at Crows Nest			
Common Bronzewing	Australian White Ibis	Australian King-Parrot	Welcome Swallow
Crested Pigeon	Rainbow Lorikeet	Eastern Spinebill	

## UPCOMING SURVEYS

### Raptors

The club's annual raptor census is on 2–3 July. This census is conducted along set routes to the north, south, east, and west of Toowoomba. All members are welcome to join in this census and it is an excellent way to hone your raptor spotting and identification skills, with guidance from the more experienced observers. It's always a great day out.

The value of the raptor data we've gathered over many years shouldn't be underestimated. Raptor researcher, Chris MacColl, who presented the Red Goshawk talk to the club, and others, are pleased to know this longitudinal data exists and are keen to analyse it.



If interested in participating, please contact the coordinator, Pat McConnell on 0457 422 082.

### Swift Parrots

The critically endangered Swift Parrot has been recorded in the Toowoomba/Lockyer Valley region on several occasions, most memorably in 2000, when they were found in Glen Lomond Park by Al Young and stayed the whole winter. The most recent records were from Picnic Point, two years ago.

This winter, we encourage members to participate during the national monitoring period, from 16 July to 28<sup>th</sup> August, using the BirdLife survey method explained in this article: <https://www.birdlife.org.au/projects/woodland-birds-for-biodiversity/swift-parrot-search>

To that end, our outing on 30 July will be for this purpose. We will be organising teams to cover the length of the escarpment.



If you wish to participate, please contact Mick Atzeni on 0499 395 485.

## MEMBERS' & GENERAL ARTICLES

### A Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo imposter

After days of wet weather, it was a joy to see the yard alive with birds when the sun finally broke through mid-afternoon on 15 March. I wasted no time getting out the binoculars to see what was around.

Our neighbours on the topside have a large paperbark on our shared boundary out the back. There's another one out the front near our bedroom. The Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos feed in them daily this time of year. There's usually a pair but occasionally three. We often wake up to their call as they announce their arrival. It's our snooze alarm—most times.

For a large bird, they're surprisingly hard to spot when quietly feeding, hidden amongst the dense foliage or aligned behind the trunk or a large branch they're gnawing at. I don't always look each time I hear them, but on this occasion, I had my binoculars and searched for them in the paperbark out the back and was surprised there were four, then realised, to quote a line from a Sesame Street jingle, "One of these just doesn't belong"—it was a male Glossy Black-Cockatoo!

I doubt I will ever forget that exact moment; the context was so counter-intuitive; almost surreal.

I grabbed the camera from my office and managed to capture some of the experience, which lasted 15 minutes. One of the Yellow-tailed started to harass the 'imposter' causing it to take flight and land in a gum in our backyard. Yay! An official yard tick. It continued briefly harassing it there before returning to the paperbark. I was pleased to get a shot of both tails flared, albeit a blurred one. It also shows the size difference well. Surprisingly, the Glossy also returned to the paperbark, perching on top initially, then flying lower down where I was able to get better-angled shots, shooting from a ladder propped up against our water tank nearby.

Why this bird was in the paperbark I'm not sure. I didn't see it eat anything. The only behaviour I observed it doing there, apart from perching, was preening. I surmised he saw, then followed the Yellow-taileds to their feeding tree, perhaps thinking they were his own kind. Since then, I've had another thought. Cockatoos are long-lived. Perhaps, he's just an old bird that had a senior moment? I know a few of us who can identify with that!

I'm very interested to hear of any other encounters with different black-cockatoo species intermingling or interacting. This was my first (that I can remember).

Mick Atzeni



## FROM THE WEST - St. George and Cunnamulla

Ann Alcock's photographic skills certainly shine out with these great images captured of the western Queensland birdlife.

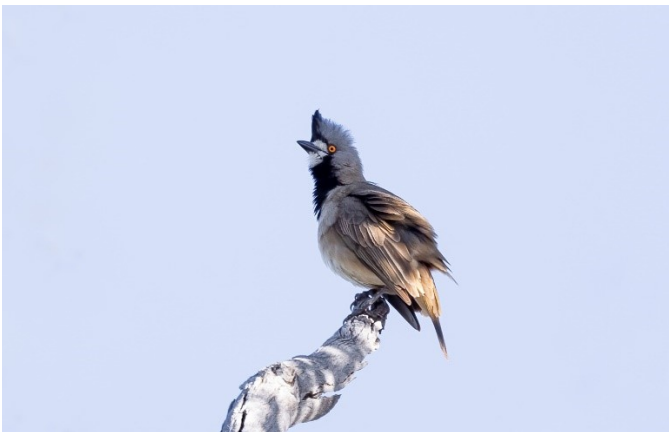
Her prize was the elusive Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush.



Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush



Bourke's Parrot



Crested Bellbird



Hall's Babbler



Red-browed Pardalote



Splendid Fairy-wren

## TOOWOOMBA REGION

**Nest boxes made to order from Toowoomba West Men's Shed**



[Toowoomba West Mens Shed | Facebook](#)

100 Glenvale Road, Glenvale 4350  
*(on the grounds of Toowoomba Community Baptist Church)*

Opening times: Tue, Wed & Thu from 8am – 12noon

Costs: Probably looking at \$35-\$40 each.  
Dimensions: 15 x15 x 50 cm for the small ones (Pale Head Rosella)

## TORRESIAN CROW

Scientific Name: *Corvus orru*  
Atlas Number: 692

Image by Charles dove

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

### DESCRIPTION:

The Torresian Crow is a large glossy black crow with short throat hackles (feathers). The feathers of the head and neck have white bases. The eye is white with a fine blue eye-ring. Immature birds are duller black with a brown eye. When landing, this species characteristically shuffles its wings. It will be seen outside breeding season in large flocks. It has also been called the Australian Crow.

### SIMILAR SPECIES:

There are six members of the family Corvidae found in Australia: five native breeding species and one infrequent self-introduction. Three are called crows and three ravens, although there is really little difference. Most Australian species are similar in size and colouration, and can be difficult to tell apart. In some cases, identification is aided by the separate ranges of different species, but differences in plumage, habits and calls offer good clues for distinguishing them. The bases of the feathers of the crows are white, while those of the ravens are grey, although this is only useful if birds are held in the hand or if discarded feathers are found. The Torresian Crow's short staccato call and its habit of wing-shuffling can help to identify it from other crows.

### DISTRIBUTION:

The Torresian Crow is found across northern Australia and in Western Australia, from Geraldton to Norseman. It is more common in coastal and tropical areas, being only patchily distributed inland. It is also found in Papua New Guinea, the Moluccas and New Britain. It is the most common corvid (crow or raven) of coastal towns from Forster, New South Wales to Brisbane, Queensland and also in Darwin, Northern Territory.

### HABITAT:

The Torresian Crow is found on rainforest fringes, in open forests and woodlands, taller scrublands, beaches and in dry areas, along watercourses with tall timber. It is also found around farms and in croplands. It requires tall trees for nesting.

### SEASONAL MOVEMENTS:

Sedentary as adults, but immatures form nomadic flocks.

### FEEDING:

The Torresian Crow eats the most grain, compared with other corvids, but will also eat fruit, insects and other invertebrates, eggs, garbage and carrion (dead animals). Often seen feeding along roads. Perches on the heads of crop plants or on tall artificial structures.

### BREEDING:

The Torresian Crow forms monogamous breeding pairs that maintain a permanent territory. Both sexes build the nest, which is a bowl of sticks lined with grass, placed high in a tree (over 10 m) or artificial structure. The Torresian Crow's nest is made of finer material than the other corvid species'. Both parents share feeding duties.



**MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES**

Species	Date	Location	Observer
Brown Quail (9)	10/04/2022	Highfields Falls	PM
White-headed Pigeon	28/04/2022	Herries St, near Lindsay St. Toowoomba	MA
Lewin's Rail	28/01/2022	Great Sandy National Park	PK; KO
Swamp Harrier	13/01/2022	Old Goombungee Road	PM
Square-tailed Kite	18/03/2022	Nanango	MA
Square-tailed Kite	1/04/2022	Highfields	PM; KO
Square-tailed Kite	11/04/2022	Toowoomba Connection Road, Withcott	MA
Collared Sparrowhawk	15/05/2022	Thomas Rd, Upper Lockyer	MA
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	2/05/2022	Murphys Creek	MA
Black Falcon (2)	27/05/2022	Hodgson Vale	MA; CD
Brown Falcon	27/05/2022	Frank Rd, Wyreema	MA; CD
Painted Button-quail (male)	5/04/2022	Highfields	JS; SS
Glossy Black-Cockatoo *	15/05/2022	7 Woden St, Murphys Creek	MA
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo (5)	16/05/2022	Murphys Creek	MA
Ground Parrot (3)	28/01/2022	Great Sandy National Park	PM; KO
Powerful Owl (pair) **	17/04/2022	Highfields Falls	JS; SS
Powerful Owl	25/05/2022	Highfields Falls	MA et al
White-throated Nightjar	11/04/2022	Mt Kynoch' Toowoomba	PM
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	31/03/2022	Highfields	PM; KO
White-eared Monarch (3)	1/05/2022	Redwood Park	PM
Grey-crowned Babbler (8)	26/04/2022	USQ Toowoomba	PM
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin	27/05/2022	Frank Rd, Wyreema	MA; CD
White-winged Chough (9)	21/03/2022	Highfields	PM; KO

\* Male being harassed by a Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

\*\* Female holding a flying-fox.

MA, M. Atzeni; CD, C. Dove; PM, P. McConnell; KO, K. O'Donnell; JS, J. Scanlan; SS, S. Scanlan.

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### **New records of hybridisation in Australian Fairy-wrens *Malurus* spp.**

*Australian Field Ornithology* 2022, **39**, 63–75

<http://dx.doi.org/10.20938/afo39063075>

It is worth downloading the PDF of this article from this site