



# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

## NEWSLETTER

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

JUNE 2022

EDITION 480

### BIRD OF THE MONTH



**Spectacled Monarch**  
*Redwood Park Toowoomba 2021*

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### OUTINGS 2022

<b>Saturday - Sunday</b> July 09-10	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> July**

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

### 2022 CHALLENGE

176 species as of the end of May.

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#### Management Committee:

President	Mick Atzeni
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Treasurer	Ann Alcock
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Records Officer	Pat McConnell
Facebook Admin	Sandy Robertson
	Mick Atzeni
	Ann Alcock

## UPCOMING SURVEYS

### Raptors

The club's annual raptor census was postponed due to rain and is now on 9–10 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.

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.



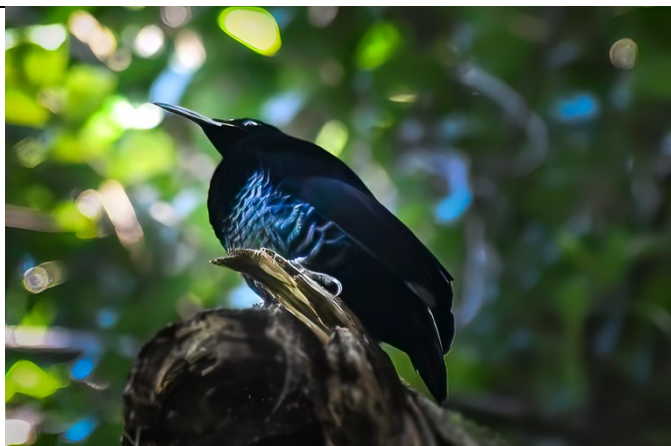
If you wish to participate,  
please contact Mick Atzeni on 0499 395 485.

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## MEMBERS' & GENERAL ARTICLES

Jennie and I spent a day last week 11/6/22 at the Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve near Maleny and managed these pictures. Some "feature" birds at this location are the Paradise Riflebird, Yellow-throated Scrubwren and the Noisy Pitta. We found the first two but not the latter. The volunteer ranger told us that the Pitta had been seen twice while we were there but, alas not by us despite him showing us the designated location and actually waiting with us!! The Scrubwrens were numerous but very flitty in the dark, thick understory and so hard to photo without using flash, which I didn't want to do.

Tony Bond



Paradise Riflebird



Pale-yellow Robin

A few more images from Tony



Brown Gerygone



Grey Fantail



Rufous Fantail



Yellow-throated Scrubwren

Peter Everist managed at last to catch up with the Red Wattlebird that regularly visits the shrub in his neighbour's front garden and managed to get a couple of photos.

Taken at The Village on the Downs, Sunday 03 July at about 5pm.



**Bird Note #1**

by Chris Cameron 4/7/2022

***As an introduction:***

I work regularly at Bryce Camm's Wonga Plains Feedlot, approx 16km North of Bowenville, compost-making.

It is largely open farming country now with some remnant timber on the ridges. The main attraction is several permanent water storages of varying size in and around the immediate feedlot area. Even though there is a fairly high level of traffic around the site, there are a surprisingly large number of birds that are loosely resident, with an additional number who visit. The "residents" vary in numbers, going from the low end, with Black-fronted Dotterels, Black-winged Stilts, Australian White Ibis and Dusky Moorhens usually less than a dozen, Masked Lapwings anything from a dozen to 50-60 odd, Pacific Black Ducks usually a few, Australian Wood Ducks about the same, Grey Teal up to perhaps a hundred or so, Plumed Whistling-Duck up to 1000 or so, Straw-necked Ibis very variable, up to hundreds at times.

In the "occasionals" there are Red-kneed Dotterels, Pink-eared Ducks and Magpie Geese, all being unpredictable, but pretty regular.

As well as these water points on site, I go past (or between) the major storages adjacent to Oakey Abattoir where there is another very variable population with some interesting visitors.

At present (3/7/22) there are a few avocets scattered around the shallow water area on the north side of the highway, and a couple of pairs of Black Swans on the shallow area of the south side. Fairly frequently there is a Swamp Harrier hunting over the general area here. Will try to give updates if people are interested!

***A couple of more interesting recent events:***

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**Bird Note #2,**

by Chris Cameron 29/6/22

***Oakey Abattoir Swamp, N side of Highway.***

This afternoon there were about half a dozen Red-necked Avocets scattered across the shallow water area on the north side of the Highway. They were mixed in with a number of Pied Stilts, both adult and juvenile plumage, some Masked Lapwings and a lot of Grey Teal. Have not seen avocets here for some time, last lot was on 28/11/2020, when there were about 50 in a mob here.



This time, being scattered and a long way out, it was difficult to get much of a picture, and could get only two in one shot.

**Bird Note #3,**

by Chris Cameron 30/6/2022,

***Wonga Plains Feedlot area.***

There have been a large number of Plumed Whistling-Ducks spending the larger part of their days around a dam adjacent to my composting area. Hard to count, but likely close to 1000. Mostly they settle down and snooze in the short grass around the dam and seldom bother to move if I am not coming too close. We get fairly regular visits from Australian Hobbies and Black Falcons, with an occasional Peregrine Falcon coming over. These cause a little concern, but not seriously so.

This afternoon I was busy working on my windrows and not really watching, but suddenly I was aware that the entire flock had exploded out of the grass and were circling in a tight formation over the dam! This was highly unusual, so I stopped the tractor to look, being very surprised to see an adult White-breasted Sea-Eagle also circling not far above the whirling ducks! Cause indeed for alarm!!

Quite quickly the eagle's path took him a little to the side and the ducks did a swift collective dive for the water, landing in a tight, very densely packed knot in the middle of the dam.

After a few circles, and no attempt to do an attack run on the ducks, the eagle circled off further to the side, eventually breaking away and flying off towards Dalby at about tree-top height.



The extremely densely packed raft of ducks watching the eagle above.

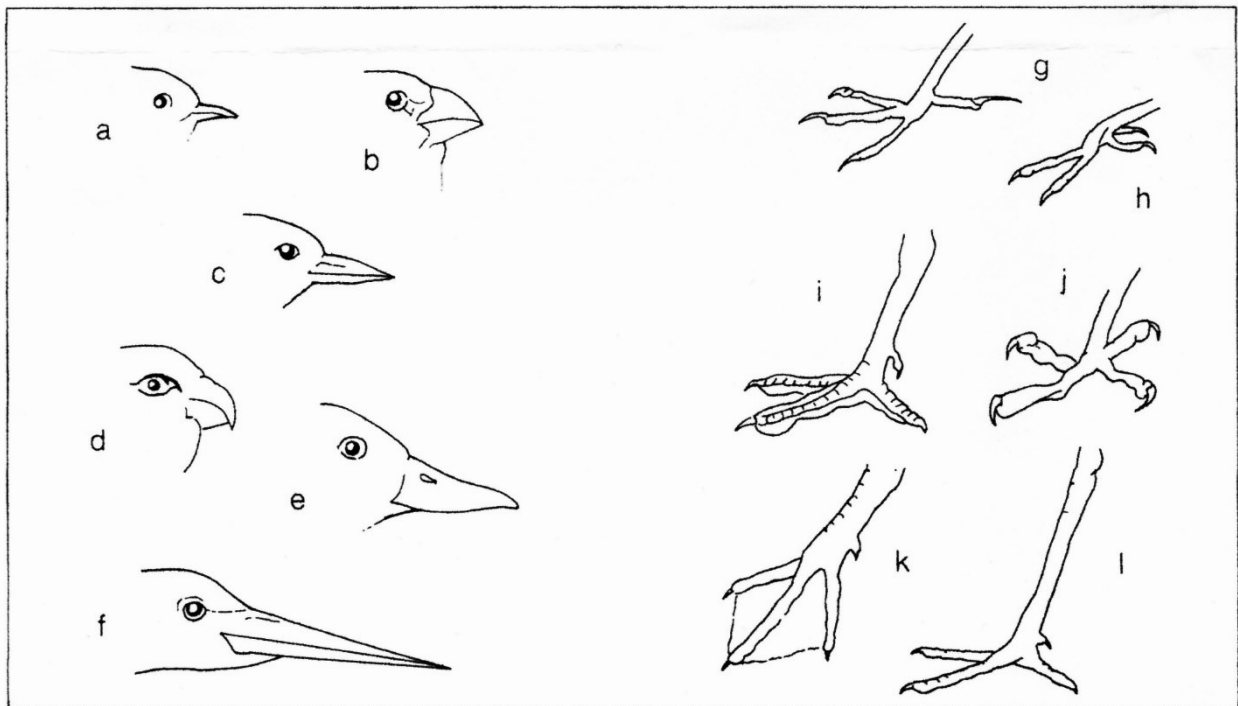
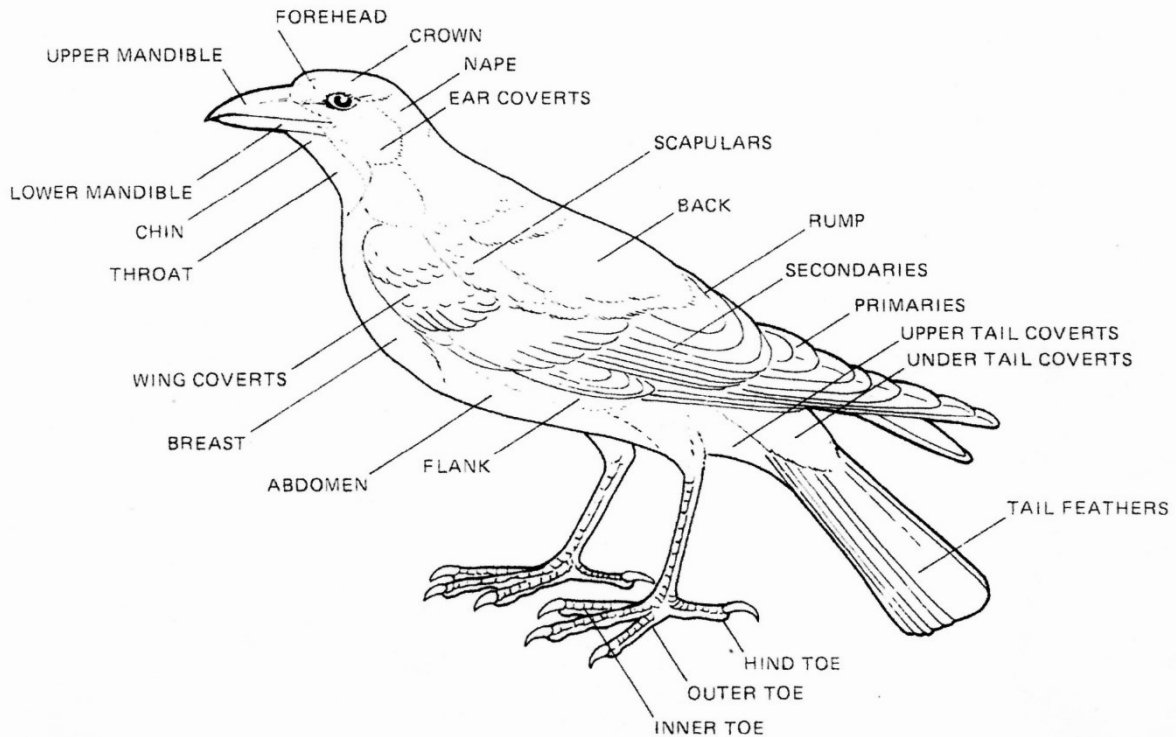
The ducks held their tight formation until it was clear that the eagle was gone before almost exploding up off the water and flying wildly (rejoicing??) for a couple of minutes before loosely returning to swim a bit before heading back to the banks to resume their afternoon nap... A MOST interesting few minutes to watch... would have been interesting to see what their plan was if the eagle was to have attacked ... were they planning a mass dive??



Here the dense mat of birds has broken up, some are already heading back to shore, the airborne birds settled again after a couple of minutes of seeming rejoicing!

It was unfortunate that I was caught with only my phone camera, the main one was some distance off in the car, all too quick evolving to be able to get it....

## PARTS OF A BIRD



### BILLS

- a) Thin and sharp for catching insects
- b) Short and deep for crunching nuts and seeds
- c) Chisel-shaped for digging behind the bark of trees for grubs
- d) Hooked for tearing at flesh
- e) Flat and broad for scooping up plants and insects in mud and water
- f) Long and sharp for spearing fish

### FEET

- g) One toe behind for perching
- h) Two toes behind for climbing
- i) Palmated toes for walking on soft surfaces and swimming
- j) Short and strong with long talons for holding prey
- k) Webbed for swimming
- l) Long-legged for walking on land

Image courtesy of Michael McGoldrick

**Two more plumage mutations by Chris Cameron**



These were both relatively fleeting sightings around 2012, though saw both on consecutive days.... The “Pied” Butcherbird was close to Bowen, on the north side where I worked for a couple of years. It was a young bird still being fed by its parents ... see first image. It had at least one sibling, normally coloured, and quite happy and healthy. This black one did not look at all well, and likely did not survive much longer, though it did not look injured.



The second one took a bit of working out. It was extremely obvious, but equally mobile, so I had to spend a while identifying and trying to get a couple of reasonable pictures.

It was obviously a Brown Honeyeater, an active, healthy looking, and seemingly adult bird in the main park in Charters Towers, in company with normally coloured birds, Blue-faced Honeyeaters and Australasian Figbirds, all enjoying to flowering Callistemons. Being extremely active, it was difficult to catch.... In the bush the bird appeared almost white, but definitely with a dark eye and feet....

I have not come across too many of these aberrations, a dark Laughing Kookaburra near Condamine, and a very white Tree Martin many years ago at our old home near Chinchilla, no pictures sadly.

Curiosities!!

**Birding on the Southern Downs**

On a recent birding trip with my younger son Alex, we were travelling on the Stanthorpe – Texas road near Pikes Creek when we flushed two small parrots from the roadside. We parked safely and were walking back to the area when a concerned local pulled over to check what we were doing. Heavily laden with binoculars and cameras it was not particularly difficult to work out, but then Alex can look a bit threatening. “Just birding” I replied waving my binoculars at her. “Birding, that’s okay then” was the gruff response, as if we needed her permission.

We were on a bit of a roll after seeing Spotted Quail-thrush and Chestnut-rumped Heathwren the previous day at Girraween, but the birds we were really keen to see were Turquoise Parrots and Diamond Firetails. Within moments of crossing the road we could see both birds. The parrots were our main priority, particularly for me as I had never been able to photograph them before. Fortunately, the parrots were more cooperative and we had about half a dozen birds in our immediate vicinity, perching for long periods.

We spent over an hour photographing both species in lovely sunshine. Red-winged Parrots, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike and Brown Treecreeper also dropped in and we were seriously wondering whether we needed to keep going to Sundown after all.

Sometimes birding can be a lot better than “okay”.

Richard Thomis



Spotted Quail-thrush



Chestnut-rumped Heathwren



Diamond Firetail



Turquoise Parrot



## SPECTACLED MONARCH

Scientific Name: *Symposiachrus trivirgatus*  
Atlas Number: 375

Image by Charles dove

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

### DESCRIPTION:

The Spectacled Monarch is blue-grey above, with a black face mask that extends across both eyes in a 'clover-leaf' pattern, rufous (red-orange) breast, white underparts and a black tail with white outer tips. Immature birds lack the black face and have a grey throat. The north Queensland subspecies *albiventris* has a rufous upper breast sharply defined from more extensive white underparts.



### SIMILAR SPECIES:

The Spectacled Monarch resembles the Black-faced Monarch, *Monarcha*, and the Black-winged Monarch, *M. frater*, but these species differ in having a black face mask that does not extend across the eyes, and both lack the white underparts and white outer tail tips.

### DISTRIBUTION:

The Spectacled Monarch is found in coastal north-eastern and eastern Australia, including coastal islands, from Cape York, Queensland to Port Stephens, New South Wales. It is much less common in the south. It is also found in Papua New Guinea, the Moluccas and Timor.

### HABITAT:

The Spectacled Monarch prefers thick understorey in rainforests, wet gullies and waterside vegetation, as well as mangroves.

### SEASONAL MOVEMENTS:

Resident in Queensland to Rockhampton, summer breeding migrant further south.

### FEEDING:

The Spectacled Monarch feeds on insects, foraging mostly below the canopy in foliage and on tree trunks or vines.

### BREEDING:

The Spectacled Monarch builds a small cup nest of fine bark, plant fibres, moss and spider web in a tree fork or in hanging vines, 1m–6m above the ground, often near water.

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## INTERESTING LINKS

### Birds thriving in the wet – but drought 'like death and taxes'

Heavy rainfall across NSW has spurred record breeding of wetland birds but researchers warn that better strategies for water management are needed to ensure future success. [Read the full story](#)

Shared from [ABC app](#)

### How the endangered ospreys of Tumby Island are making a comeback

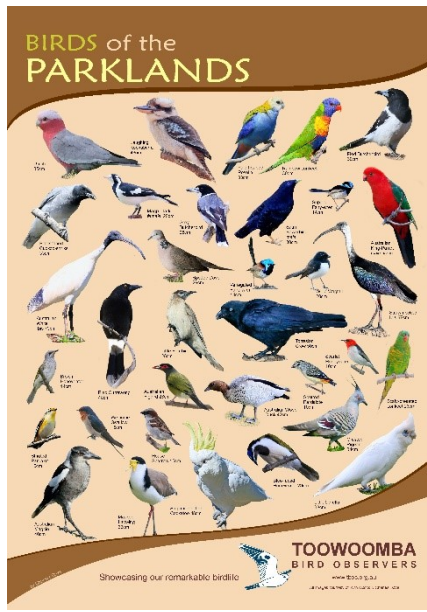
Eyre and Yorke peninsulas' osprey population is set to be boosted after an artificial platform was placed on Tumby Island to protect the endangered species from predators and human disturbance. [Read the full story](#)

Shared from [ABC app](#)

### Interesting background story to the recently published hybrid fairy-wrens paper

<https://us2.campaign-archive.com/?u=b35ddb671faf4a16c0ce32406&id=1facca88c3&e=002b25c493>

# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS NOW HAS BIRD POSTERS



## POSTERS ARE FOR SALE

They come in two sizes: A3 - 297mm x 420mm and A2 – 420mm x 594mm.

A3 size: \$5 each or set of six for \$20 + bonus Butterfly Poster

A2 size: \$20 each or set of six for \$100 + bonus Butterfly Poster

**Financial members of Toowoomba Bird Observers will receive a 10% discount**

Contact Charles Dove on 0417 422 302 for details. Cost of postage if required, will be added to the purchase price