



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

NEWSLETTER

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

November 2022

EDITION 485

BIRD OF THE MONTH



Varied Triller

Redwood Park Toowoomba QLD 2022

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OUTINGS & EVENTS 2022

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Wednesday December 14th | East Creek – Toowoomba Charles Dove 0417 422 302 |
| | |

PLEASE CONTACT THE LEADER IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND

The Toowoomba Bird Observers Newsletter
is published monthly.

**The deadline for the next Newsletter
is 26th January 2023**

Charles powerart@bigpond.net.au

2022 CHALLENGE

192 species as of the end of November 2022.

Website: www.tboc.org.au

Postal address:

P.O. Box 4730

Toowoomba East QLD Australia 4350

Email: tboc4350@gmail.com

Phone: 0499 395 485

Management Committee:

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| President | Mick Atzeni |
| Vice-president | Sandy Robertson |
| Secretary | Peter Everest |
| Treasurer | Ann Alcock |
| Media officer | Ann Alcock |
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| Records Officer | Pat McConnell |
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| | Ann Alcock |

Upcoming Outings

MIDWEEK WALK

East Creek Toowoomba

Date: Wednesday 14th December

Leader: Charles Dove

Meet location: Waterbird Habitat Carpark, Alderley St Toowoomba

Time: 8:00am.

Approx 4km - Please bring morning tea

RSVP: To Charles Dove by 12:00 midday Tuesday 8th November 2022
Txt 0417 422 302 or email powerart@bigond.net.au

Outing details: slight downhill and uphill grades. Morning tea at the Waterbird Habitat near carpark.

In the event of inclement weather contact Charles Dove on 0417 422 302 by 7.30am
Closed footwear required.

Club Reports

MIDWEEK WALK – Prince Henry Drive - 09th November 2022

At 8am a group of eight birders met at Katoomba Point Lookout on Prince Henry Drive on Weds for the latest of Charles Dove's mid-week walks. It was a good day to be out. There was a cool breeze at the start of the walk but jumpers came off as we headed downhill into the relative shelter of the trees and creek lines. The entire walk was on bitumen road, straying onto the grass only at the Lovers Leap picnic area to use the table for our morning tea.

While signing in at the beginning we saw a couple of common regulars, Torresian Crow and Pied Magpie but, once the walk got under way, our first real "spots" were male and female Variegated Fairy-wrens hopping about in lantana.

Further on we saw fleeting glimpses of a male Regent Bowerbird, while several females were more in evidence.

Michael had to leave early and walked ahead after morning tea, but texted back to the group that he had seen a Tawny Frogmouth on a nest. This was followed up with photos of the stretch of road and the actual tree. Despite all this good information it still took us a good ten minutes of staring before we actually found the bird, which was very well hidden.

Other good spots for the day were Varied Trillers and Barred Cuckoo-shrikes.

Michael also spotted the Red-backed Fairy-wren on the return trip but unfortunately it had gone by the time the group arrived at the location.

In all 28 birds were seen or heard and a full list is below, thanks to Jennie.

The walk took a very pleasant three hours-ish at a leisurely pace. It was a good opportunity to meet some new people we had not met before.

Thanks to Charles for organising things and we hope see to you next time.

Tony Bond



Variegated Fairy-wren



Australasian Figbird



Brown Thornbill



Redbrowed Finch



Barred Cuckoo-shrike



Tawny Frogmouth

| Prince Henry Drive Midweek Walk | | 8 members | 28 species |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Australian Brush-turkey | Brown Thornbill | Barred Cuckoo-shrike | Australian Magpie |
| Tawny Frogmouth | Striated Pardalote | Common Cicadabird | Pied Currawong |
| Pheasant Coucal | Lewin's Honeyeater | Varied Triller | Torresian Crow |
| Eastern Koel | Noisy Miner | Rufous Whistler | Silvereeye |
| Regent Bowerbird | Brown Honeyeater | Grey Shrike-thrush | Mistletoebird |
| Red-backed Fairy-wren | Eastern Whipbird | Australasian Figbird | Double-barred Finch |
| Variegated Fairy-wren | Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike | Olive-backed Oriole | Red-browed Finch |

WEEKEND WALK *Ravensbourne NP 26th November 2022*

Ravensbourne

On the warm spring morning of Saturday 26/11/22, the last chance to savour some sunlight before the next round of rain, 15 Toowoomba Bird Observers gathered at the Gus Beutel Lookout, Ravensbourne National Park. After witnessing Topknot Pigeons romping through the lookout's large fig tree, the group made for the cool of the Cedar Block circuit, where we were soon reminded of the frustrations of rainforest birding: calls of Wompoo and Rose-crowned Fruit-Doves emanated from somewhere within the dense vegetation, but the birds refused to show. However, a spectacular male Regent Bowerbird and cheerful Crimson Rosellas did put in an appearance, along with some of the rainforest's smaller specialties, such as Brown Gerygones and Large-billed Scrubwrens.

We then relocated to the Blackbean day-use area, having a bite to eat before another walk. Black-faced Monarchs and Eastern Spinebills delighted with their hyperactive aerial antics in the picnic area. Throughout the second walk, the birds were starting to thin out as the temperature rose, but we got some more call practice from a well-hidden Noisy Pitta and Emerald Dove, while Wompoo Fruit-doves were again heard wom-pooing. A pair of furtive Russet-tailed Thrushes were spotted but eluded most of the group. Amongst the more visible species on this walk were countless Lewin's Honeyeaters, Golden Whistlers and ever-endearing Eastern Yellow Robins.

We wrapped up with lunch back at the picnic area, as talk turned to plans for the year to come – more places to go and birds to see. Altogether, 47 species were recorded, a worthy rainforest total.

Cheers,
Regan Scheuber

| Ravensbourne NP Weekend Walk | | 15 members | 47 species |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Australian Brush-turkey | Laughing Kookaburra | Brown Thornbill | Australasian Figbird |
| Brown Cuckoo-Dove | Sacred Kingfisher | Spotted Pardalote | Grey Butcherbird |
| Brown-capped Emerald Dove | Oriental Dollarbird | Eastern Spinebill | Pied Currawong |
| Bar-shouldered Dove | White-throated Treecreeper | Lewin's Honeyeater | Spangled Drongo |
| Wonga Pigeon | Green Catbird | Noisy Friarbird | Rufous Fantail |
| Wompoo Fruit-Dove | Regent Bowerbird | Eastern Whipbird | Grey Fantail |
| Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove | Satin Bowerbird | Varied Sittella | Torresian Crow |
| Topknot Pigeon | Superb Fairy-wren | Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike | Black-faced Monarch |
| Nankeen Kestrel | Yellow-throated Scrubwren | Common Cicadabird | Silvereeye |
| Australian King-Parrot | White-browed Scrubwren | Eastern Shrike-tit | Welcome Swallow |
| Crimson Rosella | Large-billed Scrubwren | Golden Whistler | Russet-tailed Thrush |
| Shining Bronze-Cuckoo | Brown Gerygone | Grey Shrike-thrush | |

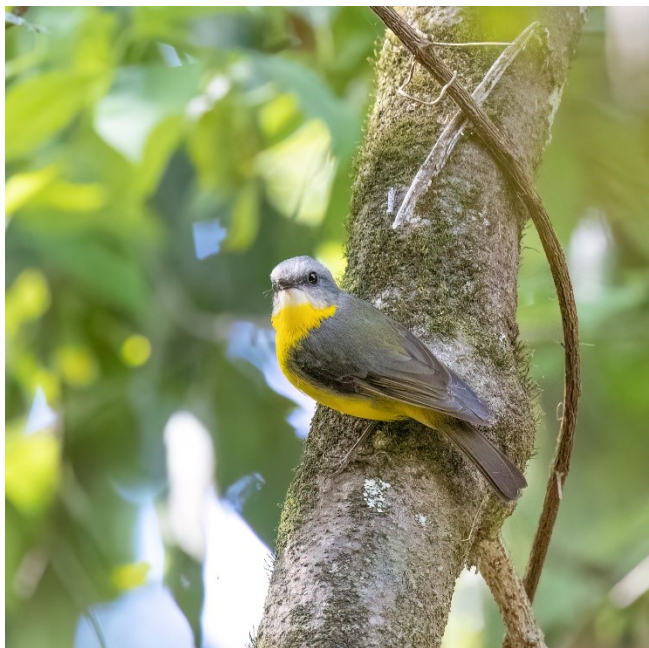
Images from Ravensbourne NP courtesy of Ann Alcock



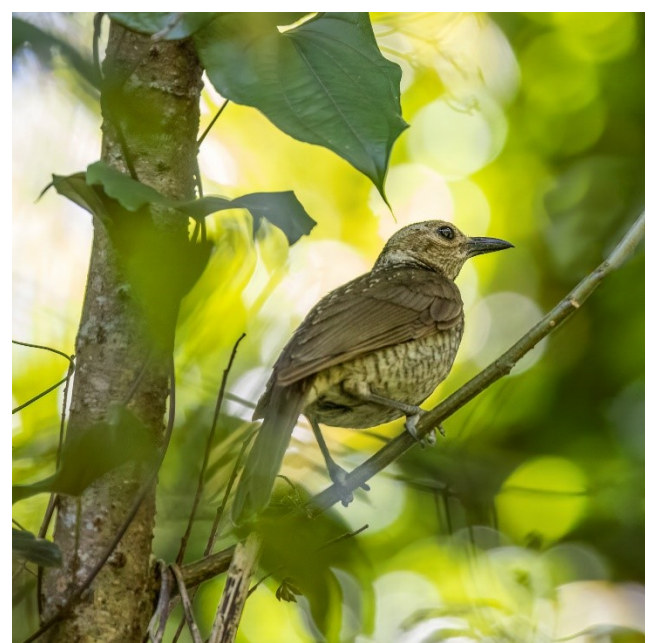
Brown Gerygone



Brown Thornbill



Eastern Yellow Robin



Regent Bowerbird

Links

Back from the brink: **Eastern Bristlebird** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJHSTDbsA0A>

Habitat associations of dryland avian communities during an extended dry period - Gorta - Austral Ecology - Wiley Online Library <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/aec.13251>

White-bellied whipbird heard in Victoria for first time in almost 40 years
<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/no-one-in-victoria-has-heard-this-bird-for-almost-40-years-have-a-listen-20221108-p5bwgj.html>

NOTICES & ARTICLES of INTEREST

Free Range Masked Lapwings

By Al & Helen Young

Over the past year or so a pair of Masked Lapwings have used our yard in Toowoomba (Darling Heights) to forage and loaf. The area they use is about 0.5 ha with the grass and weeds kept mowed to about 40-50 mm high. The birds tolerate our presence without any obvious fear or aggression, only the occasional keek-keek if we go too close.

Then on 29th September, 2022 Helen noticed a brief courtship display followed by an even shorter mating between two lapwings. On the afternoon of 7th October, 2022 a lapwing was sitting on the ground in the 'egg- incubation posture' typical of many ground-nesting birds. As Al approached to within about 20 m of the sitting bird to get photos, it briefly left the 'nest' (called a scrape) to reveal four eggs. The time between copulation and egg laying varies from 24 to 48 hours depending on the species. Once all the eggs are laid, incubation begins and in Masked Lapwings this takes from 28 to 30 days. Both parents share the incubation duties. One of the birds appeared to have a deformed dewlap which was bulbous rather than a thin triangular flap of skin hanging from the facial region. (See photo).

The only possible threat to the eggs we saw was an Eastern Bearded Dragon (*Pogona barbata*) which strayed near the scrape but the sitting adult lapwing sent it on its way with a very aggressive threat display – loud vocalisations with wings spread, showing the spurs. The Bearded Dragon was gone in a hurry. Lapwings one, dragon nil

The birds were checked every morning and evening. On the morning of 13th October, six days after the start of incubation there were no birds and no eggs present. There were no signs of feathers or broken egg shells in the yard. A nocturnal predator was probably responsible

for the loss of this clutch. The predator either swallowed the eggs whole or carried them off to be eaten elsewhere, thus no signs of broken shells. The adult birds most likely escaped rather than trying to defend the eggs from a large predator.

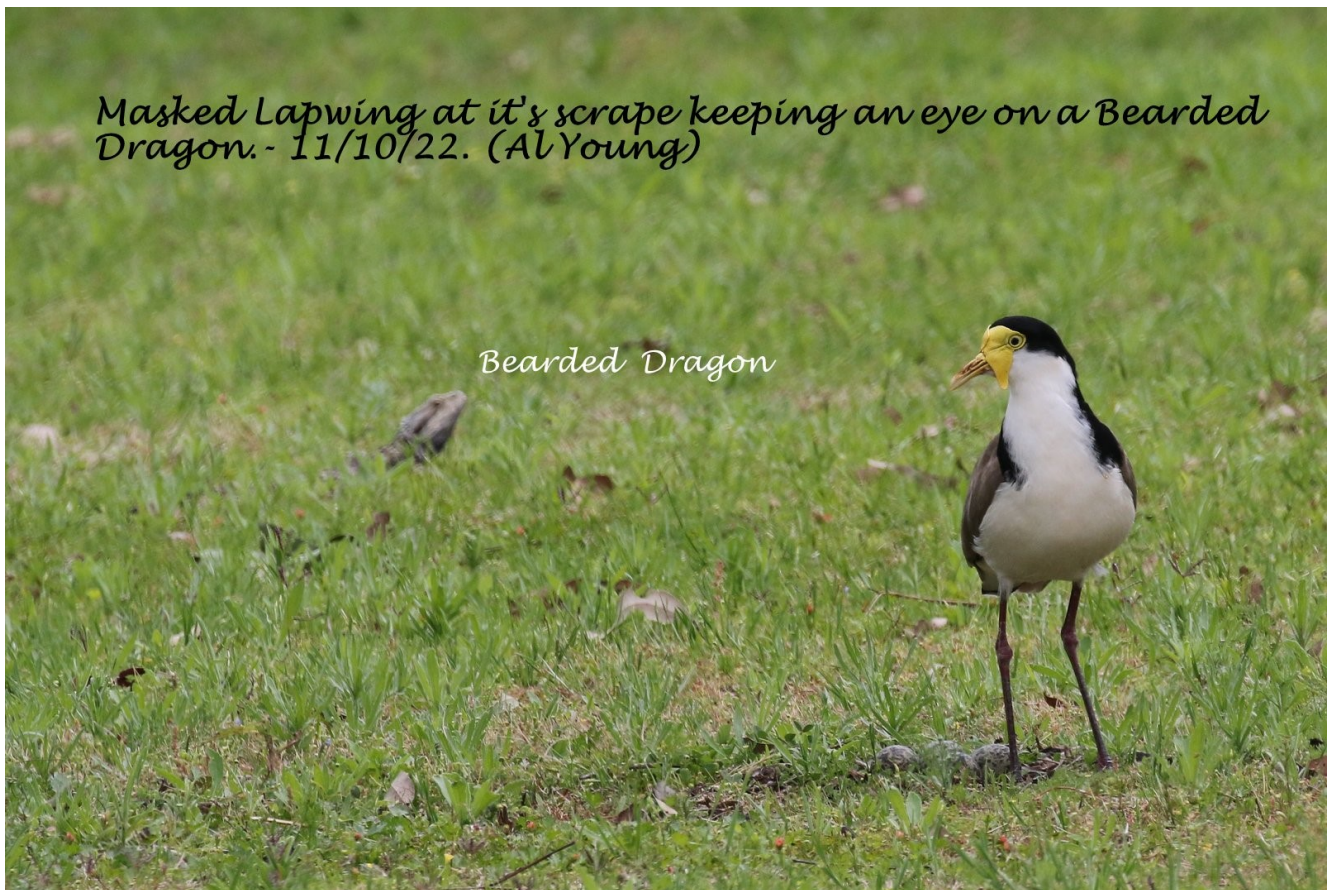
The only nocturnal predators large enough to pilfer this clutch without leaving any signs of broken shells would most likely be a Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), a Dingo (*Canis lupus dingo*)/ domestic dog, a Feral Cat (*Felis catus*) or a Carpet Python (*Morelia spilota*). A cat probably would not have a large enough mouth to carry the eggs away; it would most likely eat them at the scrape which might leave traces of broken eggs.

We have recorded foxes and feral cats on our property but not dingos, although dingos are on Mt. Rascal which is only about 2km away. We have recorded carpet pythons in our yard many times over the years. So, a fox or a carpet python are the most likely contenders for destroying this clutch.

Masked Lapwings generally have a low hatching and fledging success rate depending on seasonal conditions and geographical location. In Brisbane (Pinjarra Hills), Giese and Jones (1996) recorded a hatching and fledging success rate (calculated as number of young per pair per season) of about 27% hatching success and about 12 % fledging success rate per pair per year. They concluded that the high rates of egg and chick losses were caused by both diurnal and nocturnal predators. Masked Lapwings are capable of producing replacement clutches (re-nesting) of between one and three clutches per year following nest or fledging failures and even occasionally after successfully rearing young to fledgling status. (Giese and Jones, 1996).

References:

1. Giese, M.A. and D.N. Jones (1996). Timing and success of breeding in subtropical Masked Lapwings. *Corella* 20(2).
2. Menkhorst, P, et al. (2017). The Australian Bird Guide. CSIRO Publishing.



AUSTRALASIAN GREBES amongst the Dragons

Out walking during the week along West Creek Kearns Spring in Toowoomba QLD I came across a family of Australasian Grebe at the Kearneys Spring Historical Park.

Firstly, I only saw one darting off on a mission and heading straight into the reeds on the side of the pond, so I thought it might have a nest, so I waited until it came out which was not long. It still seemed to be on a task and headed into the adjacent pond and returned with a small fish in its bill heading in the opposite direction to where it originally came from. As I followed

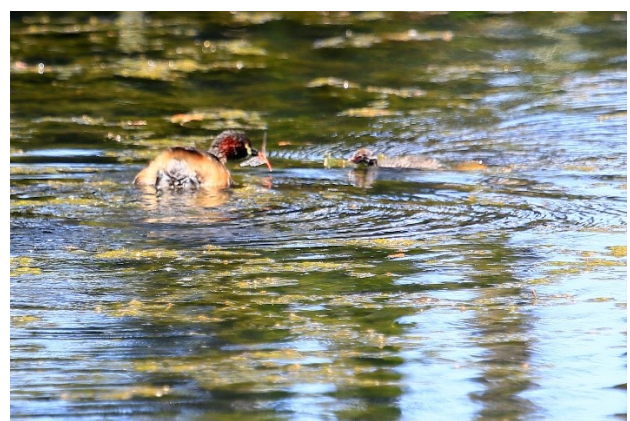
it along, I realised its partner was in amongst the lily pads with two chicks; with the fish as its mouth, it moved towards them to feed the chicks, one chick approached but soon turned back to the other Grebe and did accept the fish; *now that is unusual*.



I soon realised why, the other Grebe was also catching food of a different, *live Dragonfly's* with the two chicks obviously showing their preferences for them with somewhat excited intensity.



It would skim across the surface of the water partially submerged with only the top part of its head exposed or it would snap one from the air as it passed over, this Grebe must have been well practiced as I also noted that it would see a Dragonfly some distance away anywhere from 2 – 5 metres away on a lily, it would then dive under the water and emerge exactly at the location of the Dragonfly. Before they fed the chick with the Dragonfly, they would give it a good dunking so that it lost all of its movement.



Now, I had never seen the Grebes feeding on Dragonfly's before and became mesmerised by the skill and speed this Grebe showed in catching them, fast and furious at times.



I must have taken over 300 photos before a father and his son appeared on the edge of the pond which caused the Australasian Grebes to move the chicks into a secluded section of the pond.

A moment to remember.
Charles Dove

PS: Their normal feeding consists mainly of small fish and crustaceans. Prey is normally caught during deep underwater dives, but some is taken on the surface. Like other grebes, the Australasian Grebe is often seen eating its own feathers and feeding them to its young. This behaviour is thought to help prevent injury from any sharp fish bones that are swallowed.



Image from the reflections of
a student's day at the
Waterbird Habitat
Toowoomba

*image courtesy of
Eddy van Klinken*

VARIED TRILLER

Scientific Name: *Lalage leucomela*
Atlas Number: 431

image by Charles dove
Text courtesy <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/>

Description:

The male adult Varied Triller is black above, with white markings on the wings and is white underneath, with grey barring on the breast. He has white eyebrows, a black eye-stripe and a rufous area on the rear underbody. The adult female is similar but browner above and her underparts are greyer with more pronounced grey bars across her breast. Juveniles are similar to the females. There are several subspecies of Varied Triller but the differences between them are fairly subtle. The Varied Triller is also known as the Pied, White-browed or White-eyebrowed Triller or Caterpillar-eater or Varied Caterpillar-eater.

Similar species:

The Varied Triller can be distinguished from the White-winged Triller, *Lalage sueurii*, by its white eyebrow and by the orange-rufous, cinnamon or buff area on its rear underbody. The Varied Triller also has less white on its wings and is more heavily barred underneath.

Distribution:

The Varied Triller is found along the east coast of Australia from about the Manning River (though some have been seen occasionally in the Hunter region) north to Cape York and in New Guinea. It is also found down the west side of the Cape York Peninsula to the south-east Gulf of Carpentaria. It is found in the top end of the Northern Territory and in the western and northern Kimberlys. Some subspecies of Varied Triller are also found in New Guinea. (Across its total range there are 14 to 16 subspecies of Varied Triller, but only four in Australia - *Lalage leucomela*, itself and subspecies *yorki* of eastern Australia and subspecies *macrura* and *rufiventris* of northern and north-western Australia).

Habitat:

Varied Trillers are mainly found in tropical and subtropical rainforests and woodlands, mangroves and in forests and woodlands close to rivers or creeks. They are also occasionally found in open eucalypt forests searching for fruit, especially that of Fig (*Ficus*) trees and for eucalypt flowers.

Seasonal movements:

The seasonal movements of Varied Trillers is not well known but they appear to stay in the one area and not to migrate.

Feeding:

Varied Trillers feed mainly on fruit and sometimes on seeds, nectar and insects. They mostly feed in the outer foliage of trees, but occasionally on the ground or on tree trunks near the ground. They are attracted to fruiting trees particularly to Fig and flowering eucalyptus trees.

Breeding:

The Varied Triller's nest is an open, shallow cup, barely large enough to hold a single egg. Nests are made of fine twigs, bark, vine tendrils, rootlets, plant stalks and grasses. The whole is bound together with spider web and lined with lichen or rootlets. The nest is usually in a horizontal fork, near the end of a thin branch of a small tree. Trees chosen are often paperbarks or mangroves. Both adult birds share the incubation of the egg and the feeding of the nestling. The incubation period is not known.

Living with us

Varied Triller numbers are likely to have been reduced by the clearing of rain forests, especially down the east Australian coast.



MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

| Species | Date | Location | Observer |
|--------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| White-headed Pigeon | 26/10/2022 | Woden St Murphys Creek | MA |
| Topknot Pigeon (12) * | 4/11/2022 | Forest Rd Highfields | PM |
| Topknot Pigeon (14) | 20/11/2022 | Murphys Creek Rd, Spring Bluff | MA |
| Brown Falcon | 10/11/2022 | Murphys Creek | MA |
| Black Falcon (2) | 25/11/2022 | Karrasches Lagoon, Placid Hills | MA; JW |
| Bluebonnet (3) | 31/10/2022 | Gowrie/Lillyvale Rd | PM; KO |
| Bluebonnet (2) | 18/11/2022 | Mountain Camp Rd, Mountain Camp | MA |
| Buff-breasted Rail | 23/11/2022 | Cooby Creek, Groomsville | MA |
| Australian Owlet-nightjar | 10/11/2022 | Redwood Park | MA; RJ |
| White-throated Needletail (8) | 28/11/2022 | Murphys Creek | MA |
| White-throated Needletail (50) | 23/11/2022 | River Heads | PM; KO |
| White-throated Needletail (8) | 30/11/2022 | Highfields | PM; KO |
| White-winged Fairy-wren | 29/11/2022 | Jondaryan-Muldu Rd, Jondaryan | MA; RJ |
| Painted Honeyeater (4) | 29/11/2022 | Jondaryan-Sabine Rd, Jondaryan | MA |
| Yellow-tufted Honeyeater | 25/11/2022 | Penderestes Rd, Murphys Creek | MA; JW |
| Spectacled Monarch | 31/10/2022 | Highfields Falls | MA; KO |
| White-winged Triller (2) | 29/11/2022 | Jondaryan-Sabine Rd, Jondaryan | MA |
| Barred Cuckoo-shrike (3) | 19/11/2022 | Murphys Creek Rd, Ballard | MA |

* Only my second record over yard in 23 years.

MA, M. Atzeni; RJ, R. Jaensch; PM, P. McConnell; KO, K. O'Donnell; JW, J. Watson (US visitor)

A BIG THANK YOU FROM TBOC NEWSLETTER TO ALL THOSE THAT HAVE ASSISTED THROUGHOUT 2022 WITH THEIR ARTICLES, REPORTS, BIRD LISTS AND PHOTOS

NEXT NEWSLETTER IN JANUARY 2023

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND ALL THE BEST FOR 2023