



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

NEWSLETTER

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

April 2023

EDITION 489

BIRD OF THE MONTH



Diamond Firetail
Aubigny QLD 2023

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OUTINGS & EVENTS 2023

Wednesday May 5th	Hancock Street Park Ann Alcock 0418 159 760
Saturday May 27th	JOINT OUTING DETAILS TO FOLLOW LATER

PLEASE CONTACT THE LEADER IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND

The Toowoomba Bird Observers Newsletter
is published monthly.

**The deadline for the next Newsletter
is 28th May 2023**

Charles powerart@bigpond.net.au

2023 CHALLENGE

141 species

Please submit your sightings for 2023

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UPCOMING OUTINGS

MIDWEEK WALK

HANCOCK STREET PARK

Date: Wednesday 10th May 2023

Leader: Ann Alcock

Meet location: *Park entrance Hancock Street Rangeville.* <https://www.tr.qld.gov.au/facilities-recreation/parks-gardens/parks-by-location/rangeville-hancock-street-park>

Time: 8:00 am.

Approx 1km - Please bring morning tea.

RSVP: To Ann 0418159760 or tboc4350@gmail.com

Outing details: Outing details: Easy walk. This is a small park - 3.7 hectares. For additional birding opportunities and to have morning tea we will then go to Duggan Park where there are toilets and picnic tables.

To find out more about the park and the mini forest recently planted there, visit <https://hancockstreetpark.blogspot.com/>

Bird list is available on Birddata and Insects and plant varieties in the park can be seen on iNaturalist. We hope to have members of Friends or the Escarpment Parks join us because they have been actively working in the park and have been the drivers of the creation of the mini forest.

In the event of inclement weather contact Ann
Closed footwear required.

WEEKEND WALK

Lockyer Valley Joint Outing

Date: 27th May 2023

Leader: Mick Atzeni

Meet location:

Time: 7.30 am

Approx ? km - Please bring morning tea

RSVP:

Outing details:

Morning Tea:

In the event of inclement weather contact the leader
Closed footwear required.

CLUB REPORTS**MIDWEEK WALK***Wednesday 12th April 2023***Williams Park Highfields.**

by Tony Bond

It was a chilly 5C in Highfields so extra layers were needed first thing but it warmed once the sun came over the range. Twelve TBO spotters assembled at the Cecil Crescent near one end of Williams Park, Highfields in anticipation of seeing some Powerful Owls. But somebody forgot to tell the owls. Despite careful scrutiny of the usual locations none were seen on this occasion. However, it was not a wasted trip, because it was a pleasant morning to be out under the trees and we did have other good sightings - just not owls.

The trees around our starting point were first examined for Tawny Frogmouths knowing that they are frequently seen here. But they too were absent today. Many common birds were noted though, such as Grey Butcherbird, Noisy Miner, Lewins Honeyeater, Galah and Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. We also had a fleeting glimpse of some Musk Lorikeets, which have been increasingly seen around this area.

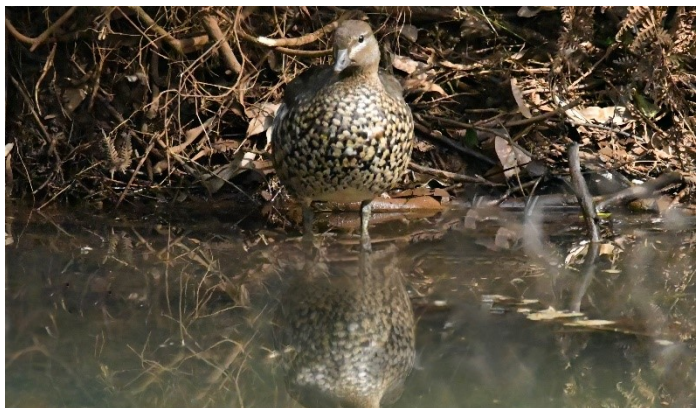
It seemed very quiet as we started off, heading north on the east side of the park but before too long things started happening. On this first leg we saw Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Crested Pigeon, Common Bronzewing. A special treat nearer to Reis Road was a family of Apostlebirds and male and female Satin Bowerbirds.



Blue-faced Honeyeater – by Tony Bond

The devastating clear-felling and grading of what was once grassy woodland on Reis Road was well in evidence as we reached the turnaround point, and crossed the bridge to head back down the west side of the creek.

On the bridge we were able to get a better view of more of Musk Lorikeets - quite high up. Wood Ducks and Pacific Black Ducks were on the water.



Wood Duck by Tony Bond

Further along we had another treat when we encountered a family of five (or was it six?) Grey-crowned Babblers assembled in a line on the same perch performing early morning preening and pre-flight checks. Then, as we watched and amid a flurry of calls, they set off for the day. This was the first time we have seen Babblers in this park, although they are commonly seen in other parts of Highfields.

As we approached the area where the Powerful Owls had previously been seen we slowed and peeked and stared but to no avail. We did detect a White-browed Scrubwren and a pair of Eastern Whipbirds in thick vegetation on the opposite side of the creek.

We heard a possible Eastern Robin in the thickest of the undergrowth but were unable to confirm. And another, particularly colourful, White-browed Scrubwren was too fast for the cameras but we all saw it.

By the time we arrived back at the southern end of the park 35 birds had been sighted and the consensus of the group was that we would save the planned reverse walk for another day. The teapot was calling and could not be ignored.

Sadly, the Reis Road disruptions may have caused the owls to move on this year. But we'll keep looking and let the group know if they do reappear.

Thanks to Jennie for recording.

Williams Park Highfields. 12 April 2023		35 Species	12 members
Australian Wood Duck	Rainbow Lorikeet	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Butcherbird
Pacific Black Duck	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	Striated Pardalote	Pied Butcherbird
Common Bronzewing	Musk Lorikeet	Eastern Spinebill	Australian Magpie
Crested Pigeon	Australian King-Parrot	Lewin's Honeyeater	Pied Currawong
Bar-shouldered Dove	Pale-headed Rosella	Noisy Miner	Grey Fantail
Little Pied Cormorant	Laughing Kookaburra	Blue-faced Honeyeater	Torresian Crow
Masked Lapwing	Satin Bowerbird	Grey-crowned Babbler	Magpie-lark
Galah	White-browed Scrubwren	Eastern Whipbird	Apostlebird
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Brown Thornbill	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	

More images from Williams Park by Tony Bond



Grey-crowned Babbler



Musk Lorikeet



Sulphur-crested Cockatoo



Pale-headed Rosella

WEEKEND WALK *Saturday 29th April 2023*

Highfields Falls Outing Report

by Ann Alcock

Twenty-eight enthusiastic birders turned up to participate in this walk – one of the largest groups in recent times. According to eBird data, Highfields Falls is the most popular birding hotspot in the Toowoomba Local Government Area (LGA).

We were pleased to welcome a number of new members and visitors. Volunteers Max Henderson and Shirley Dunsdon from Friends of the Escarpment Parks joined us and Max gave an update of the work they are doing to clear the park of invasive species as well as the regeneration taking place.

The weather was mild but overcast which made spotting difficult against the bright clouds. Due to the number of participants in attendance, we walked in a couple of separate groups. The size of the park and the number of walking trails meant we could do this in comfort.

Flowering mistletoe ensured a good variety of honeyeaters and other nectar-feeding birds. The park is lush at present with a dense understory for small birds and plenty of grass seeds for finches. We were pleased with a bird count of 46 species for the morning.

Unfortunately, the park at Highfields Falls does not have facilities so we reconvened for morning tea at Peacehaven Gardens where the highlight was a low and near-flying Square-tailed Kite.



Eastern Whipbird – by Joe Scanlon

The club is experiencing increased levels of interest in its activities and outings, lending support to reports that there are increasing numbers of people taking up birding and travelling for birding. Surely this sends a strong message to our local community leaders about the importance of ecotourism to the local economy.

Highfields Falls 29 th April 2023		46 species	28 members & friends
Australian Brush-turkey	Little Lorikeet	Eastern Spinebill	Grey Butcherbird
Brown Quail	Australian King-Parrot	Lewin's Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
Brown Cuckoo-Dove	Pale-headed Rosella	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Pied Currawong
Common Bronzewing	Laughing Kookaburra	Noisy Miner	Grey Fantail
Peaceful Dove	White-throated Treecreeper	Scarlet Honeyeater	Magpie-lark
Wonga Pigeon	Superb Fairy-wren	Brown Honeyeater	Eastern Yellow Robin
Collared Sparrowhawk	Red-backed Fairy-wren	White-naped Honeyeater	Silvereye
Galah	Variiegated Fairy-wren	Noisy Friarbird	Mistletoebird
Little Corella	White-browed Scrubwren	Eastern Whipbird	Double-barred Finch
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Brown Thornbill	Golden Whistler	Red-browed Finch
Rainbow Lorikeet	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Shrike-thrush	
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	Striated Pardalote	Olive-backed Oriole	

More images from Highfields Falls and Peacehaven Park



Eastern Yellow Robin – Ann Alcock



Grey Shrike-thrush – by Ann Alcock



Little Lorikeet by Joe Scanlon



Lewin's Honeyeater – by Tony Bond



Australian King Parrot – by Dan Bishop



White-throated Treecreeper – by Charles Dove

Links

Albatross first tagged as a chick in 1976 found alive and well off WA's south coast. The 46-year-old wandering albatross is the oldest of its species in recorded Australian history — and is known to have raised 11 chicks with three different partners. [Read the full story](#)
Shared from [ABC app](#)

Ecogeography of group size suggests differences in drivers of sociality among cooperatively breeding fairywrens | Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences. <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rspb.2022.2397>

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/major-mitchell-pink-cockatoo-among-new-threatened-species-on-growing-national-list-20230403-p5cxnb.html>

Hello, Rosie: Lonely parrots learn to video call their friends. <https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/hello-rosie-lonely-parrots-learn-to-video-call-their-friends-20230422-p5d2i9.html?btis>

The listing of more Australian bird species as 'threatened' is alarming – but also cause for hope
https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/apr/11/the-listing-of-more-australian-bird-species-as-threatened-is-alarming-but-also-cause-for-hope?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

NOTICES & ARTICLES of INTEREST

BROWN QUAIL AND PAINTED BUTTON-QUAIL

By Joe Scalon

We were excited when we saw a pair of brown quail in our garden on the 1st March and 29th March 2022. We had this pair feeding, taking dust baths and just 'hanging out' in our garden till the end of July. On 27th January this year, we again saw a pair of brown quail – this time with 6 half-grown chicks. We saw them regularly in February. Early in April, there were only 4 chicks with the adults. We didn't see any of them for a few weeks and then there were only 2 chicks with the adults. Again, we didn't see any for a few weeks and then only one juvenile returned and has been around for the last week or so (mid-late April). We are hoping that the parents and the other chick have just moved away and not succumbed to predators.

From April to September 2022, we also had a pair painted button-quail visit our garden. During the first few months, the brown quail and button-quail seemed to come and go at the same time. It was interesting to watch the different feeding behaviour of these 'similar' birds. While the brown quail just pecked and scratched around in the same sort of way that domestic fowls forage, the button-quail would scratch around while spinning around in a circle.



Brown Quail

We can watch these from our dining room window. Interesting to watch and we can spend quite a lot of time just watching them.

Images by Joe Scanlon



Brown Quail



Brown Quail & Painted Button Quail



Brown Quail

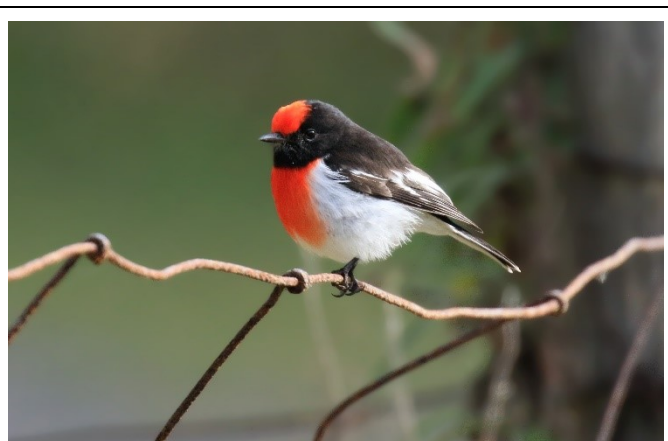


Painted Button Quail

A couple birds visiting the Toowoomba region at present you might want to keep an eye for



Diamond Firetail



Red-capped Robin

DIAMOND FIRETAIL

Scientific Name: *Stagonopleura guttata*
Atlas Number: 652

image by Charles dove

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

Description:

They are a small bird sometimes described as one of the most stunningly coloured birds of the finch family. The top of its body is ash brown with crown, forehead and neck grey. The under feathers are white with a crimson rump. There is a black band across its neck which continues down the flank to be dotted with white. The bill and eye ring are coral, and the legs and feet are dark grey. The female is similar to the male although sometimes smaller. The juvenile Diamond Firetail has a black bill and is duller in colour. They fly low and flocks travel in long lines. This species may also be called the Diamond Finch or Java Sparrow.



Similar species:

The Diamond Firetail is very distinctive, being larger and more heavily built than the Red-browed Finch, *Neochmia temporalis*, and slightly smaller and shorter-tailed than the much duller House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus*.

Distribution:

Endemic to south-eastern Australia, ranging from Carnarvon Ranges in Queensland to the Eyre Peninsula and Kangaroo Island in South Australia.

Habitat:

Found in open grassy woodland, heath and farmland or grassland with scattered trees.

Seasonal movements:

Mostly resident or sedentary with some local movements.

Feeding:

Feeds on the ground and generally eat ripe or partially ripe seeds and can be seen hopping around on the ground. They occasionally eat insects and their larvae.

Breeding:

The Diamond Firetail builds a nest with green grass blades and stems and lines it with fine grasses and feathers. The nest can be found in trees and shrubs with dense foliage and has sometimes been known to build in the base of a hawk's nest. The nest is built by both partners but only the female does the weaving. Both partners incubate the eggs and care for the young. Usually only one clutch is laid per season.

Living with us

They have been adversely affected by clearing for agriculture or urban development as well as predation of eggs and nestlings by increased populations of native predators such as the Pied Currawong. **They are now listed as Endangered.**