



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

NEWSLETTER

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

May 2023

EDITION 490

BIRD OF THE MONTH



Weebill
Oakey QLD 2022

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OUTINGS & EVENTS 2023

Wednesday June 14th	Federation Park Charles Dove 0417 422 302
Saturday – Sunday June 24 th – 25th	Raptor Census Pat McConnell 0457 422 082

PLEASE CONTACT THE LEADER IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND

The Toowoomba Bird Observers Newsletter
is published monthly.

**The deadline for the next Newsletter
is 27th June 2023**

Charles powerart@bigpond.net.au

2023 CHALLENGE

141 species

Please submit your sightings for 2023

Management Committee:

President	Mick Atzeni
Vice-president	Sandy Robertson
Secretary	Peter Everest
Treasurer	Ann Alcock
Media officer	Ann Alcock
Editor	Charles Dove
Outings Coordinator	-
Records Officer	Pat McConnell
Facebook Admin	Sandy Robertson
	Mick Atzeni
	Ann Alcock

MID-WEEK WALK**FEDERATION PARK**

Date: 14th June 2023

Leader: Charles Dove

Meet location: <https://goo.gl/maps/bJ5zm3Xue4QBxzzU8>
766 Drayton Connection Rd, Vale View QLD 4352

Time: 8.00 am

Recommended: Please bring morning tea.

RSVP: Charles by 12:00 midday Friday 13th June 2023
text 0417 422 302 or
E-mail powerart@bigpond.net.au

Outing details: 2–3 km - casual easy walk. There are toilet facilities and picnic tables on-site.

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

ANNUAL RAPTOR CENSUS

Dates: 24th /25th June 2023. The western route will be done on 27th June.

Coordinator: Pat McConnell. Mobile: 0457 422 082

Our annual raptor census is conducted along set routes to the north, east, south and west of Toowoomba.

For those who find raptors challenging, participating in the census is a great opportunity to improve your raptor spotting and identification skills.

Further information: Contact Pat for general enquiries, and the relevant leader below for date confirmation, meeting time and place, expected finish time and transport arrangements. The norm is to carpool and share fuel costs. Surveys usually start around 9am and can take at least 5 hours to complete, depending on the route and number of raptors around.

<u>Route</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Leader</u>	<u>Contact details</u>
Northern:	TBA	Pat McConnell	0457 422 082 or sootyowl81@icloud.com
Eastern:	24/6	Mick Atzeni	0499 395 485 or tiddalac@gmail.com
Southern:	25/6	Sandy Robertson	0415 277 145 or sandy.robertson6@gmail.com
Western:	27/6	Chris MacColl	0427 560 666

MID-WEEK WALK reportWednesday 10th May 2023**Hancock Street Park and Duggan Park .***By Ann Alcock*

On a cool overcast morning, 11 birders arrived to walk through the small Hancock Street Park. The park is just over 3.7 hectares and contains bushland vegetation of significant environmental value. In 2016, the Friends of the Escarpment Parks (FEP) started working with Council to eradicate weeds and regenerate native vegetation.

Presently the park hosts a range of birds that use the hollows for nesting but only a few smaller birds. Known to be present now are White-browed Scrubwrens and more recently a female Golden Whistler. The large number of Noisy Miners is possibly partially responsible for the lower number of smaller birds. New recordings for the park were an Olive-backed Oriole and an overhead sighting of a Collared Sparrowhawk.

There was a great deal of interest in the micro forest which is being developed on the southern end of the park. There is more information about it here.

<https://hancockstreetpark.blogspot.com/>

Then it was on to Duggan Park for morning tea and close views of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos with a young bird.



Golden Whistler female



Variegated Fairy-wren - female



Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo – female

Images courtesy of Ann Alcock

Bird List Hancock Park			
Collared Sparrowhawk	Australian King-Parrot	Noisy Miner	Australian Magpie
Galah	Pale-headed Rosella	Eastern Whipbird	Pied Currawong
Little Corella	Laughing Kookaburra	Golden Whistler	Magpie-lark
Rainbow Lorikeet	White-browed Scrubwren	Olive-backed Oriole	
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird	

Bird List Duggan Park			
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Variiegated Fairy-wren	Lewin's Honeyeater	Pied Butcherbird
Galah	Brown Thornbill	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Spotted Pardalote	Noisy Miner	Red-browed Finch
Rainbow Lorikeet	Striated Pardalote	Grey Butcherbird	

Links

Rare black cockatoo with white feathers carries '1 in 30,000' mutation

A clean capture of a rare leucistic Baudin's black cockatoo has put to rest a rumour which had been circulating among the bird lovers of Margaret River. [Read the full story](#) Shared from [ABC app](#)

Leucistic Grey Fantail

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-04-30/rare-white-willie-wagtail-leucistic-delights-birders/102277642>

Student's innovative design a game-changer in safeguarding wildlife populations - CSU News

<https://news.csu.edu.au/in-brief/students-innovative-design-a-game-changer-in-safeguarding-wildlife-populations>

Why birds and their songs are good for our mental health - Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/interactive/2023/birds-song-nature-mental-health-benefits/>

Two in the bush: The quest to save Australia's wildlife

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/two-in-the-bush-the-quest-to-save-australia-s-wildlife-20230418-p5d1q1.html?btis>

NOTICES & ARTICLES of INTEREST

THE PURPLE PATCH May 2023

by Dan Bishop

Sometimes with birding a lot of things just go your way. You hit an unexpected purple patch, when a juxtaposition of good luck, good timing, good information, and good birds is converted into a cluster of lifers. Lifers are getting harder to come by for me, especially in the Toowoomba LGA. In 2021, when I started birding in earnest, I was averaging about 15 a month. This has since dropped to about 2 or 3. I took Friday the 5th of May off work to seek out the Diamond Firetail and add another lifer to the list. Little did I know that I was going to have local birding experiences over the next 4 days that I won't soon forget.

The Diamond Firetail is a stunning little bird often seen near farmland in the Dunmore area, particularly at Western Creek State Forest near an eBird hotspot dubbed "Sam's Track", which winds through open woodland. Local rarities such as Little Woodswallow, White-browed Babbler, Crested Bellbird, Diamond Dove (this one still eludes me), Western Gerygone, White-backed Swallow and Hooded Robin have been regularly seen along the track, making it one of the go-to birding spots in the Toowoomba Region. I've picked up 14 lifers at Sam's Track so far, and there's an element of surprise with nearly every visit.

I set the alarm for 4:15am Friday, full of hope and optimism that I will finally tick a bird that I've been wanting to see ever since a random Powerful Owl encounter sparked my birding obsession in late 2020. I've tried for Diamond Firetail several times with no luck, so at the back of my mind lingered the nagging feeling that I would

dip out yet again. But you've got to have a go, and as a bonus Regan had recently recorded Budgerigars on eBird at Yarralong Weir. Not much of a detour, I can swing by the Weir after Sam's Track and possibly add two birds to the life list. Ultimately though, things didn't go exactly to plan—how often do they?—but if the situation had played out differently the rest of the weekend may not have unfolded the way that it did.



White-browed Babbler

Friday morning, I'm up and ready to leave by 4:45. Uneventful car trip, delayed at least 20 minutes by the ubiquitous roadworks traffic lights that are always red when you get to them, and about 1000 Pied Butcherbirds on a wire later I get to Dunmore Road. Past Opal Creek Feedlot to the left, which is big and smelly, and about 200m down the dirt road section I slow to avoid a kangaroo carcass, scattering a dozen or so protesting crows. I glance at the tree immediately to my left, and staring at me are two perched Wedge-tailed Eagles—one of those cliched jaw-dropping experiences and I couldn't help but exclaim "whoooooa!" to an empty car cabin. I've never been that close to a Wedgie before. Pull over and clamber out to take a pic, but they've already taken off, with slow and powerful wing beats. I watched them for a while then continued to Sam's Track.

I arrive and it's about 6:50 by the time I'm ready for the trek. Diamond Firetails have often been seen along the fence line on the opposite side of the road, so I walked a couple hundred metres either side of the track entrance with eyes and ears strained. No luck, and no Emus in the paddock beyond, either—there have been Emu sightings in the past and I am compelled to look at those paddocks every time, just in case! I start along the track, quickly ticking off a Brown Falcon, Australian Hobby, Hooded Robins and Yellow-rumped Thornbills. It's a cool, crisp morning with light winds, my favourite birding conditions. Plenty of Jacky Winters, and in a dead tree I spot 6 White-backed Swallows with about three dozen Tree Martins. At the end of Sam's Track there's a disused water tank that feeds cattle drinking trough, and I usually walk there and back. I'm about halfway to the tank and still haven't seen a Firetail. I'm starting to lose hope, and next thing the trees around me are full of cranky, chattering Thornbills—these little characters seem to just appear out of nowhere, and I tick off Yellow, Inland, Buff-rumped, then Chestnut-rumped. Four thornbill species at once, a first for me. I get close to the water tank and usually I see Restless Flycatchers and Western Gerygones around here, but not today. On the return trip I tick off White-eared Honeyeater, Rufous Songlark and, the star of the show as it turns out, a White-browed Babbler. The latter was foraging on the track with Speckled Warblers. Overall, 42 species in about 4½ hours of birding



Hooded Robin - female

(and 8km of walking according to eBird), but Diamond Firetail did not end up on the list. Consoled by my second only sighting of a WB Babbler, I make the hour-long drive to Yarramalong Weir. I bird for about an hour at the Weir, wandering about looking for Budgies, but have no luck. Highlights included a pair of Restless Flycatchers and getting reasonably close to a White-necked Heron, a species which usually takes off when I get within 100 metres. Other than that, just the usual waterbirds and a total of 35 species. I've done over 5 hours of birding and 3 hours of driving, with another hour-long trip home ahead of me. I'm bushed, and the homing instinct has kicked in. Sixty-one species for the day, and 3 ticks for the year list. Not a bad haul, but 0 lifers! I get home, plonk myself down on the lounge and peruse the day's lists. Where to tomorrow, I wonder? Later, I receive an email that provides the answer.



White-backed Swallow

(To be continued...)



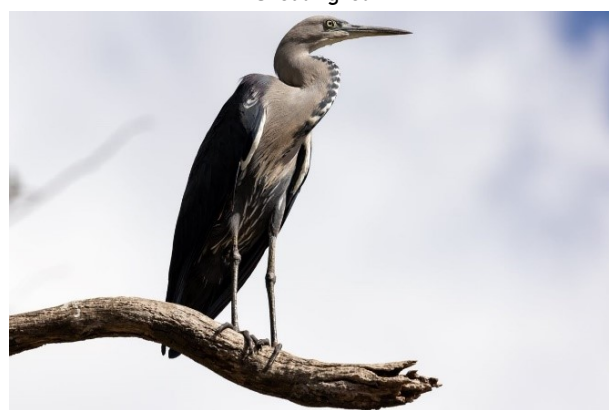
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill



Great Egret



Inland Thornbill



White-necked Heron

Birds seen

Western Creek State Forest at Sam's Track:

Brown Quail, Crested Pigeon, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Australian Hobby, Brown Falcon, Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Cockatiel, White-throated Treecreeper, Superb Fairy-wren, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Noisy Miner, White-plumed Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Striped Honeyeater, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, Speckled Warbler, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Inland Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Yellow Thornbill, Weebill, White-browed Babbler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Rufous Whistler, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Willie Wagtail, Grey Fantail, Magpie-lark, Torresian Crow, Australian Raven, Jacky Winter, Hooded Robin, Eastern Yellow Robin, Rufous Songlark, Tree Martin, White-backed Swallow, Double-barred Finch.

Yarramalong Weir Reserve:

Crested Pigeon, Black-fronted Dotterel, Australasian Darter, Little Pied Cormorant, White-necked Heron, Great Egret, Intermediate Egret, White-faced Heron, Straw-necked Ibis, Black-shouldered Kite, Whistling Kite, Nankeen Kestrel, Galah, Pale-headed Rosella, Superb Fairy-wren, Noisy Miner, White-plumed Honeyeater, Noisy Friarbird, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, White-throated Gerygone, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Rufous Whistler, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Willie Wagtail, Grey Fantail, Magpie-lark, Restless Flycatcher, Torresian Crow, Golden-headed Cisticola, Welcome Swallow, Double-barred Finch, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin.

AN AMATEUR’S TAKE ON THE BIRD COUNT IN FEBRUARY

by Jane Butler

A bird count! Doesn’t that mean I need to be an expert on identifying birds? I went along anyway ostensibly to help but really to learn and I’m so glad I did.

It was an early start of course, meeting at Stockyard Hall on a rather fresh morning at 6am. There was a good number of enthusiast (17) considering the early hour, representing two groups: Toowoomba Bird Observers and Birdlife Australia. The gathering was organised by Roger Jaensch for LUCI (Lockyer Upper Catchment Incorporated).

Mark Kidd introduced himself as the owner of the property we were visiting, pointing out ‘Ironbark Ridge’ from the Hall, a well-treed section of the Toowoomba escarpment...and rather steep looking!

We split into two groups, one group was to climb the Ridge while the other group, dropped off further up the driveway, was to walk back and meet the others halfway where we were to compare notes. Our group walked very quietly down the road straining to listen for any bird sounds. Unfortunately, for our group the birds were a bit quiet. One sound I mistook as a bird was actually an insect! The other group however were looking very pleased with their number. It turned out that just around the corner was a fruiting fig tree growing in a gully, full of birds particularly a Regent Bowerbird, a species that hadn’t been seen at Ironbark Ridge since 1991. A group of us rushed down to spy the birds, which also included Mistletoe birds and Cicadabirds. We weren’t disappointed.

We then continued to the saddle of the Ridge where we spied a Wedge-tailed Eagle and one of those “is it an Olive-backed Oriole or a female Figbird?” challenges. I couldn’t tell so I left it to the experts!

We were by this time, especially for those who had skipped their morning coffee, ready for some sustenance. And boy did Penny oblige. What a wonderful spread she put on for us, catering for all tastes! A big THANKYOU to Penny and Mark.



So don’t be put off by your lack of experience because there are a lot of experts to help and like-minded amateurs too.

Overall, we recorded 34 species, 12 (those asterisked below) which were new to the property list.

Species recorded 23rd February, 2023

Australian Magpie	3	Leaden Flycatcher*	1
Bar-shouldered Dove	2	Lewin’s Honeyeater	13
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	7	Little Friarbird*	2
Brown Goshawk*	1	Mistletoebird	20
Brown Honeyeater*	2	Noisy Friarbird	13
Brown Thornbill	7	Noisy Miner	12
Cicadabird	12	Olive-backed Oriole	3
Eastern Whipbird	10	Peaceful Dove*	1
Eastern Yellow Robin	8	Pied Butcherbird*	2
Golden Whistler	1	Pied Currawong	13
Grey Butcherbird	6	Rainbow Lorikeet*	8
Grey Shrike-thrush	7	Regent Bowerbird*	1
Silveryeye	12	Spangled Drongo*	8
Speckled Warbler	1	Striated Pardalote	2
Striped Honeyeater*	1	Torresian Crow	13
Varied Triller*	2	Wedge-tailed Eagle*	1
Laughing Kookaburra	2	Rufous Whistler	3

THE RED-BACKED KINGFISHER

IT HAPPENS

by Charles Dove

The Red-backed Kingfisher is not often seen around the Toowoomba–Lockyer Valley regions, and I'm told it's usually just the odd bird. A few weeks ago, reports of a Red-backed Kingfisher started coming in. So, with camera in hand, I looked for it to no avail. Then reports from other locations followed over the next few weeks and it became obvious there was more than one around. I checked these locations, too, hoping to catch my first glimpse of a Red-backed Kingfisher. But not to be.

After these numerous attempts, I was about to give up chasing this elusive bird. Then I had a phone call from a friend on 29th May about an unrelated matter and happened to mention the Red-backed Kingfisher was seen the day before at the same place near Helidon, where I'd tried previously. So, I thought I would give it one more go, thinking this is the day.

I packed the camera, food and water and was prepared to wait at this location for a while. After arriving, I waited and kept looking up high at the main powerlines where it had been seen by so many, but not me. Just over an hour, boredom started to set in, so I set off for a walk down the road to see what else might be around.

I then noticed a shape on a lower power line leading to a small house nearby. WHAT was that sitting there on the lower wire, slightly obstructed by the power lines in front? Finally, the Red-backed Kingfisher! It was certainly worth the wait. AND IT COULD HAVE BEEN THERE ALL MORNING!



P.S: I'd taken lots of photos from the back, front and side on, and suddenly realised that the kingfisher was looking at me as if to say "Don't you have enough pics yet", so then I walked away.

BIRD OF THE MONTH**WEEBILL**

Scientific Name: *Smicromnis brevirostris*
 Atlas Number: 465

image by Charles Dove

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

DESCRIPTION:

The Weebill's common name comes from the short, stubby, pale beak. The eye is pale cream, and there is a pale line above the eye. Weebills are dull grey-brown on the head and olive-brown on the back, and the underparts are buff to yellow. In the south and east of the country, the birds are light brown, while northwards and inland they become paler and more yellow. Both sexes are similar in colouration, and young birds can be separated from the adults by their greyer eye.

**SIMILAR SPECIES:**

Many other small mostly brownish coloured Australian birds are similar to the Weebill. Members of the thornbills have varying amounts of spots and streaks around the head and face, while the slightly larger gerygones mostly have red-orange eyes.

DISTRIBUTION:

The Weebill is found throughout mainland Australia.

HABITAT:

The Weebill inhabits almost any wooded area, with the exception of the wettest forests, but favours open eucalypt forests. It spends most of its time in the canopy, in pairs or small groups. The birds stay in the same area throughout the year.

SEASONAL MOVEMENTS:

Sedentary.

FEEDING:

Weebills move in active flocks, feeding mainly in the outer edges of the tops of trees. The bill is well suited to taking small scale insects from the leaves; other insect prey is also eaten.

BREEDING:

The Weebill's nest is a neatly woven dome, made from grasses and other fine vegetation. It has a narrow spout-like entrance towards the top. The interior of the nest is lined with feathers and soft vegetable matter. The female alone incubates the eggs, but both parents care for the young birds.



Harpy Eagle



Apostlebird

How did the taxonomists miss this?