



# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

## NEWSLETTER

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

June 2023

EDITION 491

### BIRD OF THE MONTH



**Pink-eared Duck**  
Lake Galletly, Gatton, QLD 2022

### IN THIS ISSUE

Outings & Events Details	P1
Club Reports	P2-4
Notices & Articles of Interest	P5-9
Bird of the Month	P10



### OUTINGS & EVENTS 2023

Wednesday July 12th	<b>Redwood Park</b> Charles Dove 0417 422 302
Saturday July 29th	<b>Swift Parrot Survey</b> Mick Atzeni 0499 395 485

Website: [www.tboc.org.au](http://www.tboc.org.au)

Postal address:

P.O. Box 4730

Toowoomba East QLD Australia 4350

Email: [tboc4350@gmail.com](mailto:tboc4350@gmail.com)

Phone: 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 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

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

### 2023 CHALLENGE

**200 species as at 6/7/2023**

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**

### **REDWOOD PARK**

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023

**Leader:** Charles Dove

**Meet location:** <https://goo.gl/maps/T17R6gKGZRjPw85K7>

Redwood Park, Warrego Hwy - Highway A21 - Toowoomba Connection Road

**Time:** 8.00 am

**Recommended:** Please bring morning tea.

**RSVP:** Charles by 12:00 midday Tuesday 11th July 2023  
text 0417 422 302 or  
E-mail [powerart@bigpond.net.au](mailto:powerart@bigpond.net.au)

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

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

---

## **ANNUAL SWIFT PARROT SURVEY**

**Dates:** Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> July

**Coordinator:** Mick Atzeni

This is part of the national survey effort. We are awaiting further advice from Beau Meney of BirdLife Australia as to what areas they would like us to survey this season. Beau will be doing preliminary assessment of habitat earlier in the month. It is possible we may be better off surveying further afield, e.g. Durikai SF.

As soon as details come to hand, we will let you know by email. Meanwhile, if you intend participating or have any questions please contact Mick on 0499 395 485 or email [tiddalac@gmail.com](mailto:tiddalac@gmail.com).

---

**MID-WEEK WALK report**      *Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023*

**Federation Park**

By Charles Dove

A bright sunny day greeted the 5 of us at the midweek walk in June. The day started quietly and only a few birds were sighted in the open, grassed areas, including Galah, Masked Lapwings, Little Corellas and Magpie-lark. As we strolled to the far western side of the park, checking all the trees and along the fence lines, large numbers of Straw-necked Ibis and some Cockatiels passed by overhead.

Following the tree line, we heard an Eastern Yellow Robin calling and caught a brief glimpse of it. Down at the creek, we were greeted by a number of Superb and Red-backed Fairy-wrens busily feeding in the grass. As we continued along Smith Creek, a Rose Robin came into view, flitting around with no time to pose for a photo. A Noisy Miner and Laughing Kookaburra also kept our attention.

We had still not come across the Western Gerygone, which a couple of members were hoping to see. We continued back up towards the highway along the back track. A Black Falcon was seen up high, and a pair of interacting Brown Falcons came down very close, causing a bit of excitement.

We decided to head back to the car park and were interrupted by the call of the Western Gerygone. A Restless Flycatcher appeared briefly just as we tracked down the Western Gerygone that we were all scrambling to photograph while it moved from tree to tree, never posing for very long. Finches showed as well, along with Striated Pardalotes, and Welcome Swallows were flying around as the day started to warm up.



Western Gerygone by Charles Dove

We did eventually make it back to the car park and rested over morning tea, but only for a short while when the Rose Robin appeared in the trees next to us at the picnic table, giving us all good views.

All in all, it turned into a great morning out with 36 species of birds along with good company.

Federation Park midweek walk Wednesday 14 <sup>th</sup> June. 5 members 36 species			
Spotted Dove	Cockatiel	Spotted Pardalote	Torresian Crow
Crested Pigeon	Rainbow Lorikeet	Striated Pardalote	Restless Flycatcher
Little Black Cormorant	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	Noisy Miner	Magpie-lark
Straw-necked Ibis	Pale-headed Rosella	Golden Whistler	Rose Robin
Brown Falcon	Laughing Kookaburra	Rufous Whistler	Eastern Yellow Robin
Black Falcon	Superb Fairy-wren	Australian Magpie	Welcome Swallow
Masked Lapwing	Red-backed Fairy-wren	Pied Currawong	Common Starling
Galah	Western Gerygone	Grey Fantail	Common Myna
Little Corella	White-throated Gerygone	Willie Wagtail	Double-barred Finch

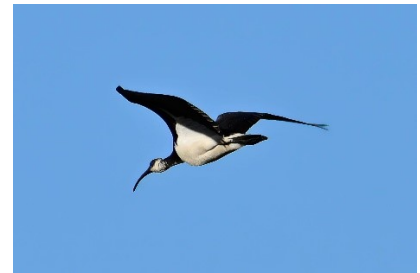
Tony Bond did well with some great images at Federation Park during the mid-week walk.



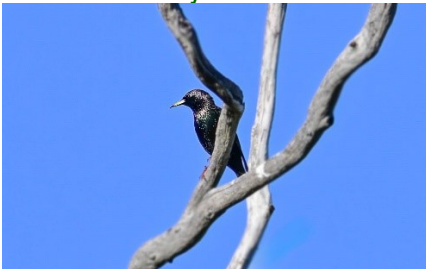
Grey Fantail



Pale-headed Rosellas



Straw-necked Ibis



Common Starling



Galah



White-throated Gerygone



Golden Whistler



Pied Currawong



Restless Flycatcher



Black Falcon



Brown Falcon

**Note from Tony Bond...**

I'll be swapping out some camera gear shortly.

**Details:**

- Nikon D7500 DLSR
- Nikkor 18-140mm VR f/3.5-5.6 zoom
- Tamron SP 150-600mm f/5-6.3 G2 zoom
- Tamron Tap-in Console

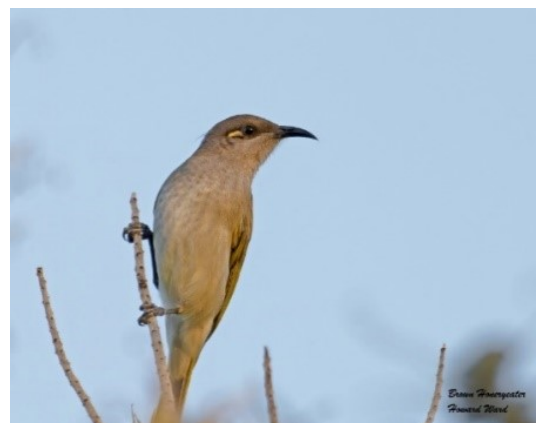
**Hi to the members of the Toowoomba Bird Observers.**

May I introduce myself; my name is Howard Ward and I was able to join members of your club on the recent outing to Federation Park.

It was a very pleasurable and informative morning and we were lucky to observe quite a few species of birds in the park. Federation Park is a little gem and provides the ideal habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. As I live in Westbrook it's right on my door steps, a short 10-minute drive.

Thank you again for sharing your morning and my wife and I look forward to many more outings.

**Right: A Brown Honeyeater that shared the morning walk at Federation Park.**





## Raptor Census June/July 2023

Pat McConnell

### Northern Section

Pat McConnell and Kath O'Donnell surveyed the northern section on Saturday 1 July. This section was divided into four sub-sections as in previous years. These were Highfields to Cooby Dam, Cooby Dam to Goombungee, Goombungee to Cooyar and Cooyar to Highfields. The survey was completed between 11.20am 3.40pm. Five species and 32 individual birds of prey were seen (See table below for summarised results). The weather during the survey was cold and fine. One hundred and sixty-four kilometres were travelled.

### Southern Section

The southern section was surveyed by Margaret Harrison and Sandy Robertson on Sunday 25 June. The route surveyed was East Greenmount, Greenmount, Nobby, Clifton, Allora, Hendon, Talgai area, Allora, Mt Marshall, Forest Springs, Upper Spring Creek, Upper Pilton to East Greenmount. The survey was completed between 10.15am and 3.00pm. The weather was clear, sunny and calm in the morning but a strong breeze sprang up in the afternoon. Four species and 59 individual birds of prey were seen.

### Eastern Section

The eastern section was surveyed by Mick Atzeni, Col Hughes, Olive Booth, Dan Bishop and Jimsie Varghese on Saturday 24 June from 9.20am to 3.05pm. The route surveyed was Lockyer, Helidon, Grantham, Placid Hills, Gatton north, Adare, Lake Clarendon, Lake Apex, Helidon Spa, Postmans Ridge and Murphys Creek. Nine species and 89 individual birds of prey were seen.

### Western Section

The western section was surveyed by Chris MacColl, Jarrod Kath and Mick Atzeni on Tuesday 27 June from 9.10am to 3.30pm. The route surveyed was Toowoomba to Oakey (via Cecil Plains Rd), Jondaryan, Bowenville Reserve, Norwin, Cecil Plains, Dalby, Kaimkillenbun & Quinalow to Jondaryan (via Mt Tyson Rd), Biddeston to Toowoomba via the Mt Tyson Rd (past the Wellcamp airport). Ten species and 313 individual birds of prey were seen.

### Table of Sightings

Species	N	S	E	W	Total
Black-shouldered Kite	10	5	3	61	79
Square-tailed Kite			2		2
Black Kite			52	58	110
Whistling Kite			14	4	18
Spotted Harrier	1			1	2
Wedge-tailed Eagle	7	1	3	4	15
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	2			1	3
Little Eagle			1	1	2
Brown Falcon		4	5	3	12
Black Falcon			2	1	3
Nankeen Kestrel	12	49	7	179	247
<b>Total number of raptors</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>493</b>

The above table shows that eleven species were seen in 2023, which is the same as in 2022. There were 493 individual birds of prey seen in 2023 which is 108 more than in 2022.

A big thank you to all involved especially the leaders.

Pat McConnell  
Records Officer

## Links

From thieving parrots to boozy pigeons: why New Zealand is obsessed with its native birds

[https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/26/from-thieving-parrots-to-boozy-pigeons-why-new-zealand-is-obsessed-with-its-native-birds?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/26/from-thieving-parrots-to-boozy-pigeons-why-new-zealand-is-obsessed-with-its-native-birds?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

CSIRO PUBLISHING | Pacific Conservation Biology

<https://www.publish.csiro.au/PC/PC22051>

The Death by Birding podcast is worth a listen, particularly the interview with Judith Hoyle

<https://cm.birdlife.org.au/t/r-e-ttiuzit-odikiykiur-r/>

### A new video slide show featuring Birds of the Toowoomba Region

by Charles Dove

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7orVVQEYj4>

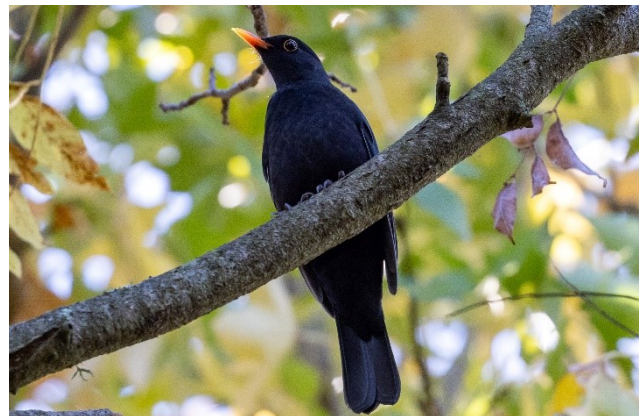
## NOTICES & ARTICLES of INTEREST

### THE PURPLE PATCH (Part 2) May 2023

by Dan Bishop

Like many birders, my birding is squeezed in around work and family – the weekends are it, essentially. I have semi-flexible work hours and can take a day off occasionally, which is usually devoted to birding. The latter arrangement led to a day of birding at Western Creek State Forest and Yarralong Weir (see previous newsletter) on Friday May 5<sup>th</sup> – I didn't find the two lifers that I was chasing but had a memorable time in the attempt and encountered species that I don't often see. I didn't have a clear plan for the rest of the weekend. Sometimes I like to follow a set itinerary, but other times I prefer to be spontaneous or get inspired by other birders. This time, eBird and an email from Regan gave me some ideas for Saturday's lifer hunt.

Regan mentioned in the email that a Common Blackbird and Little Wattlebird were reported on eBird at Davidson Arboretum in Highfields, just a few blocks from my place. The Little Wattlebird seemed very unlikely, but I remember Mick Atzeni saying that Blackbirds had been seen in Highfields over the years. Red Wattlebirds were listed as well, an uncommon local occurrence. Davidson Arboretum, then, as the first destination on Saturday. I'd been there once a few years ago and never really gave the place a second thought – a bit too neat and artificial for my liking, though it was originally an experiment to test the suitability of exotic plants to the local climate, which is interesting. The Blackbird must be feeling quite at home there amongst all those exotica. I'll take native plants and birds any day, but a tick is a tick!



Common Blackbird by Dan Bishop

I get to the Arboretum at around 7:45 and the place is pretty much as I'd remembered it: lots of orange leaves and autumn-ness. It's a giant L-shaped garden with a few "rooms" containing various exotica. Plants are not my strong point, so I didn't take too much notice of species. I spend nearly an hour there and spot the Common Blackbird in the area near the Flamingo (!) Road entrance. Slightly larger than a Russet-tailed Thrush, with yellow eye-ring and bill contrasting nicely with jet-black body and wings. My first lifer for the weekend. Twenty-three species seen, comprising the usual suspects for Highfields: Spotted Dove, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Pale-headed Rosella, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Rainbow Lorikeet, Satin Bowerbird, Superb Fairy-wren, Eastern Spinebill, Lewin's Honeyeater, Noisy Miner, Brown Honeyeater, Spotted Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill, Australasian Figbird, Grey Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Magpie-lark, Silvereys, Common Myna (and Common Blackbird).

I'm feeling lucky and decide to visit Hartmann Park at Crows Nest to add the elusive Spotted Quail-Thrush to the list of birding conquests. Hartmann Park is a hidden gem with winding trails north of Bald Hills Creek,

where Eucalypts, Grass Trees, Triggerplants, Bottlebrushes and other native plants grow on a sandstone ledge. Plenty of deadfall, leaf litter and rocky outcrops – perfect habitat for Spotted Quail-Thrush. Not so good for me seeing them, though, and I proceed to dip out once again! Not even a contact call peep. As usual, a consolation presented itself, this time in the form of a Square-tailed Kite and trailing cacophony of Noisy Miners, Pied Currawongs, Butcherbirds, and Willie Wagtails. What a racket; it mustn't be easy being a raptor.

The final location for the day was Cooby Dam, the best birding spot in the Toowoomba Region not just in terms of number of species seen, but also for the fact that you just never know what will show up while you're there. The water level has dropped, revealing muddy patches along the shore that attract wading birds..... and obsessed birders. I arrive at Loveday Cove at around 2pm and bird for 2 and a half hours, picking up fifty-eight species. Highlights – a young Black-necked Stork visible from the playground carpark, Musk Duck, Red-kneed Dotterels, and a Brown Goshawk. Just as I thought the visit couldn't get any better, the distinctive calls of Blue Bonnets echoed from the long grass during my walk back to the car, close yet out of sight. By the end of the day, I had amassed a total of seventy-six species, including one precious lifer.



Brown Goshawk by Dan Bishop

I arrive home and check eBird for interesting records and am not disappointed. A Black-tailed Native-hen near Oakey, reported by the same person who spotted the Common Blackbird. I'm beginning to think I owe this person a 6-pack. I also receive an email from Mick with the news that Pat had seen a Red-backed Kingfisher at Lilydale. So, Sunday is set – I'll head out to Oakey for the Native-hen, then go down the Range for the Kingfisher. Two potential lifers for the day.

A sleep-in on Sunday morning then I'm off by 7 enroute to the Black-tailed Native-hen. Fifteen minutes into the trip, I just happen to glance up at the powerlines on a road corner near Kelvinhaugh, and get a quick glimpse of a shape that causes me to quickly brake and do a U-turn. I expected yet another Pied Butcherbird, but this split-second sighting was different and had my birder senses tingling. Could it be? By the time I park the car and scramble out, fumbling with camera and binoculars, the bird is gone. Oh well, might as well do a list here since I stopped. After a few minutes I peek back up at the powerline...and looking back at me is a Red-backed Kingfisher. Wow, so cool, my very own lifer. I owe myself a 6-pack. I took some pics (it wouldn't let me photograph its rump – must've been shy) and admired its beauty for a while before it flew to a nearby paddock. Feeling as chuffed as a Chough, I continue to Oakey.



Red-backed Kingfisher by Dan Bishop

I stop at Devon Park-Boundary Road for a one-hour list and the obligatory White-winged Fairy-wren viewing, my first record of the species this year. The Native-hen was spotted just around the corner, where Doctor Creek crosses Devon Park Road. I seem to have a knack for spooking rails and crakes whenever I approach within 200 metres of them, so I was doubtful about spotting the bird as I parked near the creek. As soon as I got out, though, it was right there, about 10 to 15m away and happily foraging in the grass beside the road. A Black-tailed Native-hen, with beautiful black bantam's tail, dark pink legs, green-red bill, and staring light orange eyes. While I stayed near the car, I was able to watch and take pictures, but as soon as I separated to get a bit closer the bird took off into the longer grass. I was happy, though. I had a good look at it and was able to tick a bird rarely seen in the Toowoomba Region. That was my Sunday morning, thirty-seven species including



Black-tailed Native-hen by Dan Bishop



two lifers. I had other commitments that afternoon and figured that my birding adventure was over until the following weekend, but a tip-off from an unexpected source changed plans yet again.

Monday morning, I scroll through Facebook before getting ready for work, and see a post on a local community page with a photo of Budgerigars at Oakey. I quickly message the person who posted the photo, asking for the specific location, then head to work. Message reply: Cory Street Park, a nice little spot with an open park full of parrots and bush birds on one side and lagoons full of waterbirds on the other. I finish work an hour early and race out to Oakey, arriving just before 4. I make my way around the park, listing everything I see as I go. I don't think I've seen as many parrots in one place, especially Red-rumped, and the place is alive with their raucous calls. A small and agile Australian Hobby and two large, powerful Black Falcons are marauding the area and stirring the parrots into a frenzy of squawking and panicked flying. To the east of the park, I catch sight of my target. A dozen little green shapes, flitting speedily through the shrubs. Wow, I thought Little Lorikeets were fast! I walk over and see the Budgies perched in a shrub with Crested Pigeons and Red-rumped Parrots. My fourth lifer in as many days. I finish off the list (thirty-four species in an hour) and head home, capping off an amazing weekend of birding: 120 species, with eight additions to my year list, and four remarkable lifers. It was an experience that surpassed expectations, equivalent to nearly two months' worth of lifers condensed into four days. The thrill of discovery, the serenade of bird calls, and the beauty of these avian wonders reminded me once again why birding holds such a special place in my heart.



Black Falcon by Dan Bishop



Budgerigars by Dan Bishop

**CHESTNUT TEALS** - by *Chris Cameron*

I don't have as much access to the dams out at work since we have been shifted, but have found one that I can get an occasional look at, that has quite a bit of variety...

Last week it was Pink-ears, but this morning (27/6) I had a chance for a look at and got a big surprise—dozens of Grey Teal, and in their midst, but sitting well apart, were two Chestnut Teal!! Have not seen them up here before:





**Editor's note: While birdwatching on Sunday 1st July in the Oakey area, I was disturbed to see three cats and two large foxes, so I have included the following article with the author's permission.** Charles Dove

**The Cat Problem: based on the Page 1 photo in The Western Herald, 4 May 2023,**  
By Nancy Robinson

In response, Nancy Robinson (of Ellerslie Station, located north of Bourke near Engonia) wrote to the NSWBA Secretary, Michael Moody, as follows: "I was interested to read about your visit to Bourke in the last Western Herald. When recording some of the history of the Spinifex country near the Engonia and east of there with help from John and Ruth Walter with the bird list, we have recorded many different birds in this area.

The long drought put a lot of pressure on some of these birds, one has not been recorded since the drought, hopefully it may return. As a result of wild dog baiting in the area very few foxes are seen, this has enabled ground birds to increase.

Now we have a huge problem, in the whole of the Western Division of NSW, with a plague of wild cats they threaten every bird and small native animal and reptile in this area. Over the past two weeks I have trapped and shot 10 cats at my house, and I know I have not disposed of them all yet. I'm reliably told wild cats are in large numbers in North Bourke, eating water birds, however they are along the Darling River doing the same.

When we travel at night, we see many cats along the roads. If these cats are not controlled many of the birds, we treasure will have problems surviving. Please do not underestimate the problem, its large, and if no action is taken many birds will become endangered or even extinct. Many people are trying to control them in their areas, but the problem is large and in a large area of NSW, particularly in the National Parks.

Over the years I have saved many native birds from injuries and it saddens me to see piles of feathers in the bush. The question is: What can we do? We need to have an attractant/decoy, many forms/types of traps, professional shooters going along the public roads (under Police guidelines). Initiate trapping, shooting, poisoning programs (like the wild dog program but focused on wild cats). Many landholders would be willing to carry out these procedures, particularly members of wild dog groups who cover a large area of NSW. Research needs to be carried out on the best ways of attracting the cats to baits and traps. These are just a few suggestions I have: urgent action needs to be taken now, not next month, next year or never. I hope this information will assist your group to understand the issues wild cats present to our beautiful birds.

Yours faithfully

Nancy Robinson, Ellerslie, Bourke NSW. 02 68747488. [malcolm\\_robinson@bigpond.com](mailto:malcolm_robinson@bigpond.com)

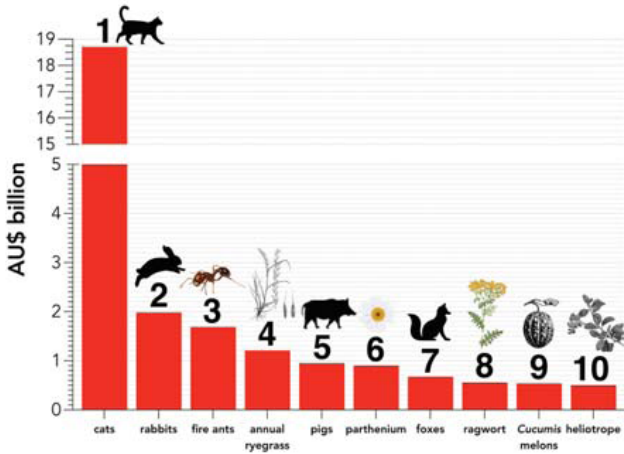
[NB: During the early 1900s, the Robinson family owned several farming properties in the Western Division, including Toorale and Nocheleche, both of which are now managed by the NSW NPWS.]



The photo opposite shows a feral cat squatting in a bird's nest on the Strezlecki Track, in north-east South Australia. Feral cats are an enormous problem for wildlife throughout Australia. They occupy most parts of Australia and researchers estimate there are as many as 10 million feral cats living in Australia. That means there is more than 1 cat per sq. km. across the entire landscape. Predation by feral cats is deemed to be a key threatening process by the NSW Scientific Committee because feral cats pose a significant threat to small native mammals and ground-dwelling/ground-nesting birds. Feral cats have already played a

leading role in 34 mammal extinctions here since 1788 including some species of hopping-mice and other small rodents, the hare-wallaby, bettong and bandicoot and have seriously impacted populations of the bilby, mala and numbat. They are a key reason for population declines of at least 123 other threatened native species.

A study, published in the journal 'Biological Conservation' in May 2019, gives a clear idea of the impact all cats have on native birds. That study concluded that feral cats killed 316 million birds a year, and pet cats killed around 61 million birds each year. Over 99% of native birds from 338 different species were reported to be killed, of which 71 were recognized threatened species. The most at risk are small- to medium-sized birds, birds that nest and hunt on the ground, and those on remote islands or in arid areas. The study concluded that about 4% of the total bird population were predated to cats each year.



### Australian Invasive Species Control Outlays

Australia’s governments spend over \$1 billion on feral cat control annually. Nancy’s email indicates that such expense and effort is having little or no effect and she proposes some alternatives to address the issue. The problem is that despite investing lots of dollars, control is actually quite difficult. Broadscale and landscape level control is expensive and seems limited in effectiveness, while trapping and shooting are small scale control methods.

### THREE KESTRELS AND A HOBBY – by Charles Dove

It seems some raptors are far less wary of humans than others. These four just seemed to ignore me when I decided to take a photo of them recently, especially the Nankeen Kestrels.





## BIRD OF THE MONTH

### PINK-EARED DUCK

Scientific Name: *Malacorhynchus membranaceus*  
Atlas Number: 213

image by Charles Dove

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

#### DESCRIPTION:

The Pink-eared Duck is a small duck with a huge square-tipped grey bill and strongly barred brown flanks. It has a large brown eye patch on a white finely barred face. There is a small pink patch behind the eye. Upper parts are brown, underparts white barred dark brown. The upperwing is brown with a white trailing edge and the underwing linings are white, finely barred brown. In flight, there is a bold white crescent on the rump.



#### SIMILAR SPECIES:

The Pink-eared Duck is not mistakeable for any other duck.

#### DISTRIBUTION:

The Pink-eared Duck is found throughout Australia but only occasionally in Tasmania.

#### HABITAT:

The Pink-eared Duck is found in timbered areas near water. It prefers shallow, temporary waters, however open wetlands support large flocks. It is a highly dispersive and nomadic species.

#### SEASONAL MOVEMENTS:

Pink-eared Ducks are birds of the inland swamps and will fly great distances in search of water. Huge flocks often reach the coast in dry years.

#### FEEDING:

Pink-eared Ducks feed in shallow warmish waters. The highly specialised bill is fringed with fine lamellae (grooves) to filter out the microscopic plants and animals which make up the bulk of its diet.

#### BREEDING:

Breeding can take place all year round and is dependent on floodwaters. The nest is a rounded mass of down placed in a hollow or on a stump above the water. Pink-eared Ducks usually take over nests built by other birds, especially the Eurasian Coot, and the Black-tailed Native-hen. Pink-eared Ducks form monogamous, probably life-long pair-bonds. The female incubates the eggs, and both parents brood the young.

For those who believe button-quails are a myth in Redwood Park, Dan Bishop managed to capture a couple of images there in June.



Black-breasted Button-quail



Painted Button-quail