

toowoomba bird club inc.

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

CLUB OFFICERS

President	Angela Kilmartin	Ph 382404
Vice-President/Records	Pat McConnell	Ph 352980
Secretary	Ann Shore	Ph 303207
Treasurer/Librarian	Keith Treschman	Ph 352894
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"TO ENCOURAGE THE OBSERVATION AND STUDY OF THE BIRDS OF THE TOOWOOMBA AREA"

No. 155 - November 1988

REPORT ON THE BIRD-A-THON - SUNDAY 23rd OCTOBER 1988.

This years Bird-a thon was a fantastic success both in numbers of species seen and money raised. So far the Club has received over \$70.00 with still more to come, while the number of species seen was an unbelievable 151. This represents 58 % of all the species recorded in the Toowoomba area and to see this number in one day is an effort of which the Club should be very proud. Participants were thankful though, that the count was on Sunday and not Saturday. Saturday was HOT and DRY; with Sunday looking like it would be the same, club members thought they in for a torrid time. However, Sunday was cooler! A fact which the birds must have also have appreciated because they turned out in numbers.

Birds of special interest, and there were quite a few, were Painted Button Quail, Buff Banded Rail, Banded Lapwing, Red Necked Phalarope, Squatter Pigeon, Little Bronze Cuckoo, Yellow Eyed Cuckoo Shrike, Masked Woodswallow and White Browed Woodswallow. Some of these birds turn up only once or twice a year while others may not be seen for years at a time.

It should also be remembered that October is a seasonal species survey (S.S.S.) month and this list of species along with the sectors in which they were recorded is a bonus for the club.

Thanks very much to those who participated. Could those members who still have money outstanding, please forward it to the Treasurer as soon as possible.

Pat McConnell

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

The Club needs more members to fill in the monthly checklists. Every piece of information on the bird inhabitants of the Toowoomba region helps us develop an accurate picture of the study area. I am taking the liberty of sending all the members of the Toowoomba area a checklist in the hope that more members will go for that early morning stroll to record the birds of their area. Please return sheets to Pat McConnell.

Also, any articles that you feel may be of interest to members in the following months would be appreciated.

MINUTES OF THE A.G.M. OF THE TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB INC.

1. OPENING OF MEETING: The President, Lesley Beaton declared the meeting open at 7.55 p.m. and welcomed all those present at the Harlaxton Neighbourhood Centre on Tuesday 18 th October 1988. Eleven members were present as per attendance book.
2. APOLOGIES: Received from Enid and Diana Beal, Gloria Glass, Joe Deuble, Angela Kilmartin, Lyn Rowan, Cath M^CGrath, Frank Belcher, Lonnie Hogan, Julie O'Connor, Bill & Eileen Jolly and Jane White.
3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS A.G.M. These were published in the Newsletter No.143 of November 1987 and were on the table to be read. The President asked if members were in agreement for a motion to be passed for the adoption of these minutes. A motion to this effect was moved by Marilyn Jacobs. Seconded by Pat M^CConnell. All in favour. Carried.
4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES: Nil
5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Lesley Beaton reported on the past year's activities and achievements.
(See separate report to be printed in November Newsletter.)
The President moved that her report be adopted.
Seconded by Barbara Weller. All in favour. Carried.
6. TREASURER'S REPORT: Acting Treasurer, Lesley Beaton, reported on the Club's finances.
(See separate report to be printed in November Newsletter.)
Lesley explained that the Club's books had been audited by Laurie Atzeni, as in previous years, as so far it had proved impossible to find a Registered Accountant to do this, as was required by Incorporation regulations. This task would now have to be faced by the incoming management committee and the Auditor named - as should be done at this meeting.
Lesley moved that her report- on the table for members to read - should be accepted
Seconded by John Shore. All in favour. Carried.
7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS TO THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: As the retiring President, Lesley Beaton, was not seeking re-election she remained in the chair to conduct the election of new officers.
The only nomination received to date was that for:-
President - Angela Kilmartin
nominated by Ann Shore, seconded by Lesley Beaton.
Nominations for other positions were received from the floor as follows:-
Secretary:- Ann Shore
nominated by Lesley Beaton, seconded by Marilyn Jacobs.
Records Officer/Vice President:- Pat M^CConnell
nominated by Laurie Atzeni, seconded by Ann Shore.
Treasurer/Librarian:-Keith Treschman
nominated by Barbara Weller, seconded by Nancy Belcher.
Editor:-Barbara Weller
nominated by Lesley Beaton, seconded by Norma Thomas
As all nominees accepted the nominations and no other nominations were received they were duly declared elected.
8. APPOINTMENT OF THE AUDITOR: Due to the previously explained reasons this appointment had to be left to the incoming committee.

9. CLOSE OF MEETING: The meeting closed at 8.23 p.m. and members remained for the following Ordinary General Meeting, to be recorded in the Minute Book.

Signed

Secretary 21 October 1988

JUST FOR THE RECORD

I should like to say a very big "thank you" to retiring President, Lesley Beaton, who has not only been a most enthusiastic, hard working and efficient figure-head for the Club during her term of office but has also combined this with the onerous task of Treasurer when we were unable to persuade anyone else to take this on. In addition she has many times willingly come to my rescue and done jobs which should by rights have been part of the Secretary's duties, but which by living out of town, I have often found hard to perform. Without her help and support in so many ways a difficult and busy year might well have become impossible. So "thank you, Lesley, a thousand times".

May I also put on the record my grateful thanks to the other members of our Executive, who are now changing positions on the Committee, Angela Kilmartin and Pat McConnell and to retiring librarian Nancy Belcher. Again, without their help we could not have achieved so much over the past few years.

To the new members of the incoming Executive, Barbara Weller as Editor and Keith Treschman as Treasurer/Librarian and to Angela and Pat, who are taking on new responsibilities, I say "Welcome, good birding and may you get as much enjoyment from the club's activities as I do - not to mention all additional excitements of new and special sightings!"

Ann Shore

Footnote to Angela: Don't break any more bones and get strong soon. We need you in one piece!

BEST WISHES TO ANGELA: Angela recently had the misfortune to break a leg in three places and spent some time in hospital. We all wish you a speedy recovery and hope you can still attend the R.A.O.U. Congress and Campout.

Editor.

CLASSIFICATION OF BIRDS

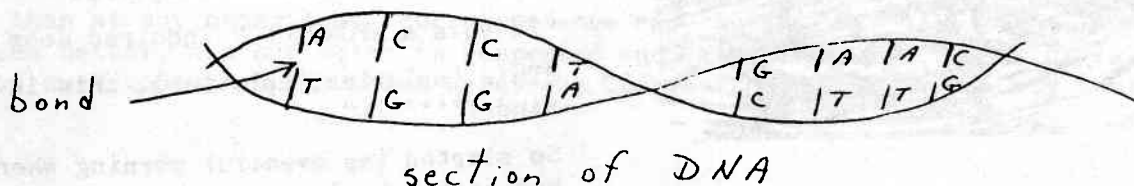
Part 1 of 3

Birds, along with all other living things, have been classified on the basis of anatomy. However, function shapes anatomy. So, it is possible for two distantly related species to look alike in some features because they solved a functional requirement in the same way. (This is called convergent evolution.)

Recently, a technique using D.N.A. analysis has allowed a reconstruction of avian relationships.

Features of a bird are controlled by genes. These form part of a very long chemical called D.N.A. (deoxyribonucleic acid), and this is present in the nucleus of all cells.

D.N.A. is a double strand of material. Sticking out from each strand is a sequence of four different chemicals (bases). They are referred to as A, T, C, G. (Adenine, Thymine, Cytosine, Guanine.) The pattern of these determines each gene. Now, A on one strand is always bonded to T on the other, and C to G.



A barrier, usually a geographical one, can divide a single species into two populations. Over time, changes occur in the genes so that the sequence of bases in the D.N.A. differs for each population. When significant differences accumulate, the populations can no longer breed with each other, and they have thus become two distinct species.

The extent of difference between the D.N.A. of two species is a measure of how closely they are related.

There are 2 000 000 000 pairs of these bases in the D.N.A. of birds. The matching is done by the following experiment.

Boiling breaks the bonds between the two strands of D.N.A. A single strand from one species is placed with a single strand from a different species, and the mixture is cooled.

Where A is opposite T and C opposite G, bonding occurs. The fewer changes there have been in the sequence, the more bonds can result.

Now, the mixture is reheated. If few bonds were able ^{to} form, the strands come apart at a low temperature. If many bonds formed, it will require a higher temperature to separate the strands. So, the temperature is an indication of how similar the D.N.A. is in each species.

This method is a more accurate way of showing relationships between the birds than a comparison of their anatomy.

Keith Treschman

Adapted from "Reconstructing Bird Phylogeny by Comparing D.N.A.'s" by C.Sibley and J.Ahlquist in Scientific American, February 1986.

NOVEMBER OUTING: This will be held on Sunday, 27th November in the Helidon Hills area. Please meet at the Helidon Picnic Ground at 7.30 a.m. Leader Ann Shore.

CHRISTMAS BREAK UP PARTY: On Sunday, 4th December we will gather at the Toowoomba University Centre, Range St. at 12 noon for a bar-b-que lunch (B.Y.O. food). A swimming pool is available so bring your bathers. After lunch, we will do some birding in the extensive grounds. Contact Ann Shore for more information. All welcome.

NEW MEMBERS: A cordial welcome to a new member Barbara Wilson and to a rejoined member Bob Weiss. We hope your association with us is a long and happy one with rewarding birding.

CALENDARS: We have a number of R.A.O.U. calendars available now, price \$9.00. These contain many beautiful bird photographs, are good value and make ideal Christmas gifts for sending overseas. Contact Ann Shore, Shorelands, Withcott, M.S. 224 Toowoomba, Qld 4352 or please phone 076 303207.



The Red-necked Phalarope - photo B.Weller

"What's this strange pale dotterel, Pat?"
I asked as we met on the dam wall of the lagoon.
A quick check with his telescope.

"It couldn't be a Phalarope?" was his answer.
He looked at each other with that fanatical
gleam that twitchers get. We started a fast
trot to get closer to the bird.

"Is this a MEGATICK?" inquired John mildly.

"This (splutter, splutter), this is a cosmic
mind-f*****!!!"

So started the eventful morning when the
Red-necked Phalarope was seen, identified,
ticked, re-ticked, photographed, and well
and truly admired. I remember so well that

first heart stopping moment when the "probable-possible" game became a definite sighting. When, with much page flicking, we had narrowed it down to the Red-necked Phalarope.

Initially we were so careful, so worried we'd frighten it. We'd take two steps, then watch it, take two steps more

The most exciting time for me was when Pat had gone to buy some film and we were left with instructions to keep an eye on it. The day was getting warm by now so John and I sat on the grass at the lagoon edge. The Phalarope came picking its way towards us until it was about one and a half metres away. We just sat and watched as it busied itself feeding either in the mud or by swimming in the shallows.

This bird has now passed into the annals of our Club with countless birdos from all over south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales coming to see it. For those still unsure of all the fuss, this is the second sighting (unofficial) of this bird in Queensland. It breeds in the Arctic, and is not often seen further south than New Guinea, and very rarely seen in Australia. Certainly a bird worth ticking.

P.S. It was last seen round about 29.10.88.

Lesley Beaton

Thank you Lesley for this interesting article on a very rare sighting indeed. In the next Newsletter Pat McConnell will give a report on the more technical details of the Red-necked Phalarope.

Editor

PRESIDENTS REPORT

1988 has been a very difficult but most successful year for the Club.

Most successful in the sense that two major projects were carried out; very difficult because of the committee work these entailed.

PROJECT 1: Incorporation of the Club. This has been the dominant thrust for 1988. There was a large amount of paper work involved, but it is very satisfying to see those three letters, INC, after our name.

PROJECT 2: Waterbird Habitat Information Board. Over \$900 was raised through grants, donations and the Bird-a-thon to build the information board. With the help of the Westbrook Training Centre the support structure is now standing in the Habitat. The illustrations and perspex are still to be finalized in the near future.

The Club continues to be involved with publicity ventures such as the Hobby-n-Craft Spectacular, Bird Week displays, etc., and we are well-known in birding circles in particular, and Toowoomba and district is far more aware of us.

Four new birds have been added to the Club list since the last A.G.M.; Lesser Golden Plover, Lewin's Rail, Whimbrel, Red-necked Phalarope. This makes 259 for the local study area. What will no. 260 be ?

Our membership remains fairly static, we gain a few, we lose a few. Luckily we have so many members who support us even though most of their contact is through the newsletter.

The library is not used as often as we would like. Newer members should take advantage of the books, magazines and newsletters that are available. We receive regular newsletters from seven organizations, as well as Australian "Wildlife" and British "Birds" magazines.

The significant concern at the moment is the growing costs of running the Club with the dwindling resources. However, the Toowoomba Bird Club has survived worse moments, and except for finances, I believe the Club has never looked in better shape. There are a number of very active members, more birding information is coming into the Record's Officer than at any other time, correspondence and contact with like organizations has never been better, and our voice is respected and considered on a number of relevant topics by such bodies as the Water Resources Commission, the Brisbane City Council, etc.

After seven years on the Committee, three as President, I have seen the Club grow from strength to strength. Though I look forward to taking a back seat, I know I will miss being involved with the Club's progress. I wish the incoming committee all the best for 1989 and thank sincerely the friends I have worked with over the last few years, especially the 1988 committee who have supported me and the Club so ably.

Lesley Beaton, President.

1989 SUBSCRIPTION

It was reluctantly decided at the October general meeting to raise the subscription to \$13. Much discussion was given to this decision in the hope that we could avoid it, but unfortunately it was impossible.

The printing and posting of the newsletter alone was only just covered by the previous subscription, but with the recent increase in postage this would not be so.

Incorporation also means extra costs; each year we have to pay an incorporation fee plus a public liability insurance. These two items amount to more than \$80 per year. As well, the cash book needs to be audited, and at this stage it looks as if we're unable to find an honorary auditor. This may mean an additional call on our funds.

When incorporation was first mooted everyone realized the necessity, and the cost this would entail. The welfare of the Club and its members was paramount, therefore incorporation was inevitable.

As ordinary and family memberships receive the same benefits from the Club ie. the newsletter, it was decided that the subscription would be the same.

Ordinary and Family memberships	- \$13.00
Student membership	- \$10.00

The Toowoomba Bird Club has always had strong supporting members. While funds are low many members have rallied to the cause by raising money in the Bird-a-thon, donating merchandise for us to sell, or by straight donation....

PLEASE SUPPORT THE CLUB IN 1989.