



toowoomba bird
club
inc.

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

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

Nb. 177 - October 1990

FROM THE EDITOR: Two important events for the T.B.C. will take place this month. The first is the Annual General Meeting to be held on Tuesday 23 October at the Toowoomba Education Centre, Baker Street. This will take the form of drinks and nibbles at 7.00 p.m., the meeting at 7.30 p.m. followed by a guest speaker. Neil M^cKilligan, a local renowned Ornithologist will address the club with a talk and slides on "Large Wading Birds of South-East U.S.A. - Their Biology and Current Research". This is a very informative talk and is well illustrated with colourful slides. Nominations for President, Record's Officer/Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Editor have already been received. However these positions are still open to further nominations which must be received in writing fourteen days prior to the meeting and cannot be taken from the floor on the night. As per our constitution only nominations for positions not already nominated for can be taken from the floor on the night. Nominations are still needed for the positions of Librarian and for a committee member.

The annual summer Bird-a-thon will be held on Sunday, 28 October and a sponsorship form is included with this newsletter. More information on this is contained in an article by Lesley Beaton later in this newsletter. It promises to be a fun day with a possible 150 species being sighted on the day.

A big thank-you to Lorraine Wilson and Pat Cleary for offering to organize the Hobby'n'Craft next year. Their help and original ideas are greatly appreciated.

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRD:

265. Little Woodswallow (Artamus minor). 26 August 1990.

LOCATION On Silver Ridge, 0.5 km along Silver Pinch Road (off Blanchview Road)

OBSERVERS Those present on the club's August outing. See report in last issue.
Observed for about 30 minutes at close quarters.

DETAILS A single bird was initially observed as it alighted on a dead tree on the slope below us and then took flight. Obvious features were the chocolate brown body plumage, medium grey wings and a pair of white notches in the tail tip. The lack of white leading edge in the wings when in flight distinguished it from the similar Dusky Woodswallow. Bill colour slatey blue. Noticeably smaller than a Dusky Woodswallow and quieter.

In the end about ten birds were counted. The weather was quite windy and at any one time, the majority of birds huddled in an amorphous cluster about a metre off the ground on the slanted trunk of a dead eucalypt. With the naked eye, this cluster appeared to be a scorch mark or small termite nest on the tree; its true identity only revealed with the intermittent peeling off or arrival of individuals.

Two days later, nine Little Woodswallows were counted on the ridge at the same place by Julie O'Connor and Margaret Krimmer. It will be interesting to see how long they remain and whether other groups are recorded in the area.

Based on overall distribution, the species has always been a prime candidate for the club's checklist. Therefore, its ability to escape confirmation by the club for so long has been quite a remarkable feat! But gotcha now, you little rasc....err.....wood-swallows!!!

Congratulations to all those who scored their first New Toowoomba Bird. Hope you're still glowing!

Michael Atzeni

HARBINGERS OF SPRING:

Despite sharp frosts by night and chilly winds by day, spring is early below the range at Shorelands. Magpie Larks nesting in the big Jacaranda tree; Noisy Friarbirds cackling in the Callistemons and scolding loudly as they and their smaller relatives are chased away by the Rainbow Lorikeets who are definitely at the top of the pecking order! It's the first year these gaudy birds have visited the garden and at present a pair are spending most of the day among blossoms, alternating with Scaly-breasted Lorikeets who appear when the coast is clear. Our resident Superb Blue Wren has been following his mate around bearing a brilliant yellow flower in his bill to complete the signs of spring.

Ann Shore

BREEDING SITE OF RARE BIRDS FOUND:

Ornithologists have long wondered about the location of the breeding site of Saunder's Gulls, a rare bird species threatened with extinction. The mystery was solved in May by a team of Chinese and British specialists and researchers from the Chinese Ministry of Forestry.

During an investigation of the estuary of the Shuangtaizi River in Liaoning Province in north-east China, they found seven nesting areas and a large group of Saunder's Gulls. The discovery proved that the species, of which just 2 000 survive worldwide, propagates in China.

Saunder's Gull (*Larus Saundersi*); which have silver grey backs, white bellies and black heads, are seen in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Viet Nam and coastal areas of southeast China, where they feed in tidal salt marshes. Little information is known about the birds even in 'Distribution of Birds in China', China's main ornithological guide. Concerning the birds breeding habits, it simply says "Little is known."

Some claims that the Gulls breed in the Soviet Union and Mongolia have not been substantiated however the birds have appeared only twice in the Soviet Union in the last hundred years and a team of experts from German Democratic Republic found no Saunder's Gulls during a survey of Mongolia fifteen years ago. Nesting sites were found in 1984 at the Yancheng Nature reserve in eastern China's Jiangsu Province and researchers found two more in the Shaungtaizi Estuar Nature Reserve last year. But where was the birds' main breeding site?

At the annual meeting between the Ministry of Forestry and the World Wildlife Fund in March this year, an agreement was reached to carry out an investigation of Saunder's Gulls in the Shuangtaizi estuary. The May 24- June 12 field trip succeeded in finding seven large nesting areas and gained valuable data concerning the birds' nests and eggs. Experts were even able to photograph chicks hatching. A preliminary study of the birds' behaviour and mating habits indicates that the gulls breed only in China. Experts plan further study of Saunder's Gulls in order to formulate effective protection measures. In addition, they are going to propose to the State Council that the birds be listed as a protected species.

Adapted from "The Beijing Review", Vol. 33 No. 31 July 30 - August 5, 1990.

Article submitted by Bill Jolly.

NEW MEMBERS:

We welcome Leonard and Jessie Rose of 28 M^CDowall Street, Newtown to the club and hope their stay with us a long and happy one with lots of good birding.

GOOMBURRA OUTING 23 SEPTEMBER 1990:

Twelve club members gathered at Goomburra on a sunny morning on what was to be a good days birding.

One long walk was the only planned activity for the day with members then filling in the rest of the time at their own pace. The track was steep and windy but passed through some very interesting and diverse habitats with nearly fifty species being seen. Highlights of the walk being Pacific Baza, Grey Goshawk, Topknot Pigeon, Glossy Black Cockatoo, Musk Lorikeet and logrunner. An Albert's Lyrebird was heard off the track, but not seen. The club also recorded a new species for the Goomburra list. This was the Snail-fattened Bowerbird. I think this was what Lesley called it - or could it have been a male Satin Bowerbird?

At about lunchtime a foot sore troupe staggered into the camping ground ready to call it a day. The day ended with a storm threatening and fifty-four species on our list.

Pat M^CConnell

1990 BIRD-A-THON (OCTOBER 28)

Within the last week winter has well and truly left us. Bird activity is building up to a frenzy; what with the summer migrants returning, and all the squabbling over territory and mates as the breeding season begins. Because of this we hold our Bird-a-thon in October.

There are three main aims of the Bird-a-thon:-

- (i) to record as many species in our coverage area as possible
- (ii) to have a great time bird-watching in the company of friendly people
- (iii) to raise money for the club

(i) Recording: This is not a competition in the Twitch-a-thon sense, but a time when club members try to cover as much of our coverage area as possible and record the number of species seen. We do not compete against each other but as a joint effort try to beat previous years' totals. Last year 152 species were recorded.

(ii) Enjoyment: We encourage as many members as possible to join in the fun. Newer members and those who are normally unable to come on our outings are especially looked for. It doesn't matter what your level of expertise is. Novices are more than welcome to join a group with an experienced leader. If you wish to participate please phone Pat M^CConnell (A/hours 352 980) or Ann Shore (303 207) before the A.G.M. so that arrangements can be made. Pat would like to hear from people who would like to be leaders for all or part of the day.

(iii) Fundraising: The money collected from sponsors of the Bird-a-thon is vital. Annual subscriptions alone do not cover the general running expenses of the club. Please support your club by collecting sponsorships and/or donations now!

General Organization: You may start when and where you please on the day - but please advise Pat of your involvement. We would prefer that you birdwatch in groups of two or more. There will be a rendezvous at 12.30 p.m. under the Jacaranda trees in the main street of Helidon. Phone Pat or Ann for any more information.

Lesley Beaton

FUTURE OUTINGS:

TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB

Sunday 28 October - Summer Bird-a-thon (See information above)

Sunday 25 November - Gatton Forestry. More details later.

MEMBER'S BIRD NOTES:

Little Eagle (pair)	19.8.90	Condamine River near St. Ruth	Ann Shore
Little Woodswallow(10)	26.8.90	Silver pinch Road	Club Outing
Sacred Ibis(90)	13.8.90	Carpendale Road	Keith Treschman
Bush Stone Curlews(nesting)	18.8.90	The Gap, Brisbane	Joe Deuble
Banded Lapwing	10.7.90	Wilsonton Airport	Lesley Beaton
Glossy Black Cockatoos(2)	16.7.90	Leslie Street near Alderley street	Marilyn Jacobs
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo(4)	17.9.90	Gilmour Court	Frank & Nancy Belcher

UNUSUAL ESCAPEE ? (17.9.90)

Ann Shore and I were bird-watching at the junction of Murphy's Creek Road and the old Toowoomba Road, Postman's Ridge when a large duck flew overhead. It had come up from the east and then landed on a hidden dam close by. We noticed that it had a bigger build than the normal ducks we see, a pale head, and white on and under the wings.

Intrigued, we tracked down the owner of the dam and received permission to view the bird at close range. (He had also noticed its arrival). When we arrived at the dam the duck was feeding vigorously in the water near the edge with some amazed Black Ducks looking on.

It certainly was a large duck, almost the size of a small goose and very much resembled a goose about the head and bill. It made some short but loud honks that were also very goose-like.

On the water, the bird was an all-over rufous colour; very much like the breast of a male Rufous Whistler.. The head was of a similar but paler colour with a button-like eye and dark bill. At the base of the neck was a thin dark ring. As the duck ruffled its wings we could see white patches with a slight flash of green.

We watched the bird feeding, swimming and honking for ten to fifteen minutes then it took off again, heading west towards the range.

Later Ann found the bird in her book of European birds - a male Ruddy Shelduck!

It is a resident of Europe, North Africa, and Asia. It breeds in Greece and around the Black Sea, and is a rare visitor to the British Isles. The most easterly extent of its range is southern China.

Lesley Beaton

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