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

No. 189 - October 1991

FROM THE EDITOR: The dry weather is continuing with more movements of birds in search of food and water. Forest Kingfishers have been sighted in the coverage area - this species is normally quite rare in our study area. There have been more reports of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos around Helidon/Iredale and I had the pleasure of Musk Lorikeets visiting the callistemon in my garden.

A new bird has been added to our Toowoomba coverage area checklist with the sighting of a White-winged Tern at Helidon Spa in late September. A full report will be given on this in the next newsletter.

Nominations have been received for most of the office bearers for the coming year; however the positions of Treasurer and Librarian are still to receive nominations. Please come to the Annual General meeting to be held on Tuesday 15 October at the Education Centre in Baker Street and hear our very special guest speaker - the Honourable Pat Comben, Minister for the Environment and Heritage.

I will not be standing for the position of editor for the next year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people who have assisted me in any way to carry out the task of producing the monthly newsletter for the past three years.

SEPTEMBER OUTING: 29 September 1991 at Coolmunda Dam, Inglewood.

"The best laid plans of mice and men.....", the time of the year was right - migration time, there is a drought on, ergo, plenty of exposed mud so - where were the waders? A few Black-winged Stilts, an occasional Black-fronted Plover but narry a sandpiper or stint to punctuate the mud banks. Still we saw some good regular residents, different from the Dip or around the Spa. No Red-winged parrots or Little Corellas there. And the seige of the Night Herons below the dam wall in the willows and eucalypts was a sight to behold; along with the red-bellied Black Snake skimming the surface, and the Great Cormorant with the Tandan impaled through the gill slits.

The drive around the dam was well worth the dust and semi-trailers for the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters and Crested shrike-tits and the Southern Whitefaces. Confiding birds are whitefaces and they didn't mind close scrutiny at all, the five of them the seven of us, eye to eye, almost - "new" species for most of us, a rare treat for all.

So what of the other seventy-nine species of the day?- there were the flocks of Whiskered Terns, many in breeding plumage, wheeling and plunging; all the comorants; all the egrets except the Intermediate; a brooding Restless flycatcher in a delicate cup over the water; Clamorous Reed-warblers, the flutey piping of Little Grassbirds

in the Juncus, Blue-faced Honeyeaters, Apostlebirds and Choughs, Red-rumped Parrots and Fan-tailed cuckoos and fifty - five more.

Lesley the moths were *Utetheisa pulchelloides* and *Cruria* sp?, the latter one being the one in Balmain colours. Names slipped me on the day. Sincerely hope I can remember them when we visit Coolmunda next year as we all decided would be a very good idea.

R.G.Hobson

ON CORELLAS: A few years ago I marvelled at the clouds of Little Corellas on the banks of the Ord river in Western Australia, never thinking that we would have our own cloud in our Mount Colliery Valley. Whereas in previous years eight corellas sighted in the area (and that was only during the last couple of years) was remarkable, this year, beginning in May the numbers quickly built up to over a 1000 birds, probably over 1500, coming in to camp in the forest along the creek. A great cacophony of noise would precede them as they approached, very late in the evening. We would dash out side to watch. Sometimes we were favoured with a great swirl of birds, turning over the house as they noisily sorted out where they were going to camp that night. It was always in the same general area and it was always quite dark before the noise diminished and small flocks ceased flying around to settle elsewhere.

Through the nights, particularly on moonlight nights, they could be heard occasionally, seemingly complaining querulously, and at the first pale daylight they were off in full flight and voice. Sometimes a few came around the house in daylight hours, and on one memorable morning there were four long bills in the top of the tree near the house. Though we were incredulous at first, we had plenty of time to observe them as they talked to Ron's longbills in the aviary. We never did find out where the main flock fed all day, though they seemed to break up into smaller flocks and head for the plain country only gathering again in the evening. Then, in early June, every one was gone.

Nancy Gooding

BIRD WATCHING TOURS AND PLACES OF ACCOMMODATION:

Every year numerous brochures arrive on these advertising forth-coming trips or places of accommodation. Most are held by the secretary. Some we advertise in the newsletter, but the majority are just kept. If you need more information on these things, please contact Ann Shore.

The latest one to arrive is from JULATTEN where the Kingfisher Caravan Park is reknowned for the many birds that frequent the nearby rainforest and other varied habitats. Don Gaydon recently had article in the newsletter describing the marvellous bird-watching he encountered while staying at the caravan park.

- Area 1. Kingfisher Park and within walking distance. Some birds are seasonal, some rare visitors. (unmarked)
- Area 2. Mt. Lewis, high level rainforest.
- Area 3. Abbatoir swamp.
- Area 4. Mt. Molloy and Southedge Lake.
- Area 5. Maryfarms and Mt. Carbine.

Accommodation to suit all budgets.

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THE SHRIKE

The piping shrike is dead! Long live the piping shrike! The exotically named official bird symbol of South Australia exists not in nature, only in legislation. The piping shrike is only a myth! In reality the badge of South Australia is a common backyard magpie. It was ornithological ignorance rather than symbolism that led to the term "piping shrike" becoming enshrined in the states heritage.

Although it was evident many years ago that there was no piping shrike, and that the term was a colonial colloquialism, the fact was ignored. In 1979, the invention became fact when the State Government passed legislation making the non-existent piping shrike the official state emblem. The story of how an ornithological arshaism became the symbol of a state has never been fully told. Some official government pamphlets on the state badge attribute it as the sole work of the leading artist of the period, Robert Craig, while others say it was initially designed by Craig but later altered by Art Gallery director Harry Pelling Gill. More recently, it has been claimed that the original design was made by young Adelaide artist Frances Jane Warhurst, and later copied. It is said she copied her design from the eagle seal of the South Australian counsel of the king of Prussia.

The nearest South Australia has to a full history of the piping shrike emblem is a paper prepared by University of Adelaide careers adviser Mr Miles Kerby. He arrived in South Australia about 20 years ago and was fascinated by the emblem. Mr Kerby's research shows that the story of the piping shrike badge began in Downing Street, London, on November 29, 1900, when the Secretary of State for Colonies, Mr Joseph Chamberlain, wrote to the Australian governor-general elect, Lord Hopetoun, pointing out that the Commonwealth of Australia, due to be proclaimed five weeks later, would require a new great seal. Following this, the piping shrike emblem was created in January 1901, when State Governor Lord Tennyson commissioned a new state badge. Within a few weeks, apparently without public consultation, it had been designed and approved and was on its way to London for the royal seal of acceptance. A modern pamphlet, published by the South Australian Government printer, which gives a brief history of the emblem says, "the original drawing was carried out by Robert Craig of the School of Arts in 1904, and a later drawing by Harry P Gill, who was the Principal of the School of Arts". A South Australian Museum information sheet says: "The artist of the State badge was Robert Craig of the School of Arts, who made the original in 1901."



The Prussian consul seal, claimed to be the basis of the modern piping shrike seal.



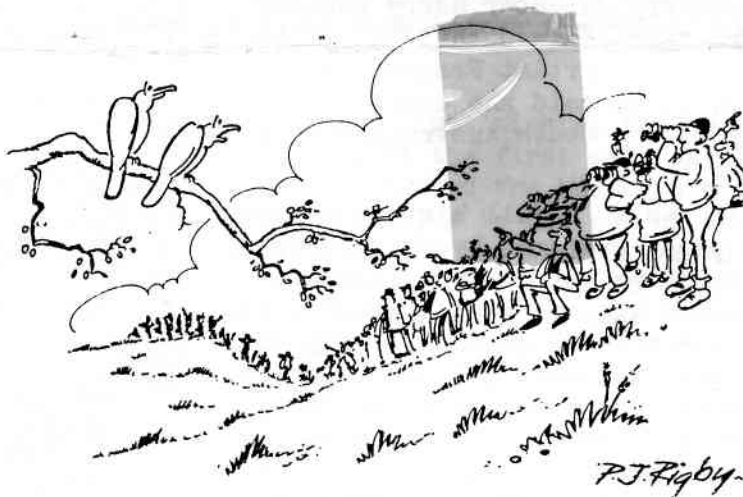
South Australia's original official seal, with the piping shrike above it. The seal is featured in a Government House window.

Born in Scotland in 1871, Robert Craig arrived in Adelaide in 1874. He taught all branches of art, including sculpture, and some of his works are now held by the Art Gallery of South Australia.

While there may be doubt about on whose work the design is based, there is no doubt about which bird the piping shrike depicts. All modern references refer to it as being the White-backed Magpie, which is common throughout south-eastern Australia. The confusion about its name came from early colonists likening it to the European shrike and its loud, distinctive call led to its being called the "piping shrike". Mr Kerby discovered this description of the piping shrike in the November, 1903, edition of the South Australian Education Department's publication, 'Children's Hour': "Among the most plentiful of the singing birds in our country are those known as the White-backed Crow-shrike or Whistling Crow-shrike, but we know them best as Australian Magpies." A South Australian Museum information leaflet describes the piping shrike as being the name given to the White-backed Magpie (*Gymnohina tibicen leuconota*), a subspecies of the Australian Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*).

FUTURE EVENTS - Toowoomba Bird Club

- Tuesday, 15 October - Annual General Meeting at Education Centre, Baker Street. Members are asked to arrive about 7.00 pm and to bring a plate. The talk by our guest speaker Pat Comben will commence about 7.30 pm.
- Sunday, 27 October Bird-a-thon. A sponsorship form is enclosed in this newsletter. Arrangements for this will be made at the A.G.M. On the day we will be meeting for lunch at Ann Shore's place, Withcott at about 12.00 noon.
- Sunday, 24 November Lockyer Wetlands. Meet at the Apex Lake, Gatton at 7.00 am. PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS OUTING VENUE HAS BEEN CHANGED DUE TO THE CONTINUING DRY WEATHER.



"1,492, 1,493. . . This people-count gets more difficult every year."

THE TOOWOOMBA BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER
Registered by Australia Post
Publication Number QBG3973

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