



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

No. 378
December 2008

To encourage the observation and study of the birds of the Toowoomba area

Editorial

By Plaxy Barratt & Nicci Thompson

In my role as co-editor (re-cycled) I expected that this editorial would be Plaxy's while I found my feet again. However, Plaxy is currently in Cairns on her way to Cape York, specifically Portland Roads and Iron Range National Park.

She is hoping her personal life list will include her 500th bird during the trip. With so many endemics in that region, at this time of year, we can look forward to an exciting report when she returns. We wish her all success and hope she reaches her target.

Did you notice that the graphics on the top of this page and the logo at the bottom have undergone a subtle change? The Black-shouldered Kite is a slimmer, fitter version of its old self, thanks to the skills of Kristy Fielder.

What of our local birds... in response to the November rains some species are making further nesting attempts especially the waterbirds. Many of the Egrets are in breeding plumage, with both the Great and Intermediates wearing their filmy breeding plumes and spectacular facial colouring. It should not be long until water birding becomes what it was before the dry years of the last decade.

Outings for 2009 have been planned and details for January and February outings are in this newsletter.

Remember these may change – sometimes at fairly short notice – because of weather or changes in the chosen venue. Check the newsletters for updates and be sure to check the forum. If unsure contact the outings leader and/or Kay, if unsure.

2008 is almost at an end. It has been a busy but productive year for TBO, We hope that 2009 will be as good for the club and for its members.

We wish you a safe and merry Christmas, and a wonderful new year with plentiful birding joy! We look forward to seeing you all again over the coming months.

2008

Challenge

216 spp as at 26/11/08



TOOWOOMBA
BIRD OBSERVERS

This Issue

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By David Duperouzel

Breakfast with the Birds
By Ross Begent

The Unleaded Petrels
By Mick Atzeni and Pat McConnell

Toowoomba to Perth
By Michael Wood

Birder in Focus:
Olive Booth
By Kay Williams

COMING EVENTS

Saturday 31st Jan 2009
Beginners' outing – new birders welcome!
Prince Henry Drive
Toowoomba
Contact: Kay Williams
(07) 4659 5475

John Gould Exhibition
Toowoomba Regional Art
Gallery (details inside)

(An affiliated member of Bird Observation and Conservation Australia)

P.O. Box 4730, Toowoomba East 4350
www.toowoombabirdobservers.org

MEMBERSHIP: Adults/Families \$22, Students \$11
(Subscriptions due 31 August)

About this time last year, towards the start of another glorious spring, and having just begun establishing the gardens at our new house, we were being visited by many of our new neighbours – **Red-rumped Parrots**, lorikeets, **Willy Wagtails**, the obligatory **Indian Mynas**, foxes (or maybe just one), cats (definitely more than one), and a strange bird behaving very strangely. I had never seen this type of bird before – a largish shape, gunmetal grey to silver in colour with a pitch black head/cheeks, and one very amusing trait. When I would see this bird, often sitting on the fence or clothesline, after just landing, it would then begin a ritual of shuffling its shoulders/wings. I observed this bird quite often over the coming weeks, and was fascinated by, what I thought at the time, its odd behaviour.

Things only then started to get odder. This bird had now started to take offence at one particular window in our house – our easterly facing kitchen window. It would fly down out of its tree, straight for our window, either flying into it at full speed, or landing on the sill and pecking, with all its might, at the offender. This behaviour continued for some weeks. I even spied it one day flying from the other side of the house, around the perimeter, arcing out, then flying full speed into the window. It hit with such force that it bounced back.

Then it proceeded to fly straight back into it, before flying away.

Concerned for the health (and mental state of this bird), I consulted my local "twitch-doctor" – Mick Atzeni. After describing the bird to him, he indicated that it was a **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** (BFCS) – a bird I had never heard of. Mick was fascinated when I related the bird's exploits. He hadn't heard of *any* bird behaving so oddly, let alone this species, which he'd never even observed at a window before.

I must confess that I approached Mick with an ulterior motive – how do I stop the bird pecking my window? I had tried shiny strips on the (internal) sill, rubber snake (on the internal sill), and of course, shooing it away whenever I saw it – what else could I try?? Unfortunately, Michael was as bewildered as I, and deferred his answer until he spoke to some others. However, before I could try any other remedies, the activity gradually declined, then ceased. During the whole time, only one bird was doing this – whether it was the same one or not, I am not sure. I only ever spied two birds together once. Shortly after, the pecking activity thankfully stopped. Or so I thought...

Some weeks ago, again near the start of spring, I again heard the ominous tapping from the window. Having forgotten about last year's experience, I was in a state of

wonderment as to what could be causing such a noise. Incredulously, there at the window, was (the same??) Mr (or Ms?) Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, pecking with such furious intent at the offender in (or on the other side of) the glass. Nearly every day since, I have seen this crazed bird furiously attacking the window. On weekends when I am home more, I have observed that there is no real particular time of day it prefers – it starts early morning (about sunrise) right through to 5:00pm.

One thing I have noticed is that it now has more competition; a new neighbour recently built a shed, and my BFCS now has another window in which to attack (this window faces NW!!) I have witnessed the bird attacking my window, then, either through being startled or by its own will, fly straight over to the shed window (some 70+ metres away) and begin attacking it. One thing I have noticed is that it appears to be living/nesting in a fairly large tree on another neighbour's property. This tree is roughly 50m from my kitchen window – basically directly opposite and about 30m from the shed window, again in a direct line from the shed.



Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Photo: Bill Jolly

I still have only thus far seen one bird, in that when the window attacking occurs, only one bird is present, and I have only seen one bird flying around. I again informed Mick of this behaviour, and he was as still as perplexed as me. This year, however, I wisened up, and managed to set-up a video camera (albeit one part of a digital still camera) to obtain some footage of this behaviour. As the camera has a limited recording span, and discovering that the BFCS has amazing vision, even through glass, it took numerous attempts to finally capture it on film – well memory card!!

Unfortunately, due to it being an exceptionally sunny day, and the camera filming from inside to out, I have only captured a silhouette of the bird – it was a bit risky to leave the camera outside. However, for at least 20 minutes (or thereabouts) I have a BFCS pecking, flying into, and peering through the window. You will notice a cat, albeit a fake one, in the window. It does appear that the bird is trying to attack it, however the cat was only placed there as a deterrent for the first time this year – as the footage demonstrates, this was a failure. The bird was conducting this behaviour for a couple of weeks before the cat was "installed", however it hasn't had any effect. The observed behaviour this year is basically the same as last year, albeit with some more competition.

I hope that you have enjoyed this tale, and are as fascinated by the actions, behaviour, and display of amazing memory ability by this little BFCS. Next year will be quite interesting....

I suspect your BFCS is a male who thinks he is protecting his breeding area from another intruding male. This behaviour is common in male Magpie-larks (Peewees) and male Superb Fairy-wrens to name a couple of common species who are similarly deluded. Ed.



As our Club outing on 6th December was the last one for 2008, we agreed to make it a 'break-up' event with our usual early morning bird walk followed by a 'Breakfast with the Birds' in Ravensbourne National Park.

The morning dawned grey and damp following some heavy rain and storms during the night. As I drove towards Ravensbourne, I was wondering what it would be like. Would the day be another complete wash out, just as it was the same time last year? Would we be fogged in? Would the leeches be coming out of the woodwork? Thankfully, the rain held off and we were able to enjoy some great birding in cool and pleasant conditions after some comparatively high temperatures during the week.

It was good to be able to welcome Margaret Krimmer and to welcome back Colin Lorback and Joe and Sue Scanlan as well.

We set out along the 1.7km Rainforest Circuit. Those familiar signature calls of the Ravensbourne rainforest dwellers welcomed us as soon as we arrived – **Grey Shrike-thrush, Green Catbird, Cicadabird, Eastern Whipbird, Lewin's Honeyeater and Brown Cuckoo-dove. Black-faced Monarchs** were in abundance and we were able to observe them nesting.

As we moved further along the track, the smaller rainforest dwellers became more apparent – **White-throated Treecreeper, Large-billed Scrubwren, White-browed Scrubwren, Grey Fantail, Rufous Fantail, and White-browed Scrubwren.**

Perhaps the highlight of the walk for many was an excellent look at a female **Paradise Riflebird**. A **Giant Earthworm** at the end of the walk added unexpected interest.

Following the walk, we all met at Gus Beutels Lookout for a barbeque breakfast with the birds. Everybody seemed to suggest that not only was the breakfast a great idea for a break-up event to wind up the years activities, but that we should find a good excuse to do it more often!

Later in the day, some members met Ernie Potts and Neil McKilligan on the upper track. They had seen **Little Shrike Thrush, Yellow-throated Scrubwren and Russet-tailed Thrush**

Thanks must go to Kevin & Kay Williams for leading the outing, and to Olive Booth for suggesting it in the first place.

Record of birds seen:

Australian Brush-turkey, Black-shouldered Kite, White-headed Pigeon, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Topknot Pigeon, Galah, Rainbow Lorikeet, Australian King-Parrot, Crimson Rosella, Eastern Koel, Channel-billed Cuckoo, Laughing Kookaburra, Sacred Kingfisher, Dollarbird, White-throated Treecreeper, Superb Fairy-wren, Red-backed Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, Large-billed Scrubwren, Yellow-throated Scrubwren, Brown Gerygone, Noisy Friarbird, Lewin's Honeyeater, Eastern Yellow Robin, Eastern Whipbird, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Little Shrike-thrush, Black-faced Monarch, Rufous Fantail, Grey Fantail, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, Cicadabird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Paradise Riflebird, Torresian Crow, Green Catbird, Regent Bowerbird, Satin Bowerbird, Mistletoebird, Welcome swallow, Silvereye, Russet-tailed Thrush.

GIANT EARTHWORMS:

The largest oligochaete (earthworm) in the world lives in Australia. It is the Gippsland Giant Earthworm *Megascolides australis* that can reach three metres in length. Other 'giant' earthworms are also found in Australia and they all belong to the genus *Digaster*. This genus of earthworms comprising 30 described species is restricted to the east coast of Australia and is well represented in south-east Queensland and north-east New South Wales. About two-thirds of the *Digaster* are found in this area. Australia's second largest earthworm after *Megascolides* is found here. It is the giant *Digaster longmani*, which can reach 1025 mm. It lives in the rainforests of Mt. Tamborine but has also been found on Stradbroke Island. The smallest *Digaster* is *Digaster minor* from the Gayndah area reaching a puny 38 mm. The Bunya Mountains has its own species *Digaster*

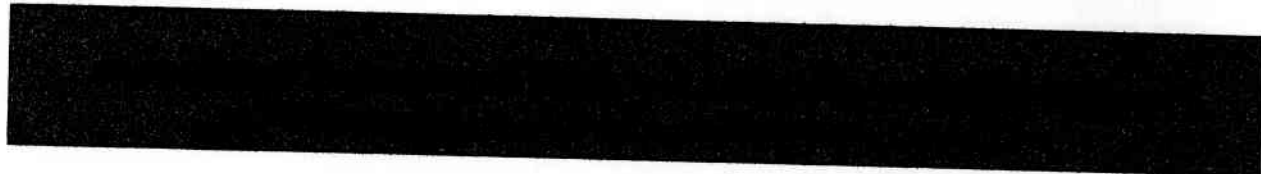


Giant Earthworm: Photo Plaxy Barratt

bradburyi bunyaensis whilst Ravensbourne is home to *Digaster keasti* (see photo and outing account). This worm grows to a fairly impressive 710 mm. It is also common around Toowoomba and occurs in the Great Sandy area including Fraser Island. Bioluminescence has been recorded in some *Digaster* species including *keasti*.

Rod Hobson

See *Native Earthworms of Australia, Megascolecidae, Megascolecinae* by B.G.M. Jamieson (2000) Science Publishers, Inc. ISBN 1-57808-161-0 if you want further information.



Life's hectic, so wouldn't it be great if your most hectic day of the year was guaranteed to be thoroughly enjoyable and productive?

For the Unleaded Petrels (ULPs) – Pat McConnell, Kath O'Donnell, Ken McKeown and Mick Atzeni – participating in the annual Birds Queensland Twitchathon is our way of ensuring our most hectic day each year is one helluva good time spent together, and all for a good cause.

This year, for the first time, teams could select any 24-hr block over the weekend whereas previously you had to all start at noon. This rule change had perceived advantages for us so, armed with a slightly modified strategy, we left Highfields around 7am Saturday with high hopes for a new team best and our eighth victory.

After sussing out the wader situation at Manly we officially kicked off at 9:20am. Thanks to some good oil from dad's reconnaissance the previous day we picked up a lone **Ruddy Turnstone** and **Pacific Golden Plovers**, as well as the usual suspects: **Eastern Curlew**, **Red-necked Stint**, **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**, **Curlew Sandpiper** and **Bar-tailed Godwit** to name a few. A single **Common Greenshank** at Manly's Rose Bay; an **Eastern Osprey** labouring with its huge catch of the day, and **Tree Martins**, both over the yacht club; **Mangrove Gerygone**, **Striated Heron**, **Little Egret** and **Collared Kingfisher** at Lota, kept the list ticking along. We dipped on **Mangrove Honeyeater** at two usually reliable Lota sites. No Lesser or Greater Sand Plovers, Red Knots and Black-tailed Godwits to be seen either.

On to Lytton and Fisherman's Island for Red-necked Avocet and Chestnut Teal. May have seen some **Nutmeg Mannikins** flying opposite the treatment plant but didn't get a good enough look. We picked up **Brahminy Kite**, and eventually a **Mangrove Honeyeater** after wasting more time than was warranted on

this species instead of cutting our losses. Also added a few waterbirds including **Black Swan** and **Hardhead**, but nothing we didn't record later in the Lockyer Valley, so there's a query now as to whether 'waterbirding' in Brisbane is best use of time in future.

We left Brisbane behind with 75 species under the belt. A lunch stop at BP Blacksoil that proved costly in retrospect, with a slow-moving, fast-food queue, and no new birds to compensate for what became a rather protracted lunch stop. We won't do that again!

Next target was the Lockyer Valley wetlands. Just the one **Channel-billed Cuckoo** all day was seen at Plainlands; likewise, for the **White-winged Triller** at Minden. Lake Galletly, had its usual **Pink-eared Ducks** and **Maggie Geese**, but also produced a bonus in a **Black-faced Monarch** in the garden shrubbery next to the bird hide: a very unlikely place for this species. We were to dip on it later in Redwood Park, so it was the bird of the day and as it didn't call, well done Kath for picking it up! Lake Freeman yielded **Wandering Whistling-Duck** and a pair of **Latham's Snipe** but the **Freckled Duck** that had



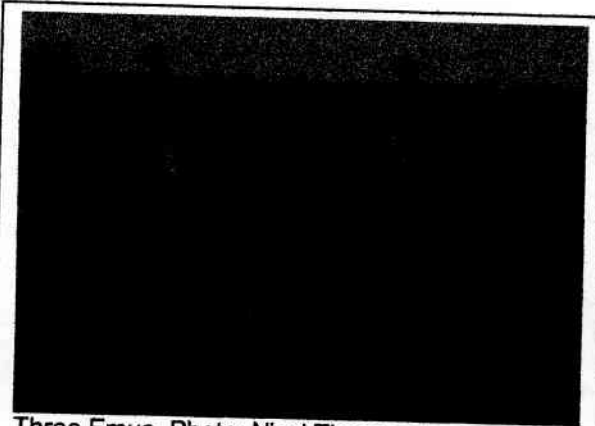
Pink-eared Ducks on Lake Galletly
Photo: Nicci Thompson

been at Lake Apex was a no-show.

Our earlier dalliances left us too little time to do Redwood Park, Prince Henry Heights and Highfields Falls adequately. It became a mad rush and, consequently, we missed several species we were expecting including **Brush Turkey**, **White-headed Pigeon**, **Barred Cuckoo-shrike**, **Regent** and **Satin Bowerbird**, and **Red-browed Finch**. As night fell, we knew 200+ species was going to be too hard. Even 190 looked pretty unlikely after doing the sums over dinner at the Highfields Tavern that night.

With 140-odd species under the belt, the ULPs were on the road at 2.30am, minus Mick who had already committed to the TBO's October census that day. We picked up two **Barn Owls** for our efforts on the drive to Mosquito Creek Road near Coolmunda Dam. We arrived at 4.30am and once it became light enough we were quickly onto a **Squatter Pigeon** perched several metres up a tree which we thought quite unusual. At least two more were calling.

A bit further on, a small dam turned up **Yellow-billed** and **Royal Spoonbills**, **Great Cormorant**, **Eastern Great Egret**, **White-necked** and **White-faced Herons**, and **Glossy** and **Straw-necked Ibis**. Further along were **White-winged Fairy-wrens**. Blue Bonnets were common in the area. Then on to Coolmunda Dam which was teeming with birdlife. We saw a flock of over 200 **Great Crested Grebes**, lots of **Whiskered**



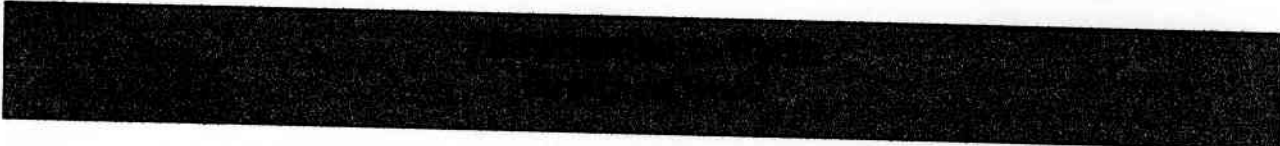
Three Emus Photo: Nicci Thompson

Terns, Musk Duck and an Australian Hobby. Next stop was the Cement Mills area where we picked up **Brown Treecreeper, Diamond Firetail, Little Eagle** and three **Emu**.

Durikai State Forest was also alive with birds, due to the flowering eucalypts. Here we saw **Red-chested Button-quail** (the bird of the twitch), **Crested Shrike-tit** and numerous honeyeaters including **White-eared**, but missed **Black-chinned**. Nearby we added **Red-winged Parrot**. A quick drive down Back Creek Road produced **Plum-headed Finch**, and **Nankeen Night-Heron** - Number 191 and the last addition. A relatively low total by our standards, but fortunately a winning one in the end by 8 species. (20 teams participated this year).

Biggest dip on Sunday? **White-winged Cough.** Seen five minutes after the finish!!

Thanks to our sponsors, the team raised around \$260 for bird conservation research in Queensland.



Day 1: Toowoomba, Qld -Warren, NSW

It was well after 1:00 pm by the time I left Toowoomba and started south along the Gore Highway. Initially, the plan was to visit some parks in the Riverina district of New South Wales and Victoria; specifically to go searching for the Plains Wanderer, a tough one to get at any time. Because of the late start to the day I decided against this and took a much more direct route to Adelaide via the Barrier Highway. When it became clear that it would be about time to stop driving for the day it was on the approach to Warren. As I didn't want to pull into the town itself, I decided to look for some cosy piece of roadside on the town's eastern outskirts. A nice spot beneath a pepper tree was found, where I set up camp to the sounds of an upset group of **Apostlebirds** that had decided to settle within the same tree for the night.

Day 2: Warren, NSW-Renmark, SA

After the obligatory search of the area around the camp -cup of coffee or two in hand, the short drive into Warren along the Oxley Highway was undertaken. On the eastern outskirts of Warren there is a rather nice wetland along a section of 'Bulla Bulla Creek'. I had only visited this location once before and remember it for some nice discoveries, one of them a male **Black Honeyeater**. On this occasion, I was a little surprised to find one of the initial species to put in appearance to be the **Common Blackbird** -to my reckoning an extremely northerly record. Shortly afterwards, as I was approaching the picnic area, a couple of excellent views of at least four **Spotted Bowerbirds** were obtained as they fed out in the open by the road verge. I was hoping to get these!

Approximately an hour and a half was spent searching the area, with a few other nice records consisting of a small number of **Plum-headed Finch**, the **Rufous Songlark**, a handful of **Little Grassbird**, **Brown Treecreeper**, **Western Gerygone** and dozens of **Pink-eared Duck**.



Plum-headed Finch Photo: Bill Jolly

From there, it was a matter of hitting 'Nevertire' on the Barrier Highway and heading towards Nyngan and Cobar, hoping to pick up a wedgebill along the way. Then, for some reason, I had a change of heart and decided against driving further west to Wilcannia and Broken Hill and took 'Kidman Way' to the south, toying briefly with the idea of visiting Round Hill Nature Reserve near the town of Mount Hope. Big mistake – a head-wind buffeted the vehicle the entire way south, not letting-up until the stretch west was resumed at Hay. Although it wasn't quite yet dark by then, the sun was hidden behind the clouds which saved a tiresome drive directly into its light.

A fuel stop was made at Mildura, Victoria, whereupon the road to Renmark was followed. I was knackered on arrival and found a spot to sleep by the banks of the Murray River floodplain. As soon as I exited the vehicle the odd sound of a **Pallid Cuckoo** could be heard. I fell asleep immediately, only to be woken during the night by a heavy shower – they're all heavy when they wake you in the middle of such sleeps. I ignored it, feeling certain it would stop. In the end, though, it got the better of me and I madly threw everything into the back and was gone.

Day 3: Renmark-Adelaide

One of the shorter stretches for the entire trip, much of the initial part of this journey was undertaken in the hours just before dawn. The weather improved as I neared Blanchetown, a small location on the Murray and a little over an hour's drive from Adelaide. I resolved to visit a reserve which I hadn't seen for years, Brookfield Conservation Park, in the hope that I'd pick up Chestnut-crowned Babbler and some other mallee species.

Frightening off a traveller who had stopped at the park for the night, I set out amongst the wombat burrows and bluebush. I had some success during the few hours I was there, managing a couple of **Crested Bellbird**, a pair of **Red-capped Robin**, a male **Hooded Robin**, the yellow-rumped, mallee form of **Spotted Pardalote**, **Grey Currawong** and several **White-fronted Honeyeaters** and, instead of the chestnut-crowned, the **White-browed Babbler**. A pair of **Mulga Parrot** was the cherry on top of the cake on the way out.

Pleased with my input at Brookfield CP, I hit the final stretch of road past Truro – famed for its murders in the 1970s, Nuriootpa and Gawler, and the short drive from there to my dad's at Elizabeth in Adelaide.

Days 4 and 5: around Adelaide

Within Adelaide the usual avian suspects were picked up, including four **Barbary Doves**, **Musk Lorikeet**, **Rainbow Lorikeet** and **New Holland Honeyeater**. The **Little Raven** and a single **Adelaide Rosella** were among others.

Day 5: Adelaide-Kimba

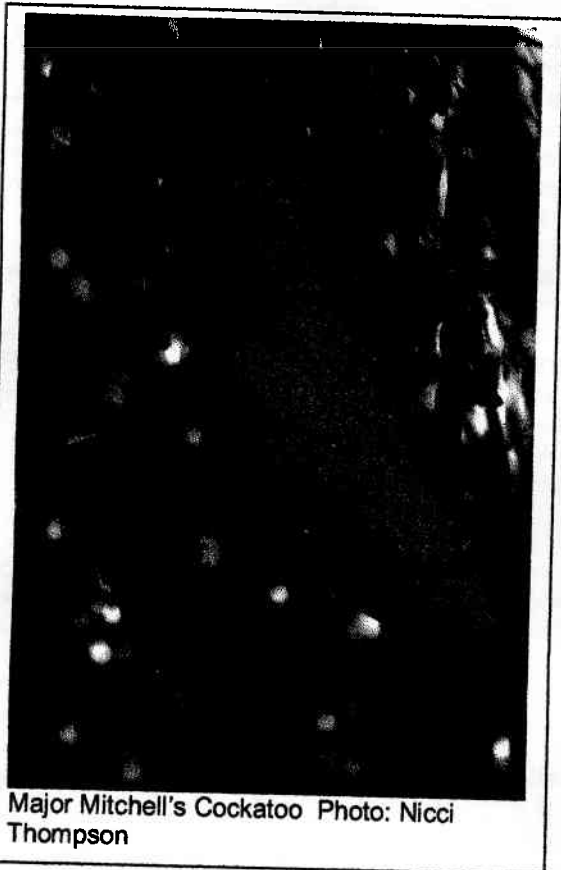
Around mid-morning I left Adelaide and headed along the highway towards the north, through towns such as Port Wakefield, Snowtown (another town known for its strange murders, this time involving body parts and barrels), Port Augusta – where the last of the **Apostlebirds** for the trip were seen- and then over the upper part of Eyre Peninsula through Kimba to a small reserve known as Caralue Bluff Conservation Reserve.

Eventually, finding a clearing to park the vehicle and camp, I rolled out the swag and took advantage of the little daylight left. Not a great deal was forthcoming. Stalking the heath for a rather musical-sounding bird, I was surprised at the end of it to find the **Inland Thornbill** - the bird's song seemingly becoming more diverse the further west I travelled. Towards dusk a **Spotted Nightjar** called and a short time later a black shape flew overhead. Then, later on in the middle of the night the raspy sounds of an **Australian Owlet-nightjar** were heard, as was, the now familiar sounds and feel of raindrops on the canvas. Once again, I had to up and leave.

Day 6: Caralue Bluff CR-Mudrabilla, WA

The next leg of the trip was probably the most interesting of all. Past Ceduna and the small town of Penong, the price of fuel became exorbitant – over \$2 at a number of locations. Worse still, the birds dropped off dramatically. I stopped at a lookout where the highway met the "Bight" and almost got blown off my legs. I recall taking one step and my leg being blown sideways, to a spot where I hadn't planned to place it. Not

brave enough to walk right up to the cliff-face because of the intense wind, I only a short time there, after which a group of **White-winged Fairy-wren** were seen.



Major Mitchell's Cockatoo Photo: Nicci Thompson

A little further on along the Eyre Highway I was both surprised and delighted to see four **Major Mitchell's Cockatoos** perched warily upon a vantage point within the heath (according to the only guide used on the trip the species is not found in this particular area).

Later in the day the WA border was crossed and the first thing that became noticeable was the distinct lack of birds. Putting together my WA bird list was agonisingly slow, much of the region appearing as though it were in hibernation and recovering from a dry period.

A roadside stop was found and I prepared for a "good night's sleep", something which was well-and-truly overdue. A walk beforehand was undertaken, whereupon the few species recorded were the **Yellow-throated Miner** and **Maggie-lark**. Very bleak!!!

Day 7: Mudrabilla- Goldfields Woodlands NP., nr. Coolgardie

Unsettled by the isolation and falling rain in the early hours of the morning, I had to quickly pack and move on once again. This is the section of the trip I had been dreading; driving at night with kangaroos jumping out of the darkness at every unguarded moment (I'm glad to say not a single animal was hit during the trip, a goal I was determined to achieve). Fortunately, there were only a few occasions when I had to hit the brakes to avoid roos, mostly big males for some reason -maybe the only ones stupid enough to be in that situation.

It was still dark when I made it to another roadside stop a short distance east of 'Balladonia' and enjoyed a few hours of wonderful sleep before waking a little late. The surrounding woodland, what there was of it, invited as I enjoyed a few of the morning's awakers. Very little was seen or heard, however, so it wasn't long before I was on my way again.

West of Coolgardie, where there seemed to be a wide load b-double stacked constantly behind me, a spot was found to spend the afternoon and evening birding and a place to rest within the Goldfields Woodlands National Park. The habitats in this area had become much more woody and healthy-looking, accounting for increased numbers of birds. A couple of the better records of birds to be found here were **Gilbert's Whistler**, **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** everywhere, **Chestnut-rumped Thornbill** and what was probably a couple of calling Southern Scrub-robins -identity unable to be confirmed.

Day 8: Goldfields Woodlands NP., nr. Coolgardie-Kwolynine CR, nr. Wundowie

On the morning of this day I set about exploring the mixed mallee woodland of Goldfields Woodlands NP., where the state's famed wildflowers began to put in an appearance. Here it was that a **Black-eared Cuckoo** showed well; unlike the eastern birds it appeared much paler on the breast overall and was almost completely white. (Only my fourth confirmed record and the first instance of two within a year.)

A couple of stops were made along the final stages into Perth. One included a stop in the wheat belt to set the scope up on some **Little Corella**, which I hoped would turn out to be the Long-billed Corella. Alas, though, after much manoeuvring, they belonged to the nominate race. Another stop was undertaken in a town called 'Kerreberin', where the first of what would be many **Laughing Turtle-doves** was seen. Another stop was made at a small salt lake further on where there were two **Australian Shelducks** and a couple of **Red-capped Plovers** which made me think of their close relative the Hooded Plover. Another nice record through these parts was of a **White-backed Swallow** over a cutting (surprise, surprise!) near Lanswood.

By about midday I found myself at Northam, approximately 90km east of Perth. I was on the lookout for somewhere to stay – I wasn't quite prepared to drive into Perth proper and tackle the metropolis just yet. Speaking to friends had been limited, so I waited around in the town for a phonecall. In the meantime, I kept myself occupied by walking along the banks of the Avon River. It was as I was doing so, walking along a suspension bridge, that some young boys began to rock the bridge. Not being a sea-going soul, I felt each and every rock and roll and began to lose my land-legs. Then, the same boys stopped in the middle of the bridge and asked me whether I was looking for birds. "Yes!" They pointed me in the direction of a bridge upstream, where earlier they had seen some swans. I immediately asked what colour and they enlivened my spirits by saying "white". Ten minutes later I was at the spot they mentioned and looking through my glasses at two **Mute Swans**. Others recorded along the river were **Black-winged Stilt**, an **Eastern Great Egret**, tons of **Brown Honeyeaters**, **Singing Honeyeater** and **New Holland Honeyeater** - a stranger mix of honeyeaters I could not have imagined. (It may be the first time I've encountered these three species together – every city or town seems to have its surprises.)

Towards dusk I decided to drive out of Northam and search for a reserve called Kwolynine Nature Reserve, a short distance south of Wundowie. It was dark by the time I eventually made it there.

Day 9: onwards Kwolynine NR-Perth

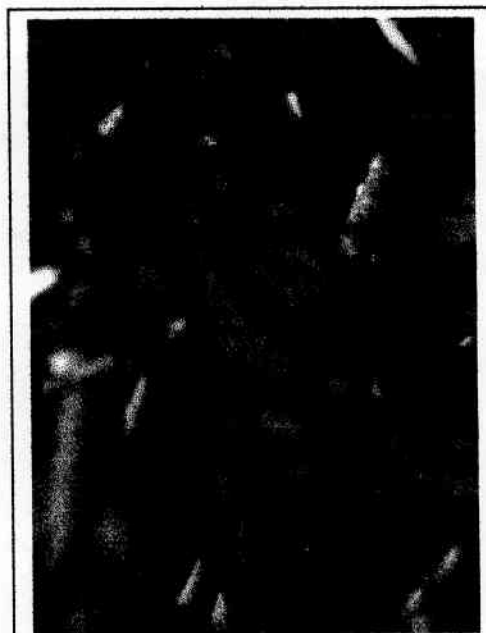
Up early next morning to the sounds of a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**; a walk was taken along the dirt road I had come in on the previous night. Almost immediate success was had in the form of a **White-cheeked Honeyeater** and, just as I was about to turn around and take the track into the woodland which was being bathed in more and more light, I heard a sound similar to the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, except they weren't supposed to occur here. Fortunately, they had perched in some trees lining the road up ahead, so I went off in pursuit. Moments later a small group of **Carnaby's Black-cockatoo** were being observed. Their overall size and paler, smaller bill giving their identity away.

Once on the track through the woodland there was more reason for excitement when a rather strange, brown falcon-like call was heard. When I caught up with the birds they proved to be **Red-capped Parrot**, just about each and every one of them either females or immatures. Then, to top the visit off, a female **Scarlet Robin**, a male **White-winged Triller** and the rather nice find of a **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater** in a small patch of heath were all located, making it all but the Crescent Honeyeater of the *Phylidonyris* genus seen during the trip.

The final drive into Perth was a breeze; it's how all such approaches to cities should be. And for the first time during the entire trip I could feel an intense pleasure and excitement - I had been beginning to wonder what was wrong with me? Thus far, the city had lived-up to all the praise that had been heaped upon it. I found somewhere temporary to stay, a hugely expensive caravan park in the suburbs north of Perth.

In the next few days I did very little birdwatching, apart from around the cabin. Strange to say that during those two days I regularly heard a Little Wattlebird-like call around the park and only decided to chase it up on the second day and was rewarded soon after by really nice views of a **Western Wattlebird**.

Since my arrival I have only made a single attempt to visit any reserves, and that was one just a few hundred metres away called 'Lake Goollelal', in the suburb of Kingsley. It was a wonderful-looking wetland, but strangely did not have the birdlife one might expect. I had to work hard for birds here, in the end coming away with sightings of an immature **Swamp Harrier**, an **Australian Hobby** tearing apart a dragon-fly, a **Brown Goshawk**, a rather rufous-coloured **Southern Boobook** being reproached by a couple of **Grey Butcherbirds**, **Australian Darter**, a male **Blue-billed Duck**, a couple of **Musk Ducks** and two **Shining Bronze-cuckoos**.



New Holland Honeyeater Photo: Nicci Thompson

Hi Olive, how long have you been interested in birds? "Nearly all my life."

How did you get started? "Going with my Dad, when he went into the bush to fell trees."

How did you find info about the T. B.O. club?
"The T.B.O. Stand at the Craft and Hobby Show, at the showgrounds in 1990."

When did you join? "July/August 1990"

Why did you join this club? "To gain knowledge on identifying birds"

Are you a lone birder in a family of non – birders? "No, most of my siblings are birders"

What are the reactions of friends and family with your birding activities? "Nothing negative, all good."

What is the best or worst thing about birding?
"All good, would do more if I could."

When or where would you like to go birding next? "Ravensbourne National Park."

Where are some of your favourite birding spots?
"Lake Apex and National Parks"

Olive when did you realise you were hooked on bird watching? "When I saw a Red-backed Fairy-wren on the first outing I went on with the club."

What is on top of places to go birding, Australia or Overseas somewhere? "Australia"

Do you constantly write lists? "Yes every outing and every week at home."

What is your favourite bird? "Willie Wagtail"

Describe one of your best birding experiences. "Going to Toorbul for the first time in 2004, so many new species in one outing was amazing."

What is on top of your birds to see list? "A male Lyrebird in full display"

Where is your favourite local birding area? "Prince Henry drive/Redwood Park"

Thank you very much Olive, for giving me this interview. It was great. Till next time,.



Olive Booth, participating in an outing, is a stalwart of TBO
Photo: Kay Williams

The Challenge 2008 Update

There has only been one addition to the Toowoomba Bird Observers' *Challenge 2008*. It was a big one, but the year's total stands at 216 species ...just 10 short of last year's *Challenge* total.

Species reported since the last newsletter.

Accuracy not vouched for by the TBO. Please check with the observer/s before citing.

*Rare/unusual locally

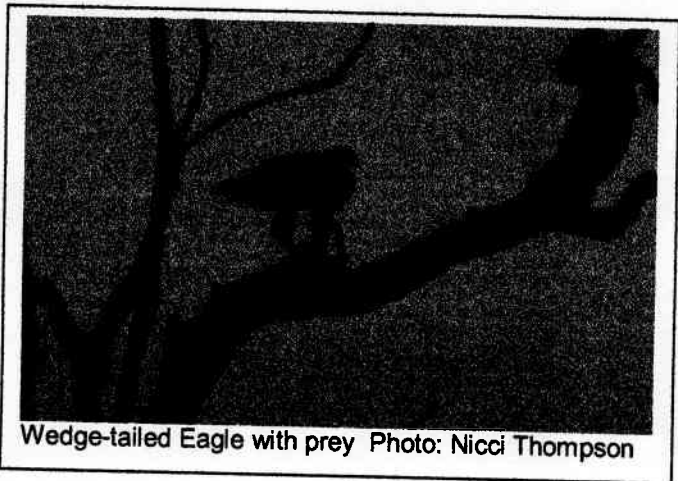
Red Goshawk* 23/11/2008 Upper Lockyer RH, MA, PB

RH – Rod Hobson, MA – Michael Atzeni, PB – Plaxy Barratt.

This photo was taken west of Meringandan. The Wedge-tailed Eagle with its prey dangling, flew across the road in front of my vehicle before landing in the dead tree.

It wasn't until I pulled off and used my binoculars that I realised what the prey really was, which sent me scrambling for my camera.

I wonder if the farmer counts his chooks when they come into roost each night. Nicci



Wedge-tailed Eagle with prey Photo: Nicci Thompson

Featuring Hand-coloured lithographic prints produced by John Gould (1804 - 1881) and his artists, chief of whom was his wife, Elizabeth Gould (nee Coxen)

Where: Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery

When: 31 Oct 08 - 22 Feb 09

With good reason, John Gould is usually regarded as the father of ornithology in Australia. Of his eighteen major works, *The Birds of Australia* (seven volumes in all) is generally acknowledged as one of the greatest, if not the greatest of them. It depicts, using the 'new technique' of lithographic prints which were then hand coloured all the 681 bird varieties then known in Australia - many of them first recorded by Gould himself.

**Saturday 31st January 2009
Beginners' outing – new birders
welcome!**

Meet: 7.00am at Katoomba Point, Prince
Henry Drive, Toowoomba
Leader: Kay Williams
Contact: Kay Williams
(07) 4659 5475

Second Saturday of each month
Black-breasted Button-quail survey
'Birdwood Park', Gowrie Junction area
Contact Mick Atzeni (07) 4688 1318

Sunday: 22nd February, 2009
Lockyer/Murphys Ck area
Leader: Michael Atzeni
Details in next Newsletter.

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