

# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

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

No. 397  
August, 2010

## Editorial

Steve Burke

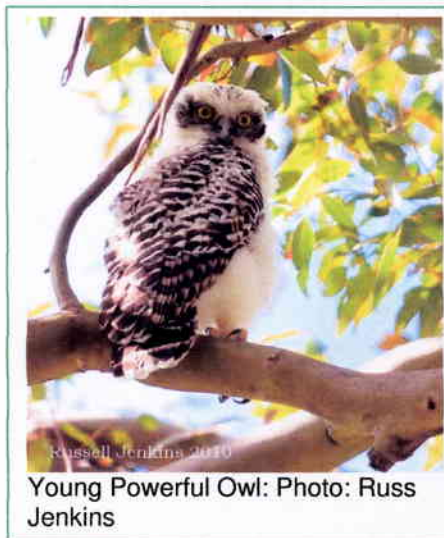
If you have been logging onto the Club website you may have noticed that there is a nesting pair of Powerful Owls at Highfields Falls again this year - some great photos appear in this newsletter. When I was out there recently I noticed that the Toowoomba Regional Council has reconstructed all of the steps at the creek crossings and levelled out the walking tracks. Well done TRC!! There was also a pair of Grey Goshawks flying together above the falls but I dipped on the Crested Shrike-tits....again. There was a large adult Koala in a tree along the track as well.

When I arrived at Highfields Falls I noticed Kevin and Kay Williams' car at the car-park and soon found them on the track. It got me to thinking on the social aspect of birding and on the likelihood that bird-watching (outside of family functions) for a lot of us is one of the only times we get to mingle, joke, confide and share with others with the same interests. It may be this outlet that keeps some of us sane in an increasingly demanding, lonely and isolating world. I know for me it is not just about the birds but also the people that I meet that

makes the birding experience as enjoyable as it is.

The Club's photo library is taking shape. By the end of the year, it should be in a fit state for our purposes. See the article in this newsletter on how to supply your photos for inclusion.

Finally, annual **subs are now due.**



**2010 Challenge:**

**208 spp**

## This Issue

Highfields Falls Outing  
*Pat McConnell*

Is it a Bird? Is it a plane?  
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Check out these websites.  
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Swift Parrots at Upper Lockyer  
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## COMING EVENTS

**August Outing**  
Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> August  
Venue: Coal Creek, Kholo  
Leader: Ken McKeown

**September Outing**  
Sat/Sun 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> Sept.  
Venue: Durikai Forest  
Leader: K & K Williams

**October Outing**  
Sat/Sun 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> Oct  
Venue: Species Census  
Leader: Mick Atzeni



TOOWOOMBA  
BIRD OBSERVERS

(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)

**July Outing – Highfields Falls 31/7/2010**  
By Pat McConnell



Spotted Pardalote. Photo: Russell Jenkins

The morning started out fine and warm (well warm for the middle of winter) as ten members gathered at the Dau Road entrance to Highfields Falls. Quite a lot of species were seen or heard from the car park even before we headed off to survey the walking tracks. A lot of work has been done by the local council in recent months and the walking tracks are once again looking good. This along with the fact that

there have been lots of interesting species seen on recent reconnoitres was a good omen for this outing.

It wasn't long before a piercing call from over head indicated the presence of a bird of prey. We all looked up to get a fleeting glimpse of a **Grey Goshawk**. This species has been a regular visitor to the falls in recent months. Lots of little birds were seen flying back and forth across the track but it was another unusual call that got everyone's attention. The birds turned out to be a pair of **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes** though only poor views were obtained.

As the group headed down to the creek **Eastern Yellow Robins**, **White-naped Honeyeaters**, **White-browed Scrubwrens** and **Grey Shrike-thrushes** were all regularly seen. **Eastern Whipbirds** were calling but were staying well hidden in the thick undergrowth. We took the side track to visit the top of the falls – this is a favourite place to see birds as they come



Powerful Owl. Photo: Russell Jenkins.



Young Powerful Owls and an adult clutching an immature brush-turkey  
Photo: Pat McConnell

down to the water to drink. There wasn't much activity this early in the morning but towards the middle of the day it is a great place to quietly sit and get great views of some of the harder to see species such as Striated Thornbills.

From here the group got back onto the main track and headed towards the site where a **Powerful Owl** had recently been seen. We scanned the trees hopefully and were just about to give up when hawk-eye Ernie Potts spotted an owl about 30m away. It sat there looking at us as everyone managed to get great looks. Several of the group also managed to get reasonable photos – digital cameras are a great help here. The weather now was starting to get quite miserable but we pushed on hoping to complete the walk. It wasn't long before we decided this was a bad idea and quickly headed back to the cars as wind and drizzle made things quite miserable. In all we recorded 39 species in what was a short but very enjoyable outing.

**Species list:** Grey Goshawk, Peaceful Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove, Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Musk Lorikeet, Little Lorikeet, Australian King-Parrot, Pale-headed Rosella, Powerful Owl, Laughing Kookaburra, White-throated Treecreeper, Superb Fairy-wren, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill, Lewin's Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Eastern Yellow Robin, Eastern Whipbird, Crested Shrike-tit, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Olive-backed Oriole, Figbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Torresian Crow, Double-barred Finch, Red-browed Finch and Silvereye.

## Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No it's Super-Kite!

By Jenny & Nicholas Matheson

A desire to share our experience drove me to write this (hopefully) shorter article. So I hope you find these antics as engaging as we did!

A family tradition of ours while holidaying at the Gold Coast involves spending a few hours at Tally (Tallebudgera) Creek while armed with nets, fish food and eco-aquariums. This June/July break was no different. With low tide occurring at about 4.30 pm, finishing lunch was our catalyst to become Tally bound.

However, one family tradition was broken this arvo. The family Ghurkha, carrying binnies instead of fishing equipment, went on strike! Nick had to manage his own equipment as well as catch paddle worms, hermit crabs, soldier crabs, glass fish, baby whiting, sand gobies and snails, and 'experiment' with gungy boy. Meanwhile, I could spend more time viewing the skies.

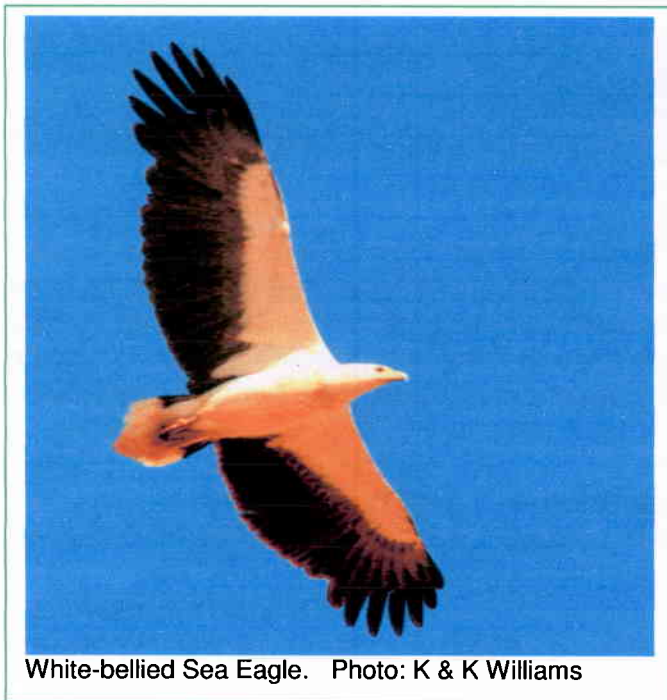


Brahminy Kite. Photo: Robert Ashdown

Well, the usual suspects kept appearing: Silver gulls, Little Pied, Pied and Little Black Cormorants, Australian Pelicans, Crested, Little and Caspian Terns, Rainbow Lorikeets and White-faced Herons. A Brahminy Kite, catching my eye, relentlessly worked its way up and down the creek, but without success.

After two hours, a turned tide and a very crisp wind fertilising goose-bumps on my bare legs, I convinced Nick that a hot dinner in a warm unit was a preferable existence. While washing sand off my feet, I noticed intense splashing in the deep waters of the opposite stretch of Tally Creek. Pointing this out to Nick effectively flicked his turbo switch. He was immediately off, running across the bridge while the family Ghurkha miraculously re-materialised.

Although laden with his treasured fishing gear, I caught up with an excitable Nick. Breathless and hyperactive, he was punching the air while explaining that there was a large school of migrating mullet below us. A motor mouth in overdrive next to my ear did not deter me from watching a dense swarm of gulls gather on the water's edge, all of which experienced unsuccessful attempts at catching a tasty morsel.



White-bellied Sea Eagle. Photo: K & K Williams

Suddenly from behind and with wing tips almost touching, a White-bellied Sea-Eagle and an Osprey flew low over the top of us, their differing colourations clearly visible. No sooner did the Osprey start a purposeful downward swoop, than it was ferociously mobbed by the gulls. Changing flight path, it quickly gained altitude and headed around Big Burleigh before veering northwards.

Intrigued, my attention turned to the Sea-Eagle which was halfway through

its descent into Tally Creek. Immediately a noisy ruckus ignited behind us as the advancing Brahminy, at lightning speed lunged at the Sea-Eagle, interrupting its descent.

A vicious dogfight ensued. Kamikaze dive bombing onto the Sea-Eagle's back, biting and full-frontal attacks were common aggressive tactics used by the Brahminy, while the Sea-Eagle regularly turned upside down grasping its opponent with its talons. Oblivious to the mullets now nearing the creek's mouth, we were mesmerised by the skills of these two fighter pilots as their violent tussle moved further out to sea. Such a vicious brawl quickly dispersed the gulls.

Suddenly, from behind Big Burleigh, the Osprey re-appeared, effortlessly and graciously plunging into the water and grabbing a squirming mullet. Offended, the Brahminy shifted its attention to the Osprey but the distance separating them was too great. Swallowing its catch the Osprey flew upstream while the fatigued Brahminy Kite could only look on.

Nick and I could not help but feel remorse for the unfortunate (but maybe stupid) Brahminy Kite. Hopefully, today learning that strategies are more successful than pure aggression, its culinary desires will be better satisfied tomorrow.

**Check out THESE websites!!**

*By Steve Burke*

I thought it was about time I made a list of some of the websites I find interesting and shared them with you. Bird watchers and nature lovers enjoy talking about wildlife, listening to the interesting stories of others, reading great stories and enjoying and sharing amazing photographs with others who can appreciate the time spent and the lengths to which you have to go to get some them.

This list is in no way exhaustive. The websites I have listed are my personal favourites and are included without favour and in no particular order.

Toowoomba Bird Observers Inc

[www.toowoombabirdobservers.org.au](http://www.toowoombabirdobservers.org.au)

Russell Jenkins Stoop Files

[www.russelljenkinsstoop.blogspot.com](http://www.russelljenkinsstoop.blogspot.com)

Abberton Birding

[www.abberton.org](http://www.abberton.org)

Sunbittern Wildlife Services

[www.sunbittern.com](http://www.sunbittern.com)

Toowoomba Bushwalkers Club

[www.toowoomba.bwq.org.au](http://www.toowoomba.bwq.org.au)

Robert Ashdown

[www.robertashdown.com](http://www.robertashdown.com)

Oz Animals

[www.ozanimals.com](http://www.ozanimals.com)

Graeme Chapman

[www.graemechapman.com.au](http://www.graemechapman.com.au)

BOCA

[www.boca.org.au](http://www.boca.org.au)

Birds in Backyards

[www.birdsinbackyards.net](http://www.birdsinbackyards.net)

If you would like to submit some web addresses for a new list in a future addition of the newsletter please feel free to do so.

**Club photo library is a step closer.**

*By Steve Burke*

With the Club photo library now coming together thanks to Joe Scanlan, the Committee invite members to supply images to the library if they wish for use in future publications and on the website, particularly the gallery. Of course this will involve significant housekeeping and you can help considerably by being selective and naming your files meaningfully. Supply your photographs on CD, DVD or a USB stick and pass on to a Committee member. Feel free to include funny or interesting photographs as well as your classics

**File Properties info:**

Include your name under the file's 'Properties' so we know who to acknowledge and for traceability purposes.

**File naming:**

Prefix files with the species name. Use lower case with no hyphens, spaces, apostrophes, etc. E.g., P109832.jpg is a picture of a White-bellied Sea-Eagle. Rename to:

whitebelliedseaeagleP109832.jpg

**Watermarks:**

This will be at your discretion and photographs will be saved as supplied.

**Gallery File Size:**

800px X 600px (for landscape) or 600px X 450px (portrait layouts) and no larger than 250kb where possible – 100kb or less is ideal.

**Friends of Lake Apex Calendar Launch.**

*By Jocelyn Wilson*

Members of Friends of Lake Apex (FOLA) would be delighted if you would join us for morning tea to launch the 2011 FOLA calendar, at Lake Apex barbecue shelter on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> September at 10am.

**RSVP 14/09/2010**

**Phone 5462 1230**

**Email [jocelynandrob@gmail.com](mailto:jocelynandrob@gmail.com)**

We are having 500 calendars professionally printed using photographs taken by local resident, Julie Reid, at Lakes Apex and Freeman and thought it would be nice to get together to celebrate this project.

## Can you help?

By Steve Burke

Can you help? Marlene Lyell, an avid bird watcher and photographer from Axedale in Victoria, is looking for a guide or birding-buddy or some information on likely birding targets around the Toowoomba region from Thursday September 9<sup>th</sup> 2010 to Saturday September 11<sup>th</sup> 2010. Available times differ on each day.

If anyone would like to offer their services as guide, mentor or advisor you can contact Marlene on the following:

Email – [lyell@iprimus.com.au](mailto:lyell@iprimus.com.au)

Mobile – 0438 984 445 Home – 03 5439 7440

## Swift Parrots at Upper Lockyer

By Michael Atzeni

**Swift Parrot** became Bird #151 for "Tiddalac" recently.

On 7 August 2010, I'd heard unfamiliar parrots - a pair (?) calling in flight - in the morning near the creek (i.e. Murphy's Creek), but was unable to locate them. Thoughts of Swift parrots and Coxen's Fig-Parrots immediately crossed my mind - always the optimist. Peach-faces, or some other exotic, too - I'm also a realist.



Swift Parrot, Upper Lockyer. Photo: Russell Jenkins

About 4:45PM, I finally got around to checking fig-parrot and Swift Parrot calls I had on my computer. Swift Parrot seemed to fit, but I still wasn't positive and resigned myself to them remaining a mystery. Then, at a whim, I decided I'd go and look for the resident platypus. It was just sheer luck that as I started off, I heard the call again and tracked down a Swift Parrot feeding in a eucalypt about 25m from the house. It and another took flight and I managed to locate one of them again feeding, before they both took off. Didn't see or hear them again from about 5pm.



From then on I recorded them almost daily each morning until 19/8, always in a very narrow time band, roughly 7-8AM, when they were active and calling.

A rarity, especially in Queensland, it was just sheer coincidence that these birds turned up on the national Swift Parrot/Regent Honeyeater winter census date, though I didn't realise that until later. I'm told mine was the only record in Queensland this time.

Personally, I hadn't seen Swift Parrots since the Glen Lomond Park birds found by Al Young in the winter of 2000. That was my first and only time until now. They are welcome at my place any time!

### Members' Bird Notes

By Pat McConnell

**MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES:** All sightings seen by, or reported to members of the Toowoomba Bird Observers. Accuracy not vouched for by the TBO. Please check with observer before citing.

Stubble Quail (Pair)	30/07/2010	Silver Pinch Rd	RH
Freckled Duck	18/07/2010	Beaudesert Racecourse	SM
Square-tailed Kite	1/08/2010	Willowbank	NM
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	22/06/2010	"Abberton" Helidon	BJ
Grey Goshawk	22/07/2010	Goomburra SF	KM, AY
Black Falcon (2)	21/07/2010	Warwick	NM
Peregrine Falcon (2)	8/07/2010	Bridge St East Tmba	NMc
Brolga	14/07/2010	Pumicestone Rd Toorbul	RH
Musk Lorikeet (300+)	27/07/2010	Tourist Rd. Tmba	RH
Swift Parrot (2)	7/08/2010	Upper Lockyer	MA
Powerful Owl	4/07/2010	Highfields Falls	K & KW
Powerful Owl*	31/07/2010	Highfields Falls	Club
Masked Owl***	6/08/2010	South of Hampton	KO
Albert's Lyrebird	22/07/2010	Goomburra SF	KM, AY
Australian Logrunner	22/07/2010	Goomburra SF	KM, AY
Red-browed Treecreeper	22/07/2010	Goomburra SF	KM, AY
Yellow-throated Scrubwren	22/07/2010	Goomburra SF	KM, AY
Scarlet Robin **	4/07/2010	Girraween NP	GM
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	*31/07/2010	Highfields Falls	Club
White-breasted Woodswallow (5)	9/07/2010	"Abberton" Helidon	BJ

\* Club Outing

\*\* Male & female seen

\*\*\* Pale coloured male – roadkill; photos taken

**MA**, M. Atzeni; **RH**, Rod Hobson; **BJ**, B. Jolly; **SM**, S. McBride; **KM**, K. McKeown; **NMc**, N. McKilligan; **GM**, G. McRae; **NM**, N. Matheson; **KO**, K. O'Donnell; **K&K W**, Kev & Kay Williams; **AY**, A. Young.

Please submit your bird notes either directly to [mccommel@usq.edu.au](mailto:mccommel@usq.edu.au) or via the Club's mailing address. Thanks, Pat McConnell, Records Officer.

## COMING CLUB EVENTS

### Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2010

**Venue:** Coal Creek, Kholo near Ipswich

**Time:** 7.30 am

**Meet:** Coal Museum car-park, take off-ramp after speed camera on highway past Blacksoil.....KEEP LEFT.

**Coordinator:** Ken McKeown

**Phone:** 0408 303 774

BYO binoculars, morning tea and chair

### Sat/Sun, 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2010

**Venue:** Durikai Forest/Coolmunda Dam

**Time:** 7.00 am

**Meet:** Karara Hotel car-park

**Leader:** Kevin & Kay Williams

**Phone:** 4659 5475 or 0429 465 954

BYO binoculars, food, chair, camping gear

### Saturday/Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2010

**Venue:** Species Census

**Time:** TBA

**Meet:** TBA

**Leader:** Mick Atzeni

**Phone:** 4688 1318 or 0458 948 955

## Committee Members

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**Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 14th September, 2010**

Please e-mail or post articles to the Secretary.

**If undeliverable return to  
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PO Box 4730, Toowoomba East Q 4350**

**Surface Mail**