

# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

No. 427  
July 2013

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

## Editorial

Mick Atzeni

This edition is unashamedly top heavy with raptor news and images as they continue to be the focus of our attention, and make the news. Whilst thousands of Black Kites have been gracing SEQ skies, around Cairns, they have started dropping out of the skies! Biosecurity Queensland is investigating the deaths. Let's hope it's only a localised problem and is resolved quickly.

There have been some recent changes on the Committee. Sadly, Paul Laurie has decided to step down as Editor. Our sincere thanks go to Paul for his quality work with the newsletter. Also, thanks to ever helpful Kylie Grose for taking over the Editor role. And we are pleased to welcome Martin Clark aboard.

Until next month, Happy Birding!



Great Egret  
Primbees  
Charles Dove photo

Great Egret  
Primbees 05/13

Photo: Charles Dove

## 2013 Challenge

Tally: 224 spp as of 25/07/13



TOOWOOMBA  
BIRD OBSERVERS

P.O. Box 4730, Toowoomba East 4350  
[www.toowoombabirdobservers.org](http://www.toowoombabirdobservers.org)

MEMBERSHIP: Adult/family \$45  
Pensioner/student \$40

## This Issue

### Brown v Black Falcon

By Paul Laurie

### Raptor Census Report

By Pat McConnell

### Bird of the Month -

### Nankeen Kestrel

Several photographers

AND MORE...

## OUTINGS

### July Outing

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July, 2013

Meet: 7:30am @ Stockyard Creek Hall

Venue: 267 Sawpit Gully Rd, Rockmount

Leader: Mick Atzeni  
0458 948 955

### August Camp-out

Fri 23<sup>rd</sup> - Mon 26<sup>th</sup>, August, 2013

Venue: "Jeslands", Jandowae  
Contact: Kay Williams

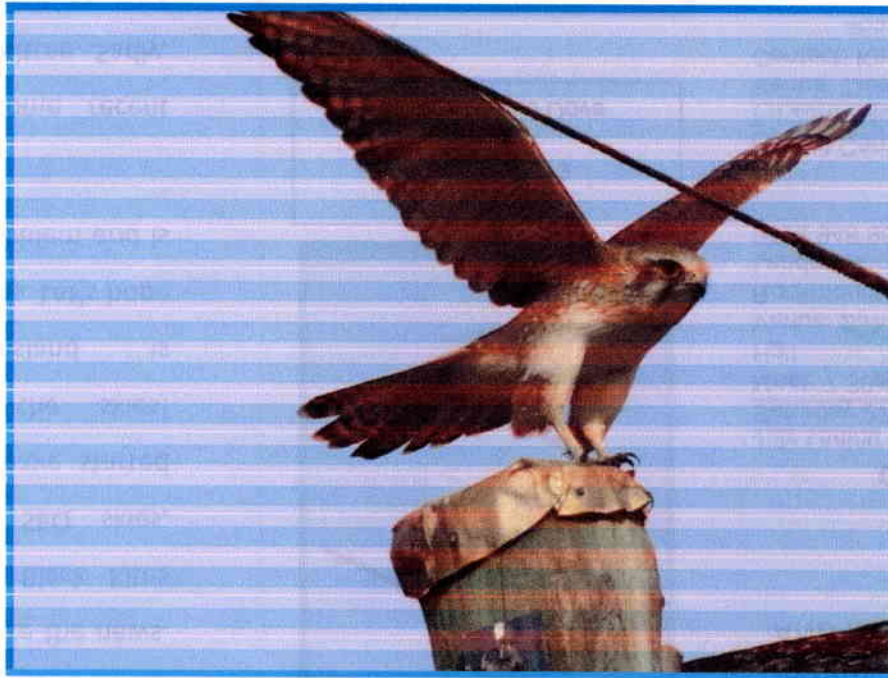
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# Feature

## **Brown Falcon vs Black Falcon**

**By: Paul Laurie**

**Brown Falcon *Falco berigora***



**Light morph Brown Falcon.**

This morph resembles a Kestrel, especially when perched. Apart from being larger, the double “tear drop” and dark “trousers” rule out a kestrel.

Photo: Pat McConnell

A medium-sized falcon (40-50 cm, span 89-109 cm) with a large head, rounded shoulders and long legs. Variable in colour, ranging from a kestrel-like buff/brown with pale underside to dusky brown, which is where the confusion with the Black Falcon arises. It looks a bit scruffy as it perches at the top of a dead tree or power pole. Sometimes it looks like it is watching an observer.

Has a characteristic, double tear drop marking on the side of the face with a pale cheek patch in the middle.

Usually has buff coloured, feathered ‘trousers’ on the upper legs.

Flapping flight is slow and heavy and it glides with upswept wings, soaring with roughly horizontal wings tending to bow slightly upwards in the middle.

Wings and tail are distinctly barred, brown/buff and off white.

**Black Falcon *Falco subniger***



**Black Falcon**  
Australia's largest falcon.  
Two-toned underwing is not always evident.  
Photo: Bill Jolly

A large falcon (45-55cm, span, 95-110 cm) with a small head, square shoulders, short legs and pointed wings. It is a fierce, sleek bird that is highly aerial.

The specific name means mostly black but the Black Falcon is actually dusky brown in colour.

'Trousers' are blackish.

Flies with short, quick wing beats that become powerful and rapid when in pursuit of prey. When soaring, the wings are almost horizontal and slightly arched.

The underside of the wing is two-toned with the flight feathers paler than the rest of the wing.

**In flight comparison**



**Brown Falcon**  
Photo: Russ Jenkins



**Black Falcon**  
Photo: Russ Jenkins

# Reports

## Raptor Census 2013

By: Pat McConnell

### Northern Section

Pat McConnell surveyed the northern section on Friday 5 July. This section was divided into four sub-sections as in previous years. These were Highfields to Cooby Dam, Cooby Dam to Goombungee, Goombungee to Cooyar and Cooyar to Highfields. The survey was done between 10.15am and 2.35pm. Nine species and 72 individual birds of prey were seen, which was three more species than in 2012, and 41 more birds. (See table below for summarised results). The weather during the survey was cool and fine and partly overcast with a south-westerly breeze. One hundred and sixty-eight kilometres were travelled. The highlights were Spotted Harrier, Grey Goshawk, Little Eagle and Black Falcon.

### Southern Section

The southern section was surveyed by Ken and Fiona Wells on Saturday 29 June from 9.30am until 12.30pm and 3.30pm until 5.30pm. They saw three species and 24 individual birds of prey which was one more species than in 2012 and four less individual birds of prey. The route they surveyed was Warwick - Freestone - Clintonvale - Upper Forest Springs - Pilton - Ascot - Cambooya - Nobby - Clifton.

### Eastern Section

The eastern section was surveyed by Mike McGoldrick, Al Young, Nicci Thompson and Doug Lyons on Sunday 30 June. They saw six species and 276 individual birds of prey which is eight less species than in 2012 but 173 more individual birds of prey. The route they surveyed was Withcott - Lockyer Siding - Helidon via Lockyer Siding Rd/Airforce Rd - Murphys Bridge (Helidon) - Grantham via Lawlers Rd - Lowes Rd Dam - Placid Hills - Adare Rd Dam & Jankes Lagoon - Lake Clarendon - Lake Galletly - Flagstone Creek Rd - Toowoomba.



**Spotted Harrier**

Bowenville-Formartin Rd, 29/6/13

Photo: Kylie Grose

### Western Section

The western section was surveyed by Olive Booth, Mick Atzeni, Ross & Margie Easton, Claire Hanney and Kylie Grose on Saturday 29 June. They saw nine species and a phenomenal 494 individual birds of prey which was one more species than in 2012, and 282 more individual birds. The route they surveyed was Toowoomba - Oakey - Jondaryan - Bowenville - Formartin - Norwin - Cecil Plains - Dalby - Kaimkillenbun - Quinalow - Oakey - Toowoomba.

**Table of Sightings for 29–30 June and 5 July 2013**

Species	N	S	E	W	Total
Black-shouldered Kite	7	4	1	40	52
Black Kite	49	12	253	248	562
Whistling Kite			9	19	28
Spotted Harrier	1			2	3
Collared Sparrowhawk				1	1
Grey Goshawk	1				1
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1		1	1	3
Little Eagle	1				1
Brown Falcon	1		5	16	22
Black Falcon	1			3	4
Nankeen Kestrel	10	8	7	164	189
<b>Total number of raptors</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>866</b>

The above table shows that 11 species were seen in 2013 which is six less species than in 2012. There were 866 individual birds of prey seen which was 492 more than in 2012. Much of this increase was due to 562 Black Kites being seen this year compared to only 54 being seen last year.

Esther Townsend surveyed Sector N1 on Sunday 30 June and saw 8 Black-shouldered Kites, 2 Black Kites, 1 Wedge-tailed Eagle and 17 Nankeen Kestrels. The group surveying the Western Sector also stopped along Hermitage Road (which is not in any of the surveyed sectors) to have a look at the Black Kites and estimated that there were over 2,000 birds present. Gayle Lee and Steve Zell also did a count of these birds over the census weekend and said that they counted about 1586 birds.

A big thank you to all involved, especially the leaders.



**Black Kites coming into roost, Hermitage Rd, Toowoomba, 29/6/13**

Photo: Kylie Grose

# Bird of the Month

**Nankeen Kestrel (Australian Kestrel) *Falco cechroides*:**

**Dimensions: 30-35 cm (tail about half); span 66-78 cm**

**Similar species: Brown Falcon (light morph)**

The Nankeen Kestrel is a solitary or loosely gregarious raptor typically seen perched on power poles and other vantage points, or hovering over paddocks in agricultural areas. It is a small falcon with rufous upperparts, boldly contrasting with black flight feathers. They have a dark-streaked, indistinct "tear drop" below the eye. Males have a pale grey head and grey tail. Juvenile birds are similar to females but are more heavily streaked above and below and more heavily barred in the tail.

The underparts are whitish-buff, more rufous on chest and flanks, with streaking on breast. The legs are yellow. A kestrel has a conspicuous black sub-terminal tail band. If you can't see the upperparts, this feature immediately separates it from any other falcon with pale underparts, e.g. Grey Falcon.

A kestrel's flight is lighter and more leisurely than other falcons, often changing direction, or stopping to hover. It soars on narrow, flat, blunt tipped wings, with its tail spread.

Kestrels are usually silent but become quite noisy during the breeding season (Aug-Dec), a shrill, sharp variable "ki-ki-ki" chattering call being uttered.

Diet consists mostly of invertebrates, particularly grasshoppers and crickets, but it also eats mice, small birds and reptiles, especially when breeding.

**Reference:** Debus, S. (2012). Birds of Prey of Australia - a Field Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. CSIRO Publishing.



**Nankeen Kestrel**

The prominent dark spotting above, and heavily streaked breast, indicate this is a juvenile.

Photo: Kev Williams



**Nankeen Kestrel**

The dark flight feathers contrasting with the otherwise rufous upperparts are evident here.

Photo: Russ Jenkins



**Nankeen Kestrel – adult male**  
The grey head and tail is a feature of adult males.  
The black sub-terminal band and white tip in tail is common to both sexes.

Photo: Gayle Lee



**Nankeen Kestrel – adult female**  
Combination of lightly streaked breast and rufous head indicates this is an adult female.

Photo: Gayle Lee



**Nankeen Kestrel – adult male**  
The grey tail makes this is an adult male. In immature male, only the rump is grey.

Photo: Gayle Lee



**Nankeen Kestrel – adult female**  
Relatively uniform rufous upperparts indicate this is an adult female.

Photo: Gayle Lee

# Photographers' Page

For all bird photographers... amateur, professional and anywhere in between, please send your favourite photos in to be published in our monthly newsletter.



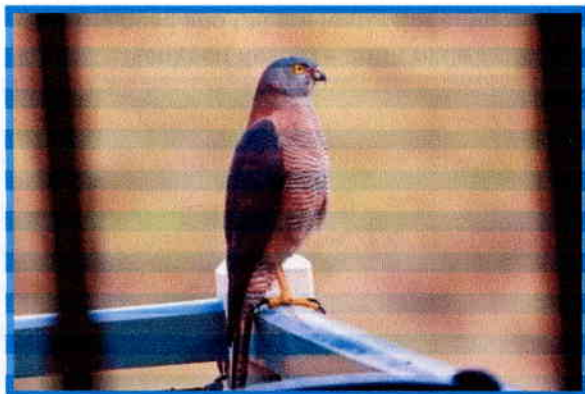
**Black Kites**  
Toowoomba, 06/13

Photo: Kylie Grose



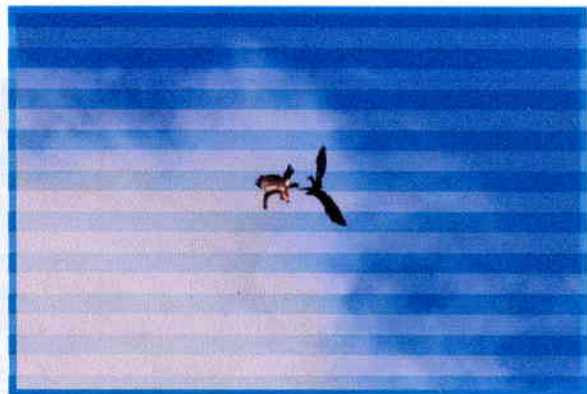
**Satin Bowerbird**  
Highfields, 05/13

Photo: Pat McConnell



**Brown Goshawk**  
"Abberton", Helidon, 08/12

Photo: Bill Jolly



**Wedge-tailed Eagles**  
"Abberton", Helidon, 08/12

Photo: Bill Jolly



# Miscellaneous

**Wanted: Photos and species recorded at Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat, Alderley St**  
Toowoomba Regional Council (TRC) Parks and Recreation Services wish to develop a permanent informative display at the Waterbird Habitat. We have agreed to assist them but firstly, we need to update the species list for there and compile a set of images that can be used as required.

Below is the list of species we have recorded there historically. If you can add to this list please supply details to the Records Officer by **15th August**. If you have any photos we can supply, please send them to Kylie Grose to catalogue by **31 August**. Please include the photographer's name in the filename so it is clear who should be acknowledged if an image is used.

Species		
Magpie Goose	Crested Pigeon	Little Friarbird
Plumed Whistling-Duck	Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Blue-faced Honeyeater
Australian Wood Duck	Glossy Black-Cockatoo	Noisy Miner
Pacific Black Duck	Galah	Brown Honeyeater
Grey Teal	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Leaden Flycatcher
Darter	Rainbow Lorikeet	Magpie-lark
Little Pied Cormorant	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	Willie Wagtail
Little Black Cormorant	Musk Lorikeet	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Great Cormorant	Little Lorikeet	Olive-backed Oriole
Australian Pelican	Crimson Rosella	Figbird
White-faced Heron	Eastern Rosella	White-browed Woodswallow
Cattle Egret	Pale-headed Rosella	Masked Woodswallow
Nankeen Night Heron	Common Koel	Pied Butcherbird
Australian White Ibis	White-throated Needletail	Australian Magpie
Straw-necked Ibis	Azure Kingfisher	Pied Currawong
Royal Spoonbill	Laughing Kookaburra	Torresian Crow
Square-tailed Kite	Forest Kingfisher	Red-browed Finch
Buff-banded Rail	Sacred Kingfisher	Mistletoebird
Purple Swamphen	Dollarbird	Welcome Swallow
Dusky Moorhen	Spotted Pardalote	Tree Martin
Eurasian Coot	Striated Pardalote	Clamorous Reed-Warbler
Latham's Snipe	Yellow Thornbill	Golden-headed Cisticola
Banded Lapwing	Red Wattlebird	Silvereye
Masked Lapwing	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Common Starling
Rock Dove	Striped Honeyeater	Common Myna
Spotted Turtle-Dove	Noisy Friarbird	

## Wyreema Sewage Treatment Ponds, Loves Road

TBO has made arrangements with Toowoomba Regional Council to access the Wyreema Sewage Treatment Plant, where there are several treatment ponds that attract a variety of waterbirds. Those wishing to visit this site must first undergo an induction at the site. TBO members Gayle Lee and Mick Atzeni have already been inducted and have been given authority to induct other members. A current list of inducted members will be maintained and given to the site manager. Once inducted, you will be given contact details for the site manager, whom you need to notify prior to each visit. To be inducted, please contact Gayle or Mick to arrange a mutually convenient time.

## Coming Events

### July Outing

Saturday 27 July

Tricia Walton's property, 267 Sawpit Gully Rd, Rockmount

**Meet:** 7:30am @ Stockyard Creek Hall, Stockyard Creek Rd. From Toowoomba, turnoff is ~12km along the Flagstone Creek Rd. Hall is about 1km from turnoff. We will visit Carol Stephen's property "Lowanna" en route to Tricia's. BYO everything including morning tea.

**Contact:** Mick Atzeni 0458 948 955

### August Outing

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> - Monday 26<sup>th</sup> August

Camp-out at Jandowae, surveying private property "Jeslands". Campers can stay at Jandowae showgrounds. Day trippers welcome to meet up over the weekend.

**Contact:** Kay Williams 4659 5475 / 0429 465 954

**AGM - Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October**

## Committee Members

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<b>Photo Librarian</b>		
<b>Committee Members</b>	Joe Allen Martin Clark	

**Deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is 15th August 2013**  
Please e-mail or post articles and photos to the Editor.

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

**Surface Mail**