



TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS

NEWSLETTER

TO ENCOURAGE THE OBSERVATION AND STUDY OF THE BIRDS IN THE TOOWOOMBA AREA

NOVEMBER 2021

EDITION 474

BIRD OF THE MONTH

IN THIS ISSUE



Plum-headed Finch

Lockyer Valley - 2021

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**TOOWOOMBA
BIRD OBSERVERS**



OUTINGS 2021

Saturday 27 th Nov	Lockyer Valley We'll visit some wetlands around Gatton. Meet up at the Floating Cafe, Grantham, at 7am, Sat 27/11.	M. Atzeni
Saturday 11 th Dec.	Breakfast With the Birds Meet at Murphys Creek Tavern carpark at 6:30 am for bird walk, followed by breakfast at Mick & Jenny Atzeni's at 7 Woden St, Murphys Creek. BYO breakfast, folding chair. Gas BBQ, tea and coffee supplied.	

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The Toowoomba Bird Observers Newsletter
Is published monthly.

**The deadline for the January Newsletter
will be the 25th January**

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2021 CHALLENGE

215 as of 24/11/2021

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President	Mick Atzeni
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Secretary	Suzanne Combes
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	Ann Alcock
Outings Co- Ordinator	Peter Everist
Records officer	Pat McConnell

A BIT FROM OUR MEMBERS

Birding at Lockyer Creek (Lockyer Siding Road)

Three birders from TBOC joined with members of the Crows Nest U3A group led by Mick in an expedition along the banks of Upper Lockyer Creek. The weather was threatening, but we were not to be deterred and set off towards our starting point. There, we were welcomed by a noisy gang of **Channel-billed Cuckoos** at least eight of them probably planning a strategy to raid some nests. **Australian Figbirds** called and a **Little Pied Cormorant** was flying up and down the creek. Little **Brown Honeyeaters** called incessantly and **Kookaburras** laughed above the chattering of the **Rainbow Lorikeets**.

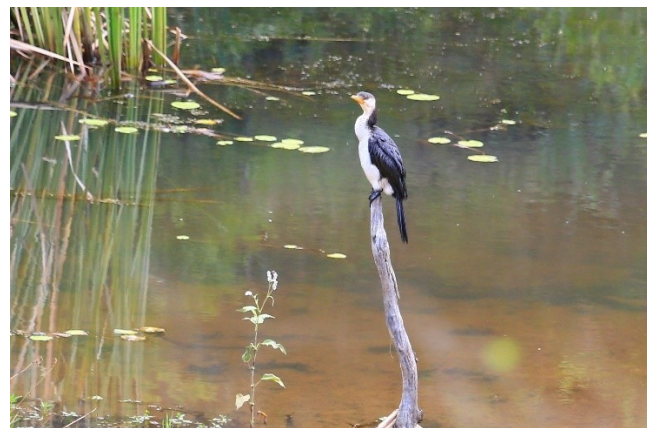
As we moved downstream, we noted **Superb** and **Red-backed Fairywrens** moving through the lantana. **Scarlet Honeyeaters** were among the bottlebrushes and a **Mistletoebird** called from above. A **Dusky Moorhen** peeped out from the reeds, a **White-throated Gerygone** called, and further off, a **Grey Shrike-thrush** called while some **Silvereyes** flittered through the undergrowth. **Whipbirds** had been calling all along, so we were not surprised to spot a young bird which flew down into a nearby thicket.

We reached the bridge with the expectation of spotting some **Plum-headed Finches**, and we were not disappointed. They were joined by **Chestnut-breasted Mannikins** and **Double-barred Finches**. **Welcome Swallows** and **Fairy Martins** hawked above the water while **Rainbow Bee-eaters** waited on branches. One sharp-eyed member of the group spotted an **Australian Reed Warbler** while an unmistakable harsh note alerted us to a **Dollarbird** perched overhead.

On our return above the creek, we disturbed an **Australasian Pipit** which lured us away from its nest while a **Golden-headed Cisticola** called from its hiding place in the long grass. Further along came the call of a **Brush Cuckoo** and then the unmistakable call of a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**. We passed a herd of cattle which was being attended by a flock of **Cattle Egrets** and back for a well-earned coffee break. Mick suggested that it was nearly 10 o'clock and that we should look out for a raptor, then as if on cue Phillipa spotted one. We all craned our eyes and finally agreed that it was a **Pacific Baza**. A fitting end to a great morning of birding, with three kilometres traversed over three hours and a total count of fifty-three species



Channel-billed Cuckoo



Little Pied Cormorant



Plum-headed Finch



Pacific Baza

Tony Bond – weekend walks

At the weekend we took a walk around two of our local spots. Saturday at Williams Park started quite heavy weather-wise and there was not much to be seen initially. But after an hour or so the greyness lifted and things started happening as the sun hit the tree tops. The last 15 minutes during our return leg was the most productive. Sunday was at Highfields Falls and it was much brighter earlier but very breezy. The tree tops swaying around made it hard to see much high up. Both locations were moderately muddy with some storm debris on the paths.

The birds we spotted were all the normal suspects for these locations.

The Red-browed Finches were just two of dozens that swarmed over the path at one time and I can say with some certainty that the one on the left is female and the one on the right is a male based on what happened immediately after I took the photo.

We've previously seen a single Powerful Owl at Highfields Falls and others have seen and photographed a family in Williams Park - just a couple of hundred metres from our house. These are probably the ones we can sometimes hear at night. But no owls were seen on this occasion.

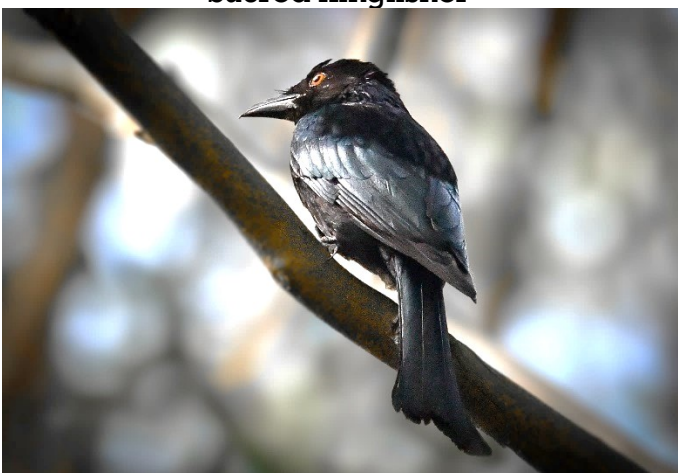
Unfortunately, the Pacific Bazas that we saw recently seem to have moved on - despite all their hard work building a nest. The remnants of the nest are still there but it looks totally abandoned and no birds were seen.



Sacred Kingfisher



White-browed Scrubwren



Koel



Olive-backed Oriole

Where did all the Honeyeaters go?

Durikai State Forest 31 October

Peter Everist

When Andy came down from Cairns, I decided that I would introduce the both of us to the famous Durikai State Forest. We had heard about the myriad species of honeyeaters and Mike had armed us with the coordinates to the famed dam where they hung out. Our arrival was greeted with a disappointing silence. A walk around the dam revealed **Blue-faced, Yellow-faced and Brown Honeyeaters**, a **Peaceful Dove** and some **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**. So down the track we drove and spread out to find **Grey Shrike-thrush**, a **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** and a pair of **Dusky Woodswallows**. At the base of a tree Andy caught sight of a little group of **Speckled Warblers** and just behind them a **Brown Treecreeper** made its way up the trunk of another tree. We moved over to investigate the call of an **Eastern Yellow Robin** and were rewarded by the sighting of a **Red-capped Robin** nearby. We were rewarded by the sighting of **Rufous Whistler, Cicadabird** and a **White-winged Triller**. We caught sight of a **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** as it landed on a branch, shuffling its wings. Moving on towards a small creek where we heard a many other wonderful species. **Weebill** and a **White-throated Gerigone**, our attention was drawn to a **Rufous Songlark**. In all we saw a total of twenty-five birds, the dearth of honeyeaters being compensated by the sighting of many other wonderful species.



Western Queensland Bird Trip – October 2021

Joe and Sue Scanlan

Sue and I recently went to Western Queensland for two weeks and saw 151 bird species.

Myall Park

Our first stay was at Myall Park near Glenmorgan. I had only recently heard about this place from a fellow TBO member. What a little gem it is! There are about 140 ha into which a wide variety of Australian natives have been planted. It is well worth a visit. Camping spots are available as well as a three-bedroom cottage at a very reasonable price. There are lots of short walks as well as a good road loop through the property.

The main flowering period was just finishing but there was still a great array of birds. A magnificent Black-necked Stork appears to be a resident of the lagoon just on the eastern edge of the property. A small pond is kept full all the time and the hide next to it proved to be a great spot for photos. I was especially pleased with the Brown-headed Honeyeater shot. There were many Spotted Bowerbirds with one male keeping very busy near the cottage. He was tending his modest bower and was using flowers during his dancing when the female was around. The pink patch at the nape is quite large during display.



Black-necked Stork



Diamond Firetail



White-eared Honeyeater



Eastern Rosella



Striated Thornbill



Weebill

Cunnamulla

Our next stay was at Cunnamulla with the Bushlands and Bowra Station being our points of interest. The mulga had set seed at the Bushlands and that attracted lots of birds. We saw Bluebonnets, Mallee Ringnecks, Mulga Parrots, Little Corellas, Galahs, Pale-headed Rosellas and cockatiels. We also saw Plum-headed Finches and White-winged Fairy-wrens.

Bowra was very special. On the drive out there, we saw a flock of several hundred cockatiels feeding on the ground. When they took off, the sight was a sight to behold. We checked in (must arrive between 7 and 9 am) and washed down our vehicle to prevent weed spread (compulsory every time a vehicle comes onto the property). Many of the roads were closed because of rain a few days before we arrived. But there was still plenty to explore along an old boredrain and at a small lagoon. The White-winged Fairy-wrens were around but never stayed still enough for long enough to get a decent shot. Splendid Fairy-wrens and Crimson Chats were present. We heard but never got to see Crested Bellbirds. Bourke's Parrots were present on both days. The Pied Honeyeater was a new species for us. We were a little surprised that there were Black-shouldered Kites around the homestead; later it made sense when one of the Bowra volunteers said they had a mouse problem. Under the eaves of the old homestead were hundreds of mud nests built by Fairy Martins. The combined weight of the nest would have been hundreds of kilograms.



One of the most interesting things we saw was interactions between Red-backed Kingfisher and Chestnut-crowned Babblers. Initially, we saw the kingfisher at the entrance of a tree hole. We could not work out if it was a nest or if it was chasing lizards for a meal. Then, a number of babblers started flying at the kingfisher. The kingfisher then flew away to a branch on the same dead tree as the hole. Again, a couple of babblers were flying at the kingfisher – it reminded me of a pesky younger brother annoying an older sibling. This kept up for about ten minutes till the kingfisher eventually flew off.

We plan to go back and explore the whole property.



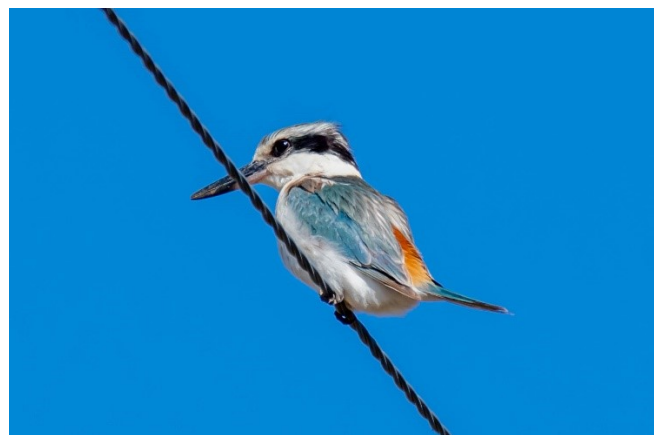
Bourke's Parrot



Crimson Chat



Mulga Parrot



Red-backed Kingfisher

Kilcowera Station (Thargomindah)

The golf course and new cemetery at Thargomindah had a number of birds. We had been told that crimson chats had been nesting there recently, but we did not see any. The most interesting birds we encountered were Black-tailed Native-hens and a sole Chirruping Wedgebill.

Kilcowera is about an hour south of Thargomindah. We stayed at the shearers' quarters and there were also powered sites there. The Cardenyabba Lagoon is a very special spot for campers. On the eastern boundary, Kilcowera adjoins Currawinya National Park with access to the saltwater Lake Wyara.







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The range of birds is great and probably rivals Bowra for variety and numbers. There were splendid fairy-wrens and variegated fairy-wrens, lots of crimson chats and we saw the orange chats at Lake Wyara. We saw a lot of Woodswallows – white-breasted, white-browed and masked. We saw a White-browed Woodswallow feeding a chick. Initially, I thought it must have been a juvenile, but now I think it might have been a young cuckoo? Another less common bird was the Australian Pratincole which was common on a dry bed of Red Rock Hole. A Major Mitchell Cockatoo was nesting near the shearers' quarters. We were lucky enough to get a shot with its crest raised.

Late one afternoon, we saw a raptor flying around. It landed near the quarters. For the next 10 minutes, the hobby made swooping passes above the quarters. It was not chasing anything in particular – perhaps it was hoping to flush something out of the trees. Even though it was around for quite some time, it was not easy to get a decent shot in the dimming light.

We plan to go to Kilcowera again.

On our way back to Toowoomba, we went to Hell Hole Gorge near Adavale. It was very hot while we were there, but we saw something quite unusual (to us anyway). We heard and then saw white-winged choughs near a big waterhole. They flew/hopped out of sight. We then heard a hollow-sounding thud-thud-thud. Couldn't work out what was happening. Then the choughs re-appeared. We then could work out and see what was going on. The choughs had a freshwater mussel and were dropping it onto rocks to break it open. Eventually they got it open and two were eating it. The mussel was probably 10cm long. I took photos but they were too far away to get a decent shot.

		
Major Mitchell	Australian Hobby	Masked Woodswallow
		
Orange Chat	Splendid Fairy-wren	White-browed Woodswallow

LINKS : for those on the internet

The eastern Australian waterbird survey is a white-knuckle flight of avian accounting | Birds | The Guardian
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/08/the-eastern-australian-waterbird-survey-is-a-white-knuckle-flight-of-avian-accounting>

The difficulty in preserving Australia's last living flamingos

Adelaide Zoo's much-loved flamingo companions were unveiled today in the SA Museum's mammal display, drawing a round of applause from onlookers. [Read the full story](#) Shared from [ABC app](#)

Bird smashes through pilot's windscreen at 300 kilometres per hour 'like a missile' - ABC News
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2021-10-26/ibis-smashes-through-pilots-windscreen-like-a-missile/100568218>

Friday Poem: 'While We Were On Twitter' by Johanna Bell - RN Breakfast - ABC Radio National
<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/friday-poem-while-we-were-on-twitter-by-johanna-bell/13628364>

Join the Glossies in the Mist network and help save the glossy black-cockatoo
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Animals-and-plants/Threatened-species/glossies-in-the-mist-flyer-180299.pdf>

New Zealand finally welcomes godwit two months after it was blown 2,000km back to Alaska | New Zealand | The Guardian
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/09/new-zealand-finally-welcomes-godwit-two-months-after-it-was-blown-2000km-back-to-alaska?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other

Hello, Scot McPhie is my name, I am the convenor for the Darling Downs local branch of Birdlife Australia.

In late 2019 through to early 2021, we conducted a series of regular surveys at sites throughout Redwood Park, many of which coincided with where the proposed mountain bike tracks would be.

We found 4 species protected under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. These are the Rufous fantail, Spectacled monarch, Black faced monarch and Black breasted button quail. Any proposed development that affects these species will require approval from the Federal Environment Minister and a report to the Federal Government submitted by the State Government of Queensland, before such a development can proceed.

We also found 23 species of birds that favour the ground and lower understory, these include doves, whipbirds, fairy wrens, scrub wrens, warblers, robins and finches.

Redwood Park also contains significant stands of Semi evergreen vine thicket, or dry rainforest, which is a listed endangered ecosystem under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

For biodiversity Redwood Park is the most critical piece of habitat along the entire escarpment at Toowoomba. Redwood Park is only 243 Ha, or 0.2% the size of Daintree National Park, but it contains 50% of the total number of bird species that the Daintree has.

Redwood Park is also well known as a refuge site in times of drought for species that normally inhabit areas much further away than our own. The greatest role that Redwood can fulfil is to serve the needs of the plants and animals that inhabit it. This is why it was first set aside as a conservation area over 100 years ago.

At the moment Redwood Park receives over 10,000 person visits per year, principally for low impact activities such as bushwalking and bird watching. There is some suggestion that mountain biking causes the same level of disturbance and impact as bushwalking. However, this is a strawman argument because the proposal before Council is not to repurpose any existing tracks for mountain biking, but to create somewhere between 20 and 30 kilometres of brand-new tracks, with all the clearing and destruction that would require.

The impact of this amount of clearing in such a small park would be severe, especially when you factor in not just the width of the tracks or the trampling by spectators, but the true size of the impact zone based on how intolerant many species are of clearing and human activities.

With over 10,000 person visits per year already in Redwood the addition of mountain biking would add a serious safety issue to the park as well. In 2014 a woman was killed in Wales when a mountain biker collided with her. This would be a very real possibility in Redwood. Growing safety concerns have meant there is now very little bushwalking occurring in Jubilee Park, because people have been effectively pushed out of it by the presence of mountain biking. This would undoubtedly be the net result in Redwood as well, especially considering the large numbers of families with young children, and older people who walk in Redwood.

In support of the mountain biking proposal the Toowoomba Regional Council cites a "community survey" on its web page (<https://www.tr.qld.gov.au/facilities-recreation/sport-recreation/walks-trails/14529-toowoomba-and-lockyer-valley-escarpment-mountain-bike-master-plan-2019-26>). However, this survey is statistically flawed and invalid because it is not based on a representative sample. The respondents in the survey were 74% male, 47% aged between 25-44 and 75% of the respondents were mountain bike riders. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Toowoomba is 48% male, with only 25% aged between 25-44. This statistically invalid survey inflates the degree of need and interest in further mountain bike tracks.

Similarly, the economic modelling in the Escarpment Mountain Bike Masterplan is inflated as well. It is stated that the proposed mountain bike expansions will bring in 75,000 new visitors a year. This is 205 people per day, over and above anyone who is already coming here for mountain biking. An estimate is made of how much they will spend, and then the total is almost doubled to suggest that the expanded tracks will bring in \$20,000,000 of economic activity per year. There is no sourcing or substantiation of these figures provided. Forgive the pun, but I think we are all being taken for a ride by these figures.

Even if the figure of 75,000 extra visits per year is true, then where is all the additional infrastructure coming from? The roads, the parking spaces, the toilets, the litter collection, the mitigation of impacts on existing

residents? The existing facilities don't do a good enough job at the moment of catering for visitor numbers on popular mountain biking days, let alone if there were an additional 75,000 visits per year.

Redwood Park is not owned by the Toowoomba Regional Council, it is owned by the State Government of Queensland, and managed by the Toowoomba Regional Council under a Deed of Grant in Trust. This DOGIT prevents any commercial development of the site. Furthermore, the State Government has signed an agreement with the International Olympic Committee to make the 2032 Olympic Games both climate positive and carbon positive. The TRC is angling the mountain bike development as a way to get Olympic activities to Toowoomba, but this would be impossible under the agreement the State Government has undertaken and the agreement the International Olympic Committee has with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, which states that Olympic games must not have a negative effect on the biodiversity of the areas in which they are hosted.

Apart from the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, the proposal also has significant State and Local Government legal hurdles, including: the Queensland Recreations Area Management Act 2006, the Queensland Biosecurity Act 2014, the Queensland Vegetation Management Act 1999, the Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992 and Section 3.4.2.1 of the Toowoomba Regional Council Planning Scheme Strategic Framework, which states:

- (1) The existing areas of ecological significance across the Toowoomba Regional Council area (approximately 31% of the Region), including endangered, of concern and least concern regional ecosystems and areas of endangered, vulnerable and rare species are retained and where possible enhanced and connected by environmental corridors.
- (2) The regions protected area estate is increased over time to better represent species conservation status that is important to the Region.
- (3) Conservation outcomes are improved and enhanced through the utilisation of voluntary nature conservation area agreements and Local Government areas of nature refuges.
- (4) A public information strategy is established to encourage community involvement in appreciating and understanding areas and species that are endangered, vulnerable and rare.
- (5) Corporate organisations are actively encouraged to participate in the conservation of endangered, vulnerable and rare species through involvement and investment in the protected area estate.
- (6) The physical condition, ecological health and environmental values of areas of ecological significance are protected, managed and where possible enhanced.
- (7) Ecosystem resilience to climate change is promoted through improved ecological connectivity across landscapes.

The Escarpment Mountain Bike Masterplan actively works against all these criteria, however the current use of the park and the activities of various groups including Friends of the Escarpment Parks, Toowoomba Bird Observers, Toowoomba Field Naturalists Club, Toowoomba Bushwalkers Club and Birdlife Southern Queensland Darling Downs Branch, all contribute to these goals.

We are fortunate in Toowoomba to have a large amount of escarpment available to the different interest groups in the town, however the activities don't mix, and different areas need to be set aside for different activities, with no group having the right to move in or takeover another area.

I understand the desire to link the mountain bike tracks to Withcott to help alleviate the economic downturn there since the opening of the second range crossing, but this can be achieved without putting any of the tracks through the most important and biodiverse habitat in the area.

As a keen cyclist myself, I want there to be mountain biking in Toowoomba, but only in appropriate areas, which Redwood clearly is not.

PLUM-HEADED FINCH

Image by Charles dove

Scientific Name: *Aidemosyne modesta*

Description:



The **plum-headed finch** (*Aidemosyne modesta*) also known as **cherry finch** is a common species of estrildid finch found in Australia.

Habitat:

It is found in dry savannah and subtropical/tropical (lowland) dry shrubland in Australia. The IUCN has classified the species as being of least concern.

General information

It is a robust bird, with a stocky, strong beak and a long tail. It measures some 15 cm long. The scientific name emphasizes the absence of the flamboyant livery typical of many Australian species, as the brown tones predominate in the plumage of this bird; the upper part of the body (nape, back, wings and tail) is in fact a deep brown colour, with a tendency to darken on the tail, while the ventral area (cheeks, throat, chest, abdomen and hips) is beige colour that turns towards white in the central part of the belly and on the undertail. The bird distinguishes for its fine zebra like colouring, which is white and present on the eyebrows, neck, chest, hips and tail, while on the remiges are two rows of white spots. The beak is black, the legs are flesh-coloured and the eyes are dark brown. In the male there are also a rust coloured bib and a frontal stain of the same colour (often with a brighter colour tending to purple red), which in the female are reduced or absent, in any case with a predominance of brown on red; they also have less dense stripes.

The female is similar to the male but lacks the male's black chin spot.

The plum-headed finch breeds mainly from September to January in the south and from August to March in the north. The nest is round, laterally compressed chamber of green grass and is built in thick bushes. Four to six pure white eggs are laid.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

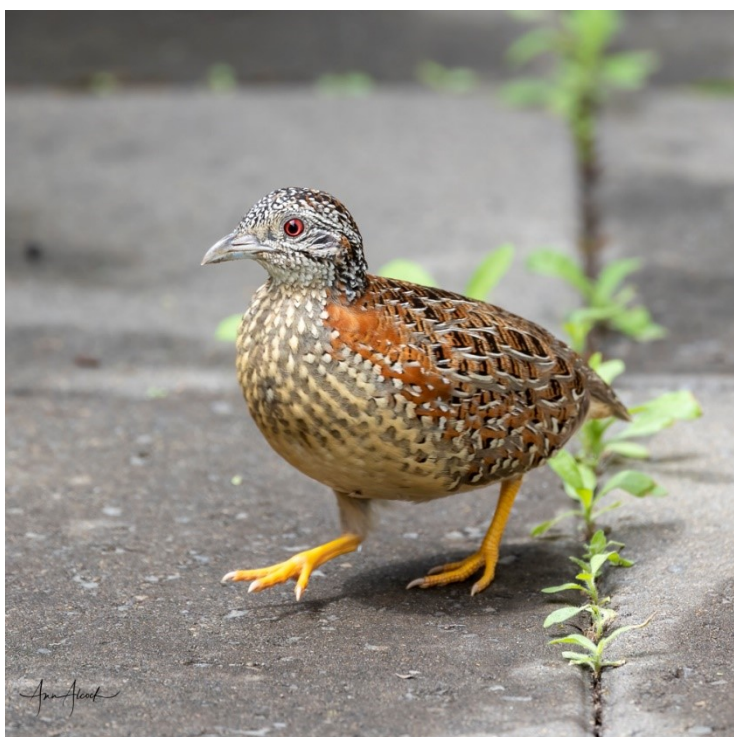
Species	Date	Location	Observer
Plumed Whistling-Duck (8)	23/10/2021	Lake Annand, Toowoomba	RH
Topknot Pigeon (8)	30/10/2021	Highfields	JS
Great Cormorant (1)	30/10/2021	West Creek Wetlands, Kearney's Spring	RH
Little Black Cormorant (5)	30/10/2021	West Creek Wetlands, Kearney's Spring	RH
Eastern Barn Owl	6/10/2021	Lake Annand, Toowoomba	RH
Eastern Barn Owl (road-kill)	21/10/2021	Gatton-Helidon Road, Grantham	RH
Masked Owl	11/10/2021	Meandarra-Talwood Road, Westmar	RH, AA, MV
Square-tailed Kite	15/10/2021	Moonie Hwy. Nandi	RH
Spotted Harrier	11/10/2021	Doctor Creek, Jondaryan	RH
Pacific Baza	29/10/2021	Highfields Falls	PM
Pallid Cuckoo	5/11/2021	Walkers Springs Reserve, Hodgson Vale	PM, KO
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	29/10/2021	Highfields Falls, Highfields	PM
Ground Cuckoo-shrike (3)	7/11/2021	Forest Road Highfields	PM, KO
Apostlebird	30/10/2021	West Creek Wetlands, Kearneys Spring	RH
Apostlebird – adults with one chick	24/11/2021	West Creek Kearneys Spring	CD
White-winged Chough (6)	30/10/2021	Wirraglen Rd. Highfields	PM, KO

AA, A. Amey; MA, M. Atzeni; CD, C. Dove; RH, R. Hobson; PM, P. McConnell; K. O'Donnell; JS, J. Scanlan; MV, M. Venez.

Annual Census – interim report. Full report to follow in next newsletter when all participants have finalised their lists.

Although some lists are still to be submitted this year's Annual Census has proven to be a great success. At least 25 members participated in this year's Annual Census and most of the sectors were surveyed. Some of the unusual species recorded were Magpie Goose, Topknot Pigeon, White-throated Nightjar, Australian Owllet-nightjar, Painted Button-quail, Little Egret, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Black falcon, Long-billed Corella, Red-winged Parrot, Eastern Rosella, Blue Bonnet, White-winged Fairy-wren, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, White-winged Chough and Brown Songlark.

Pat McConnell
Records Officer



Ann Alcock was fortunate to have a great visitor to her garden and get a great photo

Painted Button Quail