

March 2024

EDITION 499

BIRD OF THE MONTH	IN THIS ISSUE
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Barking Owl at Glen Lomond Park, May 2020

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OUTINGS & EVENTS 2024

The Toowoomba Bird Observers Newsletter
is published monthly.

**The deadline for the next Newsletter
is 23rd April 2024**

Charles powerart@bigpond.net.au

Saturday April 6th	Cooby Dam Dan Bishop 0401 135 156
Wednesday April 10th	Toowoomba Showground Charles Dove 0417 422 302
Saturday April 20th	Blanchview Drive – Blanchview Charles Dove 0417 422 302

PLEASE CONTACT THE LEADER IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND

WELCOME TO ALL OUR NEW
MEMBERS

Those needing a name badge please contact Charles Dove
powerart@bigpond.net.au

MONTHLY OUTING 1

Cooby Dam

- Date:** Saturday, 6th April 2024
- Leader:** Dan Bishop
- Meet location:** Boat Ramp. Cooby Dam
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/hdvnJOKBR1angKup9>
- Time:** 7.00 am
- Other details:** Easy grades. **Closed footwear required.** BYO morning tea.
Facilities available.
Please wear a name tag if you have one.
- RSVP:** Dan Bishop text on 0401 135 156
5pm Friday 5th April 2024 or
email me at danbishop@internode.on.net

In the event of inclement weather contact the leader.

MID-WEEK WALK

Toowoomba Showground

- Date:** Wednesday 10th April 2024
- Leaders:** Charles Dove
- Time:** 8:00 am
- Meet location:** Toowoomba Showgrounds,
Glenvale Rd, Glenvale QLD
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/R37s6LTtUn6ESir28>
- Other details:** BRING MORNING TEA
Facilities Available
- Moderate walking.** **Closed footwear required.** BYO morning tea.
- RSVP:** Charles Dove by 12:00 noon Tuesday 9th April 2024
Txt 0417 422 302 or email powerart@bigpond.net.au

In the event of inclement weather contact the leader.

MONTHLY OUTING 2

BLANCHVIEW (private property)

- Date:** Saturday, 20th April 2024
- Leader:** Charles Dove
- Meet location:** 254 Blanchview Drive, Blanchview.
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/Noq3isUD1XsscNrt6>
- Time:** 7.30 am
- Other details:** **Note:** Private Property.
Meet at the locked gate and wait for it to be opened.

Closed footwear required. BYO morning tea.
Please wear a name tag if you have one.
- RSVP:** text on 0417 422 302
By 5pm Friday 19th April 2024

In the event of inclement weather contact the leader.

CLUB REPORTS

Wednesday Walk 13 March 2024

by Howard Ward.

The Toowoomba Bird Observers March mid-week walk was located at Walkers Springs Reserve, Preston and was led by Charles Dove and Michael McGoldrick.

Eight keen members assembled on the corner of Meynink Rd and Walkers Springs Rd but not before 2 members were disappointedly led astray and pulled up outside a lovely property on Meynink road which was aptly called "Wren House."

Finally, after signing in and having a brief chat with a group of electric bike riders who had ridden from Toowoomba, one of which was an avid fan of Charles and was delighted to meet him in the flesh, we started our intended mission.



Walking north along Walkers Spring Road we could hear a variety of birds calling but no immediate sightings. It was noted how overgrown the reserve was and the internal tracks needed slashing so we remained on the road checking the bush and vegetation on each side.

A pair of Lorikeet's flew overhead heading east and were identified as Scaly-breasted.

Ahead the calls of Spangled Drongos' could be heard and fleeting glimpses of them before they disappeared into the trees to the left. Wrens could be heard and a male Superb Fairy-wren who was sitting on the barb wire fence dived into the long grass before a photo could be taken.

About half way along the eastern side of the reserve was an opening and branches and undergrowth was pushed into a pile. Charles who got there first was pointing and indicating to come over. Sitting in a small bush was a male Red-backed Fairy-wren who posed long enough for a few photos. The members had spread out and had split loosely into two groups each trying to identify the calls and small birds.

Returning back along Walker's Spring Road more Wrens, Rufous Whistler, Willie Wagtail, Peaceful Dove and Striated Thornbill were added to the list and the call of a Coucal Pheasant was noted.

Turning right into Meynick road the bird count started to grow and more sightings were recorded. I was falling behind the main group while trying to get a photo of the Drongos. I had also noticed behind some tall grass a track leading into the reserve. Stepping through the grass and about 20 meters in it opened into a clear area and to the left was a deep gully with the water course from the road. This spilled into a permanent water hole, a perfect spot to sit and watch for birds.

Over the next 10 to 15 mins Wrens, Spangled Drongos, Lewin's Honeyeaters, Scarlet Honeyeaters, Leaden Flycatcher were all seen in or near to this location.

While on Meynick Rd much to the excitement of all was a Wedge-tailed Eagle gracefully soaring overhead while a Grey Goshawk flew purposely across the sky beneath the eagle.

Returning to the cars a tally of the numbers revealed a total of 38 species recorded. What started as a quiet day turned out to be very productive.

All aboard our cars and with Michael leading we set off for Walter Brunner Park for morning tea and a short walk to Gormans Gap Viewing Platform. This drive from Walkers Springs Reserve to Gormans Gap is quite spectacular, passing beautiful acreage homes. Following ridge lines some peaks 700 meters high with deep valley views this is raptor heaven.

Michael pulled up at one location and explained that this was a viewing point that raptors could often be seen crossing the valleys below. Table Top Mountain could be seen in the distance from this point.

Morning tea at Walter Brunner Park was most welcome and set us up for the short walk to Gormans Gap viewing platform.

About 100 meters along the track to the lookout, movement in the trees caught our attention and several Little Friarbirds were observed in the trees above us. A little further and a large web crossed our path with a large female spider of the Orb family at its center. She was attended by 2 diminutive male spider's intent on stealing her catches without becoming her next meal. The love life of a male spider is a very risky business. A few minutes were spent looking and discussing spiders with some involuntary shivers down the spine of a few of the members including me.

The view from the Platform was as expected, “Amazing “Some clearing of weeds around the platform has occurred and the timber deck has been replaced and a preservative finish applied.

All in all it was a great morning, a very eventful bird observing and pleasurable informative drive.

Thanks to all who attended and special thanks to Charles and Michael.

Walkers Spring 13 th March		8 members	Total Birdcount 44
Peaceful Dove	White-throated Treecreeper	Noisy Miner	Willie Wagtail
Bar-shouldered Dove	Superb Fairy-wren	Scarlet Honeyeater	Torresian Crow
Grey Goshawk	Red-backed Fairy-wren	White-naped Honeyeater	Leaden Flycatcher
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Variegated Fairy-wren	Little Friarbird	Black-faced Monarch
Masked Lapwing	White-browed Scrubwren	Eastern Whipbird	Magpie-lark
Galah	White-throated Gerygone	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Golden-headed Cisticola
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Rufous Whistler	Welcome Swallow
Rainbow Lorikeet	Brown Thornbill	Grey Shrike-thrush	Mistletoebird
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	Spotted Pardalote	Australasian Figbird	Red-browed Finch
Australian King-Parrot	Striated Pardalote	Australian Magpie	
Pheasant Coucal	Lewin's Honeyeater	Pied Currawong	
Rainbow Bee-eater	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Spangled Drongo	

Images by Howard Ward from Walkers Spring and Gormans Gap



Brown Thornbill



Red-backed Fairy-wren – male



Peaceful Dove



Red-backed Fairy-wren – female



Leaden Flycatcher



Spangled Drongo



Lewin's Honeyeater



Rufous Whistler

LINKS OF INTEREST

Bird quiz: What species is best with faces and how did the rosella get its name?

Let's find out how well you know your backyard birds. Will you get the squawk of approval? [Read the full story](#) Shared from [ABC app](#)

Scientists, volunteers join forces to save little penguin colony in danger of dying out. Tens of thousands of tourist's flock to an island off Perth's southern coast each year to see its population of little penguins, but as numbers of the birds plummet, scientists and volunteers team up to do something about it. [Read the full story](#) Shared from [ABC app](#)

This endangered butterfly is a fussy eater, so a nursery is helping grow its food.

A Victorian plant nursery is growing a native shrub to help expand the habitat of the golden-rayed blue butterfly, found exclusively in western Victoria. [Read the full story](#) Shared from [ABC app](#)

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels - High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza has spread to Wandering Albatrosses on sub-Antarctic islands. <https://www.acap.aq/latest-news/high-pathogenicity-avian-influenza-has-spread-to-wandering-albatrosses-on-subantarctic-islands?fbclid=IwAR3k1w3B6HZXPNWVeqCGW6xA0DAZIDHIE4cHd4EQGAjYHccjASPy0jSC4zKg>

NYTimes.com: This Bird Is Half Male, Half Female, and Completely Stunning

Explore this gift article from The New York Times. You can read it for free without a subscription. This Bird Is Half Male, Half Female, and Completely Stunning. A green honeycreeper spotted on a farm in Colombia exhibits a rare biological phenomenon known as bilateral gynandromorphism.

https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/07/science/honeycreeper-birds-colombia-gynadromorph.html?unlocked_article_code=1.bU0.L5Xg.mM-9f-g9ANI8&smid=em-share

The Wonderful World of Woodpeckers.

<https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/free-preview-the-wonderful-world-of-woodpeckers/>

BIRD OF THE MONTH

BARKING OWL

Scientific Name: *Ninox connivens*

Atlas Number: 246

image by Charles Dove

text courtesy: <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/>

DESCRIPTION:

The Barking Owl is a medium-sized hawk-owl. Hawk-owls lack the definite heart-shaped face of the tyto-owls (which include the Barn Owl, *Tyto alba*). There are two subspecies of Barking Owl. *Ninox connivens connivens* occurs in eastern, south-eastern and south-western Australia and *N. connivens peninsularis* is found in northern Western Australia, the far north of Queensland and the Northern Territory. Adult Barking Owls are grey-brown above, with white spots on the wings, and whitish below, heavily streaked with grey-brown. The head is almost entirely grey-brown, and the eyes are large and yellow. Young Barking Owls have less streaking on the underparts and are mottled white and grey-brown on the rear of the neck. Barking Owls are nocturnal birds (night birds), although they may sometimes be seen hunting during the day.



SIMILAR SPECIES:

The similarly plumaged [Southern Boobook](#), *N. novaeseelandiae*, is more brown or rufous-brown, and has more spots (rather than streaks) on the underparts. The Southern Boobook is also smaller, measuring 28 to 36 cm.

DISTRIBUTION:

Barking Owls are widely distributed throughout Australia, but are absent from central areas.

HABITAT:

Barking Owls are found in open woodlands and the edges of forests, often adjacent to farmland. They are less likely to use the interior of forested habitat. They are usually found in habitats that are dominated by eucalyptus species, particularly red gum, and, in the tropics, paperbark species. They prefer woodlands and forests with a high density of large trees and particularly sites with hollows that are used by the owls as well as their prey. Roost sites are often located near waterways or wetlands.

FEEDING:

The Barking Owl feeds on a variety of small to medium-sized mammals, birds, reptiles and insects. Diet is largely insects during the non-breeding season, with larger prey more commonly taken when breeding. Prey is located either from the air or from an exposed perch. Most hunting is performed in the first few hours of the night and the last hours before dawn. Occasionally, birds may even be seen hunting in daylight. The Barking Owl prefers to hunt in clearings, including waterways and other open areas.

BREEDING:

Barking Owls raise a single brood in a season. The nest site is an open hollow in a tree trunk, loosely lined with sticks and other wood debris. The female incubates the eggs, while the male supplies the food. Young Barking Owls remain dependent on their parents for several months, and will remain in the family group until a few months before the next breeding season.

LIVING WITH US

Barking Owls have declined rapidly throughout much of their range. In Victoria it is estimated that there are only 50 pairs left. Habitat loss and degradation is a major threat to the survival of the Barking Owl. Loss of hollow-bearing trees and firewood harvesting impacts on the species by removing nesting and roost sites as well as habitat for hollow-dependent prey such as gliders, possums and parrots. Competition from feral honeybees for roost sites has been named a key threatening process for this species in NSW. Competition with foxes and feral cats, as well as predation by foxes is also thought to be a reason for their decline. Barking Owl mortality has also been recorded due to secondary agricultural poisoning, barbed wire fences and vehicle collisions.