

JANUARY 2025

EDITION 508

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Royal spoonbill



IN THIS ISSUE

Events & Outings	P2
Mid Week Outing Report	P2
Proposed Outings 2025	P4
Bird of the Month	P5
Links of Interest	P7



Website: www.tboc.org.au

Email: tboc4350@gmail.com

Postal address:

P.O. Box 4730
Toowoomba East 4350

Management Committee:

President	Mick Atzeni 0499 395 485
Vice-president	Dan Bishop 0401 235 156
Secretary	Joe Scanlan 0400 709 446
Treasurer	Ann Alcock 0418 189 760
Newsletter Editor	Kathy Bowly
Committee	Jennie and Tony Bond. Peter Everist Jarrod Kath
Records Officer	Pat McConnell 0457 422 082
Facebook Admin	Mick Atzeni, Ann Alcock Dan Bishop
Website	Dan Bishop

OUTINGS & EVENTS 2025

The Toowoomba Bird Observers Newsletter
is published monthly.

**The deadline for the next Newsletter
is 23rd February 2025**

Kathy Bowly kathryn.bowly@gmail.com

Wednesday 12 th February	Pittsworth Charles Dove 0417 422 302
February Date to be confirmed	Waders Outing Moreton Bay/Wynnum Mick Atzeni

PLEASE CONTACT THE LEADER IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND

MID-WEEK WALK - February 2025

PITTSWORTH

Date: Wednesday 12th February 2025

Leader: Charles Dove

Meet location: <https://goo.gl/maps/puRwqaabwc6uqsH78>

Meet at Rotary Park. cnr Clifton and Yandilla Sts, Pittsworth
Then proceed to Hill Street and Sewage Area ponds

Time: 8.15 am

Recommended: Please bring morning tea.

RSVP: Charles by 12:00 midday Tuesday 11th February 2025
text 0417 422 302 or email powerart@bigpond.net.au

Outing details: casual walk can be easy. There are toilet facilities at Rotary Park.

Closed footwear required.

In the event of inclement weather contact the leader.

MID WEEK WALK JANUARY 2025

West Creek, Toowoomba Mid Week Walk

Text and Photos by Tony Bond

Wednesday 8th January was the first mid-week walk of 2025 and it almost didn't start well. There had been rain and thunder overnight, with 25 mm recorded in Highfields and showers forecast for later in the morning. Fortunately, no further rain did fall and by the time 8AM arrived the day was pleasantly cool - perfect for a bit of birding along West Creek. Eight members met opposite the corner of Lemway Avenue & Marwedel Street at Kearneys Spring.

While we waited for everybody to arrive, a small flock of Little Corellas flew up and circled above with accompanying sound effects. Thirty seconds later Charles arrived asking - had anyone else seen the Black Kite? We hadn't. The Kite was a little further up the creek line from where we were, but it was obviously the cause of the Corellas' distress.

Plenty of regular West Creek residents were in evidence as we assembled - Swamp Hens, Masked Plovers, Dusky Moorhens, White Ibis and Noisy Miners. A small group of Apostlebirds hung around our meeting point in the hope of some scraps but left disappointed.

We started south, crossing Spring St adjacent the garden centre property and then along the west side of Kearneys Spring Historical Park before looping back on the east side of the water. Through the high fence of the garden centre we spotted an adult Pacific Black Duck resting on the bank with a brood of five fluffy ducklings huddled nearby.

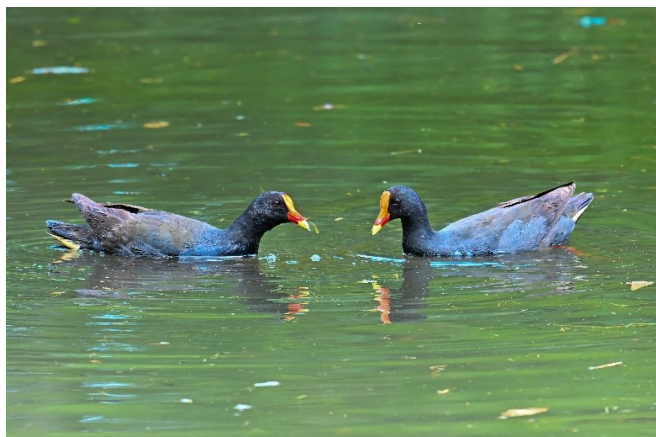


Pacific Black Duck and ducklings.

to

A solitary Grey Butcherbird flew from tree to tree next to the path. A Blue-faced Honeyeater watched us from the top of a palm.

Dusky Moorhens



On the water there were plenty of water birds: Eurasian Coots, Dusky Moorhens, Pacific Black Ducks, Wood Ducks, Australasian Grebe, and a Little Black and a Little Pied Cormorant. A Hardhead floated conveniently on a clear patch of water enabling everyone to get a good look at its muddy face.

We also spotted a group of about 20 Plumed Whistling Ducks on a far bank but, as we observed them from a distance, an unleashed dog ran into the scene. Ducks and Water Dragons alike scattered for the skies or

nearest cover - time to move to a different spot! In the thicket adjacent to Spring Street, residents of the permanent Flying Fox colony were in evidence, mostly happily resting with only an occasional creature doing a fly-around before returning to roost.

The Whistling Ducks did return to another piece of water. They executed a couple of loops to check the dog had gone before landing but they chose a hiding place behind a tall reed bed after landing.

Continuing northwards we saw Figbirds, Apostlebirds, more Ibis and some lucky folks saw a fleeting glimpse of a Buff-banded Rail as it hurried out of sight on the far bank.

Getting close to Stenner Street, we watched a full-sized battery electric garbage truck glide silently between bin locations in the park. The driver told us it was the first and only one operated by TRC and had actually been in service for 9 months. It's normally driven for up to 10 hours at a time and uses about 60% of its battery per shift - very impressive!!

In the last pool before Stenner Street, we watched Fairy Martins collecting mud from the bank and flying back and forth through a large culvert under the road. Welcome Swallows squabbled over who was allowed to perch on a sign beside the water.



Fairy Martin



Welcome Swallow

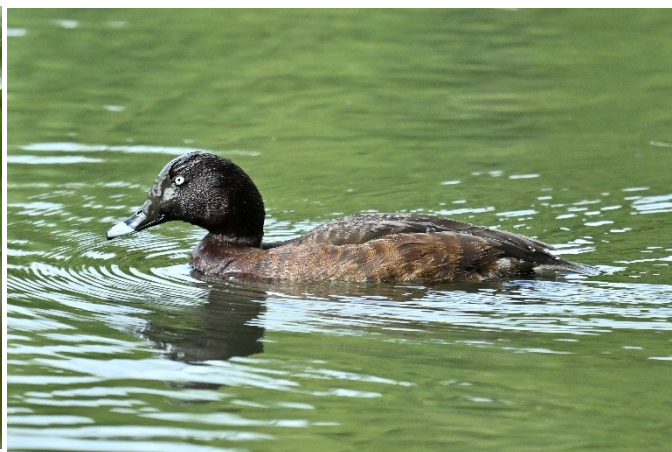
By the time we arrived at Stenner Street itself it was almost 10 o'clock, the sun had warmed things significantly and morning tea was calling. But first we split into two groups - according to thirst rating. The first group headed back to the start point for morning tea.

The second group continued on for another couple of hundred metres to a small pool with timber walkways - lured by the hope of seeing a resident Azure Kingfisher - but not today. However we were rewarded on the return leg with a pair of Tawny Frogmouths. These were the first and only ones seen despite it being one of their favourite spots.

It was a very pleasant morning. Thanks to Charles for leading the walk and for sharing his expertise and to Jennie for recording the sightings. Check the newsletter for details of the next walk.



Tawny Frogmouth



Hardhead

West Creek Bird List

Australian Brush Turkey	Eastern Cattle Egret	Little Corella	Australasian Figbird
Australasian Grebe	White-faced Heron	Rainbow Lorikeet	Australian Magpie
Australian Wood Duck	Black Kite	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Hardhead	Australasian Swamphen	Tawny Frogmouth	Grey Butcherbird
Pacific Black Duck	Buff-banded Rail	Blue-faced Honeyeater	Olive-backed Oriole
Plumed Whistling Duck	Dusky Moorhen	Noisy Friarbird	Pied Butcherbird
Australian White Ibis	Eurasian Coot	Noisy Miner	Apostlebird
Little Black Cormorant	Masked Lapwing	Magpie-lark	Fairy Martin
Little Pied Cormorant	Crested Pigeon	Willie Wagtail	Welcome Swallow

Proposed Outings 2025

Date 2025	Destination	Contact/Leader
January 8th	West Creek, Toowoomba	Charles Dove
January 25th	Ravensbourne NP	Mick Atzeni
February 12th	Pittsworth	Charles Dove
Feb (date to be confirmed)	Wader Outing - Moreton Bay/Wynnum	Mick to contact Barb Collyer
March 12th	Back Plains	Charles Dove
March 30th	Williams Park, Highfields	Tony/Jennie Bond

April 9th	Walkers Springs Reserve	Charles Dove
April 26th	Cooby Dam – Loveday Cove	Jarrod Kath
May 14th	National Park - Crows Nest	Charles Dove
May 31st	Toowoomba Showgrounds	Charles/Tony & Jennie
June 11th	Leyburn to Stonehenge Rd	Charles Dove
June 28/29th	Raptor Census	Pat McConnell
July 9th	Bowenville	Charles Dove
July 26/27th	Swift Parrot Search	Mick Atzeni
August 13th	Lake Clarendon and Lake Galletly	Charles Dove
August 30th	Redwood Park, Toowoomba	Eddie? (Mick to check)
September 17th	Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation confirmed	Charles Dove
September 27th	Jondaryan	Ann Alcock
October 8th	Murphy's Creek/ Helidon	Mick Atzeni
October 24/27th	Species Census	Pat McConnell
November 11th	East Creek - Waterbird Habitat, Toowoomba	Charles Dove
November 29th	Cooby Dam – Groomsville	Dan Bishop
December 6th	Highfields – end of year gathering	Tony & Jennie Bond
December 14th ?	Picnic Point	Charles Dove

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Text courtesy of <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net>

Royal spoonbill **Scientific Name:** *Platalea regia*

Atlas Number:

181

What does it look like?

Description:

The Royal Spoonbill is a large white waterbird with black, spatulate (spoon-shaped) bill, facial skin, legs and feet. During the breeding season, it has a distinctive nuchal (back of head or nape of neck) crest, which can be up to 20 cm long in male birds (usually shorter in females). The crest can be erected during mating displays to reveal bright pink skin underneath. Breeding adults also have a creamy-yellow wash across the lower neck and upper breast and a strip of bright pink skin along the edge of the underwings which is obvious when the bird opens its wings. The facial skin is black with a yellow patch above the eye and a red patch in the middle of the forehead, in front of the crest feathers. Females are slightly smaller with shorter legs and bill. Out of breeding season, the nuchal crests are reduced, the underwing is not bright pink and the plumage is less brilliant, often



appearing 'dirty'. Young birds are similar to non-breeding adults without a crest or coloured face patches, and are slightly smaller with a shorter, smoother bill. The Royal Spoonbill is most often seen wading in shallow waters, sweeping its submerged bill back and forth in a wide arc to find food.

Similar species:

Their large spoon-shaped bills easily distinguish spoonbills from all other water birds. Its black face, bill and legs all distinguish the Royal Spoonbill from the slightly larger Yellow-billed Spoonbill, which has a yellow bill and legs. The Royal Spoonbill also has a distinctive nuchal crest during breeding season, which is visible even in silhouette.

Where does it live?

Distribution:

The Royal Spoonbill is found throughout eastern and northern mainland Australia from the Kimberley region of Western Australia across the Top End and through Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, to south-eastern South Australia. It is only a rare visitor to Tasmania and it is not found south-west of Broome, Western Australia through to the Spencer Gulf, South Australia or in central Australia. It is also found in New Zealand, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and on some south-western Pacific islands.

Habitat:

The Royal Spoonbill is found in shallow freshwater and saltwater wetlands, intertidal mud flats and wet grasslands. Both permanent and temporary inland waters are used when available in the arid zone. They will also use artificial wetlands such as sewage lagoons, salt fields, dams and reservoirs.

Seasonal movements:

Sedentary on the coast, inland birds move with changing water availabilities.

What does it do?

Feeding:



The Royal Spoonbill feeds mainly on fish in freshwater, and on shrimps in tidal flats; it will also eat other crustaceans and aquatic insects. The structure of its bill limits it to feeding in water that is less than 40 cm deep over sand, mud or clay, where it can sweep the water with its bill. It uses several methods to catch food: slow sweeping from side to side with an open bill, rapid sweeping while walking fast or even running through the water, as well as dragging, probing or grabbing. The spatulate bill has many vibration detectors, called papillae, on the inside of the spoon, which means the bird can feel for prey items even in murky water and can feed by day or night. Once food is caught, it lifts its bill up and lets the items slide down its throat. It will bash shrimps against hard objects to remove their shells.

Breeding:

The Royal Spoonbill form monogamous pairs for the duration of the breeding season and nest in colonies alongside many other waterbirds, including Yellow-billed Spoonbills, ibises, herons and cormorants. A solid bowl-shaped nest is built of sticks and twigs lined with leaves and water plants and is usually placed in the crown of a tree over water or among high reeds and rushes. Nest sites may be reused year after year. Both sexes incubate the eggs and feed the young. When threatened at the nest, the adult birds will raise all their feathers to appear much larger and crouch down low over the nest. The young are often fed by both parents for several weeks after fledging and young birds will forage alongside their parents for some time before the family group disperses.

Living with us.

The Royal Spoonbill is not tolerant of disturbances, especially when breeding, and destruction of habitat by land-clearing, drainage, increased salinity or flooding and weed invasion are all detrimental to both feeding and breeding. However, it has benefited from artificial wetlands in some areas. In the Northern Territory, the introduced Water Buffalo threaten freshwater wetland habitats by breaking down levees and allowing salt water to flow in.

Did you know?

The Royal Spoonbill can feed faster and on larger prey than the Yellow-billed Spoonbill, as it has a shorter, broader bill with more papillae (touch receptors) inside the spoon.

Calls

Grunts, growls and soft honks. Also makes non-vocal sounds such as bill-snapping and 'wing-woofing' during aggressive displays.

LINKS OF INTEREST

Birdwatching Slang.

<https://www.weekendbirder.com/podcast/100-birdwatching-slang-with-cesar-kylie-sean-and-steph>

Do you seek a “lifer” or do you experience “dips” or perhaps you talk about “LBB’s” or “LBJ’s”. Weekend Birder celebrates its 100th episode discussing the language of birdwatching with a panel sharing anecdotes with reference to different bird slang/language that maybe used by “twitchers”.

Sanctuary for critically endangered Plains-wanderer

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-10-05/critically-endangered-plains-wanderer-protected-on-mallee-farm/104366034>

The late Victorian Mallee farmer, George Cullinan, in 2024 established a 91 hectare covenant on his property to protect the Plains-wanderer, one of Australia’s rarest birds.

Shed Snake Skin used for Bird Nest Construction to Deter Predators

<https://www.sci.news/biology/snake-skin-bird-nest-construction-13601.html>

Researchers in North America looked at the probability of survival of eggs in nests with some shed snake skin as part of the nest construction and found some definite correlations especially in cavity nests.

A Bush Stone-curlew Family

<https://www.instagram.com/friendsofthefloof/reel/DFFbRSiB7YN/>

For some Bush Stone-curlew cuteness check out friendsofthefloof Instagram account.

