

MAY 2025

EDITION 512

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<div>Wednesday</div> <div>11th June</div> <div>Leyburn to Stonehenge Rd</div> <div>Charles Dove 0417 422 302</div>			
<div>Saturday</div> <div>28th /29th June</div> <div>Raptor Census</div> <div>Pat McConnell</div>			
<div>PLEASE CONTACT THE LEADER IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND</div>			

MID-WEEK WALK - JUNE 2025

Leyburn to 3406 Stonehenge Road

Date: Wednesday June 11th 2025
Leader: Charles Dove 0417 422 302
powerart@bigpond.net.au
Time: 8am
Meet location: *Leyburn to 3406 Stonehenge Rd*



Southern Whiteface

1st stop <https://maps.app.goo.gl/fKUwZppvkuPeVpTD7>
Along Stonehenge Road <https://maps.app.goo.gl/m1ybh3vdqvg1cvGP9>

Facilities only at First Stop

Other: Please bring morning tea and picnic lunch – might need it.

RSVP: 10th June 2024

Outing details: Sunscreen and insect repellent
Facilities and BBQ available at first stop only or After Stonehenge
you can proceed to Millmerran via **Old Kooroongarra Town
Centre (Spotted Bowerbird seen here)** can go home this way after.

In the event of inclement weather contact Charles 0417 422 302.
Closed footwear required.

MONTHLY WALK - June 2025

Raptor Census

Date: 28th /29th June 2025
Co-ordinator: Pat McConnell 0457 422 082

Our annual raptor census is conducted along set routes to the north, south, east and west of Toowoomba. For those who find raptors a challenge, participating in the census is a great opportunity to improve your spotting and identifying skills of raptors.

Time: Surveys usually start around 9am and can take at least 5 hours to complete, depending on the route and number of raptors around.

Route and leader details to be confirmed. An email will be sent to members closer to the date.

MID WEEK WALK MAY 2025

Waterbird Habitat, Toowoomba 14th May 2025
Bond

Text by Tony

Thirteen keen birders met at the Mackenzie Street entrance to the Toowoomba Waterbird Habitat for the latest TBO midweek walk. No-one was put off by the grey morning and the possibility of light drizzle, which did eventuate later - though luckily not for long. Early arrivals registered the presence of two feral newcomers in the park: a Muscovy Duck and a domestic white duck. Meanwhile more normal residents were to be found around the water, mainly Pacific Black Ducks, Wood Ducks, Dusky Moorhens, Australian White Ibis, and Purple Swamphens.



Dusky Moorhen

By Tony Bond



Willie Wagtail

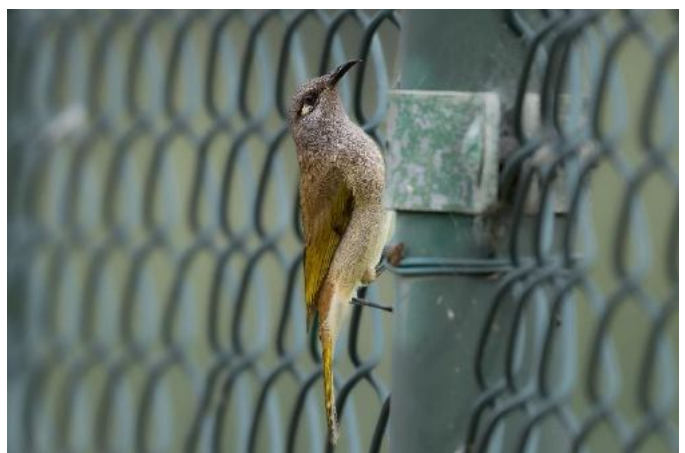
By Tony Bond

We decided to head south towards the Ballin Park section of West Creek and immediately our attention was drawn to the small pond where Reed Warblers have been recorded previously. We saw none but did notice a Willy Wagtail harassing something unidentified and well hidden in the reeds on the far side. Examination of blurry photos afterwards, and after several email discussions, better experts than I decided that the “harrassee” was not a Reed Warbler, nor a Grassbird. It was definitely a Golden-headed Cisticola.



Welcome swallow

By Lareina Hagan



Brown Honeyeater

By Tony Bond

noisily between tree tops. Looking through a wire fence opposite, a pair of Welcome Swallows perched on the net of the tennis court, while a pair of Brown Honeyeaters examined cobwebs on a gate. Spotted Doves and Crested

Pigeons perched on the power line and further along a Satin Bowerbird was seen in the far distance.



Rufous Whistler

By Tony Bond

though the male was not evident. A pair of Grey Fantails and a female Rufous Whistler chased each other around in the tree tops. A pair of Red Wattlebirds posed on some twigs.

A flock small birds were seen circling and were later identified as Silvereyes.

We re-entered the Waterbird enclosure and headed immediately right to the Casuarina section. Three Magpie Larks were wading in the weir and a rather fat looking Kookaburra watched from overhead. A solitary Sulphur-crested Cockatoo landed in a Casuarina and proceeded to tear strips off.



Sulphur-crested Cockatoo

By Kathy Bowly

On the way back a Grey Butcherbird sat and watched our group.

By morning tea, the official count was 38 birds seen - excluding the two ferals at the start, and with the GH Cisticola being added later. Not a bad count considering the conditions.

Charles had arranged to meet some folks related to the Junior bird drawing competition

One solitary Red Wattlebird was seen above the creek line and more Lorikeets screeched overhead. A Sacred Kingfisher was spotted on a culvert railing but darted off immediately and Striated Pardalotes were heard on the other side.

The temperature dropped as we approached the large "Wagner" footbridge, which was to be our turnaround point and unfortunately most birds seemed to have given up and returned to their roost at this point. However things did improve slightly after crossing the creek. A female Satin Bowerbird was seen



Red Wattlebirds

By Ed Crago



Grey Butcherbird

while others of us had appointments to make so we broke up about 10.30.

Thanks Jennie for recording the count, and to Mick and Charles for the expert identifications.



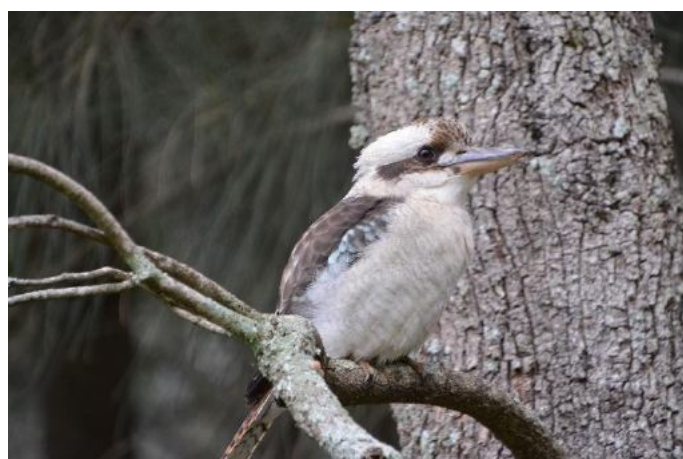
Pacific Black Duck

By Kathy Bowly



Australian Wood Duck

By Tony Bond



Laughing Kookaburra

By Kathy Bowly



Little Pied Cormorant

By Tony Bond

Waterbird Habitat / Ballin Park species		May 14 th 2025		38
Australian Wood Duck	Crested Pigeon	Brown Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird	
Pacific Black Duck	Rock Dove	Lewin's Honeyeater	Pied Currawong	
Australasian Darter	Spotted Dove	Noisy Friarbird	Satin Bowerbird	
Little Pied Cormorant	Australian King Parrot	Noisy Miner	Common Myna	
Australian White Ibis	Rainbow Lorikeet	Red Wattlebird	Silvereye	
Australasian Swamphen	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	Rufous Whistler	Welcome Swallow	
Dusky Moorhen	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Grey Fantail	Golden-headed Cisticola	
Eurasian Coot	Laughing Kookaburra	Magpie-lark	House Sparrow	
Masked Lapwing	Sacred Kingfisher	Willie Wagtail		
Bar-shouldered Dove	Striated Pardalote	Australian Magpie		

Lord Howe Island Layover...

Text and Photos by Tony Bond

Jennie and I have been meaning to visit Lord Howe Island for at least 30 years and finally made it there recently. In keeping with island tradition - we hired push-bikes to get around.

The island is home to some special birds, including some that are unique to this location. Three that we were especially keen to see were Providence Petrels, White Terns and Lord Howe Woodhen. The first two spend most of their lives at sea, coming to Lord Howe just at this time of year to breed before heading off again. Our timing was constrained by flights and accommodation so we were hoping that the birds would still be around while we were there - and they were.



Lord Howe Island Woodhen

We had heard that the local Woodhens had made a superb recovery after near extinction and indeed it was one of the first birds we saw after leaving the airport. The successful breeding program is due to the complete eradication



Buff-banded Rail

of predators - there are no rats, no cats and no feral pigs or goats on the island. A leg-banding program was started but has since been abandoned. In fact there are now so many Woodhens you have to be very careful walking or cycling not to run them over. Interestingly, wherever we found Woodhens there was a high likelihood of also seeing a Buff-banded Rail or two. They don't let you get too close but are still far less shy than those at home. They happily graze the roadside verges and beach reserves - probably something to do with the total lack of predators.

Our accommodation was a short walk to a beach through some thick shrubbery and we were warned to avoid stepping in a Muttonbird (aka Short-tailed Shearwater) burrow. Most of the adult birds had already left but some burrows remained occupied with chicks that had hatched late and were still fledging. It was explained that these chicks were unlikely to survive the migration north now. These youngsters leave the burrows at dawn and dusk and can be seen stumbling around on the beach, on the roadside and on the footpaths - still covered in fluff and unable to use their legs and wings properly yet, having come straight from the burrow.



Muttonbird chick



Sacred Kingfisher

We had also been told that Sacred Kingfishers start to come down from the hills at this time of year and can be seen in fields and woodland reserves closer the beach. On our first evening walk to the beach the first bird we saw was - a Sacred Kingfisher. We thought the local variety seemed to be more colourful than the Toowoomba residents we were used to. We found a couple of locations where one could be reliably found mornings and afternoons. We also regularly saw a resident Kestrel at the same spots and a single Brown-capped Emerald Dove also ambled by a couple of times.



Nankeen Kestrel



Brown-capped Emerald Dove



Common Noddys

We did see plenty of White Terns - the best sightings were around the Norfolk Island Pines that line the lagoon area. These birds don't make a nest - instead they balance a single egg on a horizontal branch. It was the end of their breeding season so we didn't see any examples of that - even though there were plenty of birds around.

Hundreds of Common Noddys had taken up residence in the palms and pines in the town centre. The locals call it the CBD but that's their joke - there's a small shop, a couple of cafés and a small bar - and plenty of bird droppings.

A local told us that the mown grass at the end of the airstrip was a good place to see birds first thing in the morning i.e. before the first flights landed - so we cycled there one morning before breakfast. Sure enough, we found Whimbrels, a flock of Bar-tailed Godwits and several Ruddy Turnstones. A small collection of European Starlings were also present along with Purple

Swamphens, a White-faced Heron, a pair of Pacific Golden Plovers, several Red-necked Stints, and... yet another Sacred Kingfisher.

Late one afternoon we walked along the shoreline to the Little Island area beneath Mount Gower, which is the highest point on the island and features in all tourism material. The public are not allowed to climb Mount Gower without a licensed guide, but our destination was on the flat before the start of the restricted area. We had been promised we could see Providence Petrels just before dark - and sure enough they were there in their hundreds. Several other people were present and the birds actually swooped low over our heads, even between us - a truly amazing sight. On the ground they walked among us quite brazenly and not at all shy of us humans. Because of the lateness of the day it was essential not to stay too long. Darkness comes quickly on the island and it was a decent walk back.



Providence Petrels

Other birds we found during our stay were Red-footed Booby and Red-tailed Tropicbird. The Boobys were out at sea and can be seen better by boat trip, while the Tropicbirds were under the Malabar Cliffs, which needed a much more serious hike than we were prepared for. We satisfied ourselves with long distance observations of these species from firm land.

Lord Howe Island is an amazing place for bird watching if you get the chance. Take a camera but be aware about luggage weight restrictions. On the way back is when they are very strict - the short runway means that every passenger is weighed at checking, including all coats and carry-on, to make sure the plane can actually get airborne!!



White Tern

BEWARE: TOXIC MONSTER AT THE WATERBIRD HABITAT

Text and Photos by Lareina Hagan

In tales as old as time, heroes have battled giant villains. Godzilla, Mothra, Abominable Snowmen... No. Charles Dove warned us of a new and toxic threat. A great galumphing beast that has invaded the Waterbird habitat:



The feral Muscovy duck.



Could an experimental goose-duck hybridisation explain its abnormal size? Perhaps a genetic modification or nuclear biohazard gone awry? To find out, I did a quick Google, but confusingly the Burke's Backyard website introduced them as such:

"Muscovies are the all time versatile pet - they are interesting looking, cheap to run and are also edible. If you have enough of these birds you can make a quilt!"

Quite terrifyingly, they go on to describe them as appearing "leery and wicked", hissing and weaponising their poop. Clearly Don Burke is not a fan, and at this stage I'm beginning to think the Muscovies are a formidable foe.

It seems clear that based on appetite alone, this introduced and invasive species would threaten food security for the native ducks and other birds.

"Feral Muscovy ducks can survive a long time due to their ability to eat everything: from plants, small fish, insects, frogs, small lizards and even mice!"

However, I still wanted to know what made these ducks "toxic". That led me to an article talking about "The Duck Plague" (here I am thinking about these new-age harbingers of doom à la rats in England circa 1350), but I quickly discovered that fortunately Australia is free from the highly fatal Duck Viral Enteritis (DVE).

Perhaps one of the main reasons they pose a toxic threat to the native environment is that they make a lot of mess, resulting in a disruption of local ecosystems and habitat destruction for our native wildlife.

Needless to say, Australia has suffered havoc caused by introduced and feral species, bird or otherwise, so the least we can do is be mindful of the security of our pet enclosures so that any escapees don't threaten our native species.

Competition Time for our Junior Nature Enthusiasts

The Junior Pencil Drawing & Poetry Competition 2025 was recently launched following the TBO's May Weekly outing at the Waterbird Habitat. Following the success of the 2024 competition, well known bird and nature photographer and TBO member Charles Dove was keen to run the competition again this year. With support from the member for Toowoomba North, Trevor Watts, and many local environmental groups, there is an opportunity for our youngsters to engage with their local environment and grow their awareness of what is happening in their backyards and beyond.

The competition invites school children aged 6-12 years to get out their pencils and draw a native bird, mammal or reptile and accompany their art work with a four-line rhyming poem.

Entry forms are available from all schools in the Toowoomba Regional area with the competition closing on the 17th July. An art display and presentation of finalists will take place at St Lukes Church Hall on the 2nd August.



With great prize money up for grabs, encourage the young children in your life (be it family or friends or the next door neighbour's kids) to enter this competition and help bring awareness and appreciation of our wonderful wildlife to our younger generation.

The Emu Run

Run Emu run
lets have some fun
while we are young
in the morning sun

By Charles Dove



Mistletoebird **Scientific Name:** *Dicaeum hirundinaceum*

Atlas Number:

564

What does it look like?

Description:

The small Mistletoebird is the only Australian representative of the flowerpecker family, Dicaeidae, and is also known as the Australian Flowerpecker. Males have a glossy blue-black head, wings and upperparts, a bright red throat and chest, a white belly with a central dark streak and a bright red undertail. Females are grey above, white below, with a grey streak on the belly, and a paler red undertail. Young birds resemble females but are paler and have an orange, rather than dark, bill. These birds are swift and erratic fliers, moving singly or in pairs, usually high in or above the canopy.

Similar species:

Male Mistletoebirds may superficially resemble Red-headed Honeyeaters or Scarlet Honeyeaters in having a red and black colouring, but these two honeyeaters have red heads, while the Mistletoebird has a black head, lacks their long, curved bills, while also being stockier and smaller overall. Mistletoebirds may also be distinguished from the red robins (*Petroica* species) by having a much shorter tail, a totally dark head (no contrasting cap or spot) and a red undertail.



Where does it live?

Distribution:

The Mistletoebird is found throughout mainland Australia. It is also found in Papua New Guinea and eastern Indonesia.

Habitat:

The Mistletoebird is found wherever mistletoe grows and is important in the dispersal of these plant species.

Seasonal movements:

Nomadic out of breeding season.

What does it do?

Feeding:

The Mistletoebird is highly adapted to its diet of mistletoe berries. It lacks the muscular gizzard (food-grinding organ) of other birds, instead having a simple digestive system through which the berries pass quickly, digesting the fleshy outer parts and excreting the sticky seeds onto branches. The seed can then germinate quickly into a new plant.



In this way, the Mistletoebird ensures a constant supply of its main food. It will also catch insects, mainly to provide food for its young.

Breeding:

The Mistletoebird builds a silky, pear-shaped nest with a slit-like entrance, made from matted plant down and spider web, which is suspended from a twig in the outer foliage of a tree. The female alone builds the nest and incubates the eggs, while both sexes feed the young.

Did you know?

In cold weather, the Mistletoebird can undergo torpor, which is the slowing down of bodily functions to conserve energy.

Calls

Very high-pitched single note; also repeated three-note song, warbles and some mimicry.

LINKS OF INTEREST

Emus move into town

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-02/drought-draws-emus-to-broken-hill-wildlife-groups-urge-caution/105237790>

As dry conditions continue in outback NSW, large numbers of emus have been seen around the streets of Broken Hill seeking water and shelter.

Helmeted honeyeaters given a life line

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-09/helmeted-honeyeater-endangered-bird-released-cardinia-shire/105003424>

A small group of helmeted honeyeaters, one of Victoria's rarest birds, have been returned to the wild with the hope that the new colony will help re-establish numbers and improve genetic diversity.

Record numbers of Puffins on Skomer Island, Wales

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0mrwxwpevxmo>

The isolation from mainland Britain protects the island from feral species such as rats and foxes and human impacts, creating an ideal environment for the puffins and several other marine bird species to successfully breed and increase their numbers.

Can birds out fly climate change

<https://phys.org/news/2025-05-birds-fly-climate.html>

Scientists have assumed for some time that birds are the best equipped species to respond to climate change by flying to better conditions. However it seems that escaping the warming world is not that easy!

Identifying Birds of Prey

<https://www.weekendbirder.com/podcast/53-birds-of-prey-with-stephen>

With the TBO's Raptor census coming up at the end of June, this podcast, with ecological consultant Stephen Debus, may give a little insight into helping with identifying some of the common birds of prey.

“Use what talents you possess;
the woods would be very silent if
no birds sang there except those
that sang best.”

—Henry Van Dyke

