

CABBOS CORNER



A few years ago now, after completing an evening shift at Prince Charles Hospital, (11PM), upon reaching the floodlit carpark I found it had been inundated with black crickets. They were everywhere. While escorting some of the fairer sex to their respective vehicles and impressing on them that the little fellows were really quite harmless, a Laughing Kookaburra swooped down and exited, stage left, with at least four hapless crickets in its beak. All in all I counted four enterprising insomniacs on the carpark fence having a pre-midnight snack. We had an influx of grey moths one night as well but that's another story.

Mike Bamford, in the Wingspan, reports about another species taking advantage of a "night-into-day" scenario. "Silver Gulls have learned that insects are attracted to bright lights and on warm summer evenings, flocks of them circle the lights of the Kwinana Freeway alongside the Swan River. The birds look like gigantic moths, but it is the moths and other insects that they are catching.

The most enterprising Silver Gull of all, however, was probably the one seen on one of the lakes of the Narrows Interchange a few years ago. It had slipped away from a scrum of

feeding gulls and gone down to the waters edge with a piece of bread in its bill. It didn't eat the bread, but set it adrift in the shallows. A small fish was soon attracted to the bait and was snapped up by the cunning bird, who adjusted the position of its lure and then crouched back to await its next victim. This went on for some minutes, until the piece of bread disintegrated and sank, whereupon the well-fed gull retired to contemplate its next move."

Baby birds learn to sing by replaying songs in their heads while they sleep, scientists at the University of Chicago have found. Recordings taken from dozing bird's brains showed they flickered with bursts of activity that corresponded to songs they had heard the day before. The study is thought to be the first to capture the changes in the brain associated with learning a new song. After a good nights rest, chicks that had been taught to sing by playing them the sound of an adult bird performed far better, suggesting their brains had worked on the songs as they slumbered.

Michelle Plant is a PhD Researcher with the Schools of Integrative Systems, Veterinary Science and Microbial and Molecular Sciences at the University of Queensland.

For the past five years she has been investigating supplementary feeding of wild birds.

Her current studies, to investigate the health and feeding behaviour of birds at supplementary feeding and natural foraging sites, were prompted by a realisation that there was little evidence to guide the debate over the question, 'to feed or not to feed?', and for those choosing to feed - 'how to do it responsibly?'

Without thorough scientific investigation, the debate over dependency and disease transfer at supplementary feeding sites remains largely hypothetical. It is going to be interesting to read her conclusions.

Four tiny Eastern Bristlebirds will soon take a caravan holiday at Main Range National Park. The critically endangered birds have been bred by EPA staff at the David Fleay Wildlife Park on the Gold Coast.

Next month they will leave in a specially built mobile home for the park, 110km southwest of Brisbane, where scientists hope they will abandon their temporary home for a life in the wild. The two males and two females will live in a 2m-high mobile aviary that will have a trapdoor through which they can move back and forth. It is hoped they will join a tiny flock of about 30 bristlebirds, all that remain in the mountains of southeast Queensland and northern NSW.

The birds will carry tiny transmitters on their lower backs via a cotton harness. Eventually the harness will break and the transmitter will fall off about the same time as the batteries start to fail. We wish all concerned, including the birds, all the very best. As we do this next species.

Scientists believed the Luzon Button-quail had died out years ago and the only evidence of its existence was in illustrations based on dead specimens discovered centuries ago. The bird is so little known that the International Council for Bird Preservation is unable to place it into any of their categories, whether endangered, vulnerable, etc.

However, a television crew inadvertently filmed one of the birds while recording a documentary on traditional methods of bird trapping in the mountains of Luzon in the Philippines. Neither the film crew nor the bird trappers realised the creature was rare and after filming it was sold at a poultry market as food. By the time the film was spotted by a stunned ornithologist from the World Bird Club of the Philippines, the bird had already been sold, cooked and eaten.



The bird trapping documentary is appropriately entitled *BYE-BYE BIRDIE*.

What can I add to that except that I just might go outside and bay at the moon.

Good (gastronomic) birding.....

..... John E. Noyce.

CABBOS OUTING

Rolling Bird Survey – D'Aguilar/Woodford Area Wednesday 3 June 2009



We first did this type of survey in July 2001 for the Centenary of Birds Australia. It was followed up with an abbreviated one of the same route in Sep.02. The object of this exercise is to stop at four designated areas and bird for twenty minutes before moving to the next. We will commence at D'Aguilar and end our survey near Woodford.

Meet at 8.30 am at the rest area on the D'Aguilar Highway opposite the D'Aguilar Pub. (UBD Map 35. K9). Bring M/T, Table and/or chairs, Slip, Slop, Slap, Binoculars and Telescope if available. NB. Kitchen sink is optional.

DIRECTIONS: Drive west from Caboolture on the D'Aguilar Highway to D'Aguilar.

.... John E. Noyce. (Ph 54788748 or 0428259872)



CABBOS OUTING

Ewen Maddock Dam and Jowarra S.F.P.

Wednesday 17 June 2009



"This small SF, situated on the southern bank of the Mooloolah River, is one of the few remaining examples of riverine rainforest within the Caloundra City area" (Page 71 "Walks in Caloundra")

Expect the usual gallery forest species of se Qld with the added bonus of PALE YELLOW ROBIN.

But prior to this we will examine Ewen Maddock Dam for a spot of waterbirding.

DIRECTIONS: Take Bruce Highway north and exit onto Glasshouse Mt Road (Steve Irwin Way). Pass Glasshouse Mountains Township. Just past your sighting of the dam on your left, turn left into parking area (opposite road to Big Kart Track: UBD Sunshine Coast Map 97,B12).

Meet at 8.30 am. Bring M/T, Slip, Slop, Slap, Table and/or Chairs and telescope. Don't forget ya Bins.

.... John E. Noyce (Ph 54788748 or 0428259872)

REPORT - CABBOS OUTING

Wednesday 1 April. 2009

TOORBUL HIGH TIDE ROOST

Nine members met at the Toorbul H.T.R. during the late morning of April Fool's Day. The tide was well on its way in and the waders were gathering. Thanks to Don and his telescope we were able to have "close encounters" of the avian kind. A number of birds were seen in partial or full breeding plumage. These were BAR-TAILED GODWIT, GREAT KNOT and RED-NECKED STINT. As per usual the EASTERN CURLEWS, WHIMBRELS and COMMON GREENSHANKS alienated themselves from most of the other species. The difference in size between the CASPIAN, GULL-BILLED and LITTLE TERNS were noted. While most of the wader fraternity rested and preened the stints were like perpetual wind-up toys, never missing a moment to put that little extra bit of sustenance away. Of the passerines we recorded MANGROVE and STRIPED HONEYEATERS, RUFOUS WHISTLER and MISTLETOEBIRD. A couple of MANGROVE GERYGONES put in an appearance to bring our total to 48. The birds definitely did not make fools of us on that outing.

.... John E. Noyce

REPORT - CABBOS OUTING

Wednesday 22 April 2009

WAMURAN WILDLIFE REFUGE

Powell Rd Wamuran

Wendy and Tony Cole welcomed eight members and one visitor onto their Wamuran Wildlife Refuge on this beautiful April morning. After intros it was off for a walk around this little gem of a place. The high wind that was forecast did not eventuate until late in the morning so small birds up high were not too hard to see. A number of flowering gums were attracting nectar-feeders with SCARLET HONEYEATER as well as RAINBOW, SCALY-BREASTED and LITTLE LORIKEETS seen atop one tree. NOISY FRIARBIRDS, LEWIN'S and YELLOW-FACED HONEYEATERS were also recorded in or near this floral bounty. SPOTTED and STRIATED PARDALOTES were heard. The latter also seen. GREY FANTAILS were quite common with the influx of southern birds at this time of the year. Wendy is a wildlife carer and some of her marsupial charges were shown to us. After morning tea (thanks for the fruit cake) most of us did a shorter walk finding GOLDEN WHISTLER, GREY SHRIKE-THRUSH as well as an immature SHINING BRONZE-CUCKOO to add to our list. These finds brought the total to 20. I think we added at least one new species to the Cole's list. Thank you Tony and Wendy for your hospitality and we will return.

.... John E. Noyce.

Wattle we call this Claytons-Bird?

By Steve Van Dyck

Part two

John Gould was more pragmatic in his description of its "...harsh and peculiar notes which have not unaptly been said to resemble a person in the act of vomiting, whence the native name of *Goo-gwar-ruck*. While thus employed it frequently jerks up its tail, throws back its head, and distends its throat as if great exertion was required...."God only knows what mountain dew the wattlebirds had been feeding on where Gould reached this conclusion, but more recent work by Mark Jurisevic and Ken Sanderson of Flinders University has shown wide variation in Little Wattlebird calls around the Australian coastline, particularly in respect of the dawn chorus. According to them the birds from South Australia were actually far more musical than those from northern New South Wales!(No doubt a superannuated Don Dunstan would lay modest claim to achieving cultural refinement all the way down to the most diffident of South Australian songsters!)

For a bird not blessed with sensational beauty or voice the Little Wattlebird stands thrice denied, because it was not blessed with wattles either! This poor bird is celebrated for everything that it is not. Or, at least, for that which it *has not*...wattles...colourful fleshy bits that dangle from bigger fleshy (and generally feathery) things. Turkey gobblers have a long retractable wattle called a snood, fancy fighting fowl known as Old English Game have scarlet wattles that are even nowadays snipped from their necks for judging, cassowaries have great pendulous levers that no-one in their right mind would tug, but Little Wattlebirds are always entirely wattleless. Their two big cousins have the appropriate fandangles and richly deserve the title of 'wattlebird', not quite so richly though in the case of the punk-looking, cherry-studded Red Wattlebird from the woodlands and suburbs in southern parts of the Australian mainland. Its metallic call has always reminded me of the morning clash between starter motor, fly wheel and my father when getting our Morris Minor fired up for the road.

Tasmania's Yellow Wattlebirds, which are lucky to be around considering the numbers that were shot and eaten by Tasmanians, have wattles to weep for. Even Captain Cook waxed lyrical in their praise: "The wattlebird (is) so called because it has two wattles under its beak as large as those of a small dunghill cock". But the Little Wattlebird is a clayton. Many years ago Sydney-based birdwatcher Harry Wolstenholme suggested that 'Mock Wattlebird' might be a more appropriate name, but even that is a copout. If I'd been born pre-1929 (the publication date of the famous gumnut adventures), I would have happily suggested one particular common name that strikes me as unique as well as descriptive. But alas, I was one of the post-Gibbs generations that flinch at the mention of certain unsavoury bushland associations that still lurk in the shadows from the tuck-me-up times of childhood. I just don't think I'd be able to revel in the squawking and shenanigans of the Little Wattlebird if its name suddenly changed to my secretly preferred.....'Banksiabird'...overnight!

MEMBERSHIP

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