Hello everyone, and welcome to all our new members! Some of us were lucky to make it along to all our monthly outings since the last newsletter in May, but for those of us who couldn’t make it every time here’s what we missed ---

June: Calurla (Lillian Rock) – always a lovely place to visit, and this time was no exception with the highlight being the male Regent Bowerbird glowing in a dead tree close to some mystery birds that looked black and huge (Crows? Currawongs?) but turned out to be Pee Wees! Morning tea during our meeting was delightful, thank you to our hosts! 43 species

July: Crystal Creek Rainforest Retreat. We had a good turnout of members for this outing; a great chatting event with fewer than expected birds, but a wonderful opportunity to enjoy this lovely place with the Manager Mark guiding us to interesting spots and providing a delightful morning tea. Many thanks to Mark and his wife for a happy day. 41 species

August: Tropical Coast Retreat – who went to Tropical Fruit World instead!?! Those of us at the Retreat enjoyed sighting 40 species thus increasing the bird list for the property since our last visit, with the birding highlights being a Spotted Harrier, and Logrunners in the wetland area. It was “challenging” birding in the wetland area, not the least for David and Jo-Ann Palmer who both got a little too close to the mud for comfort but remained in good humour regardless. Rick and Veronica were gracious hosts and we thank them for guiding us around the property and sharing their plans with us, and for morning tea!

September: A coastal outing this time, to Grays Lane, Tyagarah. Being very windy on the beach we stuck to the more sheltered inland track. Not a lot of birds there, so Ian Parer showed us the delights of the waterhole – avian and otherwise! A very beautiful spot and a great place for our waterside meeting. Special sightings included the Swamp Harrier and Tawny Grassbird. 44 species

October: The plan was a campout in the Border Ranges but the weather dictated otherwise for all but the intrepid David and Jo-Ann. …….. such a shame, but there is always next time!

Some members are keen to have more TBO overnight / further afield outings. If you have an idea, or would like to organize a campout or overnight stay somewhere don’t hesitate to bring it up at a meeting!!
November: The expected itinerary was changed a little here and members enjoyed seeing 50 species at Schuster Park and Fleays Wildlife Park including Little Corellas, Buff-banded Rail and Nankeen Night Heron. Jim and Rosalind Foster from the UK joined this outing and also the following Thursday outing to Banora Sewage Treatment Plant. They were out here last year and it was great they caught up with TBO again.

Meetings?? How have you enjoyed having the meetings at the end of the outings? Members get a chance to hear what the Club is involved with and to join in the happy chatter about our personal birding experiences. However, any feedback, positive or negative, is welcome! Do you think it’s been better this way; would you like to see any changes, go back to night-time meetings, etc?? Please feel free to have your say!!

Admin: Our new “Committee” have embraced their jobs with great enthusiasm. Blair has skillfully managed the money side of things and tackled the computer with great determination. Well done Blair!

Did we know how lucky we were to be when we nominated Linda to be Secretary? Thanks Linda for your wonderful focus and enthusiasm. Beside all the endless “normal” secretarial jobs you have written letters on behalf of TBO, helped out with the calendar, created news releases, run the meetings, and generally supported our members as much as you can. Much appreciated!!

Snippets:
- Faye Hill has the TBO copy of “The New Atlas of Australian Birds” so if anyone wants to borrow it please get in touch with her (02 6677 9095).
- David Palmer has a copy of the DVD “Australia, Land of Parrots” available for loan. Contact David if you are interested (02 6679 3177).
- Injured Seabirds: Please contact Mary Grant from Seabird Rescue on 0403 061 968.
- Indian/Common Mynas - It’s taken a while but the Council project is up and running and doing well. Pamela Gray has many traps out in the community, and is investigating the option of shooting birds in rural areas.

Seniors Expo:
Once again TBO set up shop at the Seniors Expo held at the Seventh Day Adventist School. We didn’t gain any new members but certainly there was lots of interest from the public in birds, and many people were keen to tell stories about “their” birds. Thanks to David and Jo-Ann for their computer display, to Laurel for organizing the day, and volunteers for their time promoting TBO on the day.

Tweed River Festival:
Another great success. Jane Lofthouse sent us an email thanking us for our support. The two days were well attended and a couple of people are now coming out with us on Thursday outings. Thanks to all the volunteers who came out to fly the flag for TBO.
TBO Campaigns:
Letters on behalf of the Club were written to
- Tweed Shire Council regarding the Kingscliff sewage treatment works which have been decommissioned and will be filled in for development into alternative land uses, thus depriving some 109 species of birds (including 28 species of water bird) of their habitat. Rod Bloss from BrisBOCA kindly added his input into this project, but in reality it looks like this site will inevitably be lost.
- Letters have also been written to Council regarding the planned re-zoning of the Tweed Pony Club site and surrounds as part of Council’s Employment Lands Strategy. The Pony Club has long been monitored by TBO members and it will be another tragedy for the birds if this habitat is adversely effected by development.
- Our letter regarding our opposition to the import of Savannah Cats joined many others from conservationists around Australia with the happy result that the proposal has been refused – Yes!

Who’s Been Birding Far Afield Lately??
Matthew headed off to Perth for a spot of birding, while Betty fulfilled last year’s plan by traveling north to the Gulf on a birding safari.
Faye and Ian tried unsuccessfully to find Carpentarian Grasswrens between Mt Isa and Lawn Hill Nat Pk, but they managed to sight Kalkadoons at the now-abandoned Mary Kathleen Uranium mine site. The trip was part of a major project surveying fire scars in that region to gain some understanding of the distribution and ecology of these two species. Survey result: Carpentarians are severely endangered!
Hawk-eyed Helen however did see Carpentarian Grasswrens on her birding expedition to the far north, along with an impressive array of sought-after endemics!
Faye and Ian’s next adventure was to Birds Australia’s Gluepot Reserve in the Mallee country of South Australia. Faye stuck it out in the dust and heat for a month as an assistant ranger, while poor Ian spent most of his time horizontal in Adelaide after a severe altercation with a ladder…. We are all delighted that he is out and about again now and enjoying the safety of the Northern Rivers!
Leon and Sharon popped into Gluepot for a couple of HOT days as part of their 3 month odyssey wandering this mighty continent. And Ralph and Judy Kraemer enjoyed an Intro to Bird Banding Course at Gluepot as well.
Peter and Kathy took an amazing trip out to Birdsville and back and added an impressive array of species to their life lists. Not home for long, they headed overseas to bird in Canada, England, Europe and Singapore, and they have bird-site information about all the places they have been to to share with the rest of us. And soon they leave again – this time to Noosa, and then Rockhampton.

Eastern Ospreys: The Tweed Osprey Group monitored the Eastern Osprey nests between Tweed Heads and Brunswick Heads again during this breeding season. Final results were definitely dismal this year with only 6 chicks fledging from 18 active nests. This is the lowest result since our group began monitoring in 1994. As usual it was tricky being certain what was actually happening in some of the nests, and
perhaps the odd chick snuck past without being observed, but this is probably wishful thinking. We have no idea why so few chicks fledged this year.

The BOCA Challenge Bird Count 2008 (also known as Twitchathon)

Last year as a group we saw a total of 4941 birds and 178 species, topping the state in NSW. This year we had three major teams, while some members concentrated on their home locations.

One team camped in the Border Ranges in the rain before checking all the access points in the park and later Mebbin National Park. It was worth it to get the Alberts Lyebird, Noisy Pitta, and a few birds who have left the lowlands and are now only in the high country, eg Golden Whistler and Eastern Spinebill.

A second team worked in the Tweed Heads area covering the wader sites and the Seagulls walk, which is no mean feat.

And the third team worked in the south of the zone covering a whirlwind route including Lismore sites, Rocky Creek Dam, Nightcap Range, Booyong Nature Reserve, Suffolk Park STW, and Broken Head National Park.

As yet we don’t know how our final tally, or how we compared with other teams in NSW and around the country, but whether we win or not it was great fun, and definitely challenging adhering to the rule of “two to see and three to hear”. Peter and Kathy Wilk put in hours of work co-ordinating the Challenge which is much appreciated. Hopefully next year more of our members will join in the fun, even if it’s only for an hour or so.

Next Six Months:

Regular monthly outings on the second Sunday of the month are outlined on the accompanying calendar. In addition it is possible we could add overnight camps or extra outings which might be suggested at meetings.

Members are also welcome to bird with the “Thursday Group” which concentrates on the Tweed Heads area for a couple of hours every Thursday. If you would like to go along please contact Laurel to find out where to meet.

Laurel also regularly surveys Land-Care sites at Fingal Heads and Bilambil Sports Ground. She would like to thank George Andrews for his wonderful help, and says anyone else is most welcome to join in with these surveys, and with any other surveys requested by other Land-Care groups from time to time. Contact Laurel (0755 909 254)

Steve McBride, Kathy Wilk and Laurel Allsopp are continuing their volunteer work with Michelle Plant who is doing PhD research investigating the health effects of feeding wild birds at sites in the Gondwana Rainforest and in the Dandenong Ranges National Park (Vic). Michelle also arranged a field trip to the Border Ranges in July and David and Jo-Ann very kindly offered their property as a site for the field lab. Steve, Kathy and Laurel regularly volunteer for a couple of days assisting with the catching and processing of Crimson Rosellas and King Parrots, and Laurel even got to travel to Melbourne to take part in the Victorian aspect of the project.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year everyone

Happy Birding !!