

**MWSSGI Extended Outing to Warwick and District**  
**6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2015**

Robyn Howard

Despite what the weather gods tossed at us, we had an enjoyable time and saw some great birds and plants. The intended 18 members and friends became 16 when two were unable to join with us.

The weather for the first few days was around the 36 degree mark, and for the last two days, the winds blew at 80 to 100 kilometres an hour, yet somehow we managed to find birds willing to risk the hazards. Besides our Tourist Park at Leslie Dam, we visited ten specific sites. Only two sites were poor owing to the conditions, but had been very worthwhile when checked earlier.

At Queen's Park in Warwick, we were astounded by the number of species in the parrot family. As well as the more common species, Scaly-breasted Lorikeets gave us good views as they sought nesting hollows, while Red-rumped Parrots, Eastern Rosellas, and Little Lorikeets were spotted, but the prize sighting was a Musk Lorikeet which had found an ironbark just beginning to blossom.

Durikai and Coolmunda provided some wonderful dry country and water birds. It was difficult to believe the numbers of birds such as Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, White-naped Honeyeaters, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and Little and Noisy Friarbirds. We were able to position our chairs at their drinking/bathing spots and enjoy the activity. Even the elusive Little Lorikeets came and perched nearby, then flew down to the water's edge to drink. The botanists found eight different species of wattle close by. Water birds were in good numbers at Coolmunda, including Pink-eared Ducks (a favourite of many birdos), large flocks of Black Swans, Eurasian Coot and Little Black Cormorants, over 20 Glossy Ibis and a group of at least 10 Chestnut Teal. We positioned ourselves under one small tree where shade provided cooler temperatures. Superb Fairywrens were abundant with at least one family kept busy feeding young. We managed to find the White-winged Fairywrens, but no fully coloured males. We were generously given access to a private lease adjoining the dam.

In the high winds, Mount Allora looked to be a real challenge. Some walked right to the top and found beautiful views of the surrounding countryside, whilst others meandered through the hillside vegetation and found some interesting birds. There seemed to be definite places where the birding was good, but not so good in between, but it was well worth any effort. Interesting birds included Rainbow Bee-eaters, Weebills, Dusky Woodswallows (which we also found at several other sites), a Jacky Winter, and Yellow-rumped and Yellow Thornbills. Our next stop was at the Goomburra section of the Main Range National Park. It is always good birding in and around the rainforest, but the birds performed in the car-park, picnic area and camping area. It was easy to sit back and watch so many Satin Bowerbirds, Crimson Rosellas, Bell Miners, Eastern Whipbirds, and the inevitable Superb Fairywrens.

On our final day, the wind was atrocious! The dam in Warwick which had been calm and well utilised by many water birds earlier in the week had turned into a choppy mess with most birds sheltering in the lee of a small island, but we did find some favourites such as Great Crested Grebes, Great Cormorants, Black-fronted Dotterels and an Australian Pipit. The performance which gave us amusement was from a pair of Grey Teal with about 8 ducklings about two days old. Several attempts were made to have the little ones follow the parents on to the water. The adults would set out with the duck equivalent of "OK kids, follow us". The tiny ones would set out paddling madly and get a couple of feet from the bank, bobbing up and down like corks, then get blown right back to shore again. After a number of attempts, the ducklings decided it was a thankless effort and chose to walk along the water's edge, clumsily tripping in the long grass.

Our next roadside stop near farm dams was quite good without providing anything marvellous, but at the top end of Connolly Dam we flushed our only Latham's Snipe, and found a pair of magnificent White-bellied Sea-Eagles with two

large young in their huge nest. A large Red-bellied Black Snake traversed a back-water and moved quickly once it decided to disappear.

Our final site for the trip was mainly for the botanists, but they were so impressed with the descriptions of Rosenthal Scrub Environmental Park that they went off on their own and spent the whole morning there. They were enthralled with the variety and difference in vegetation. It is remnant dry vine scrub which has evolved over many thousands of years from the rainforest scrub of wetter times. Some of the group side-tracked to view some of Warwick's magnificent old sand-stone buildings, and only the keen bird observers made it to Rosenthal, but we had our most thrilling experience of the trip. Having found interesting birds and listened to beautiful songs, we suddenly saw a pair of Varied Sittellas and realised they had a nest. The nests are the most amazingly camouflaged structures and it was difficult to find again and point out to the other observers. It is constructed of spider web, plant fibre, bark and lichen, and shaped to resemble the fork against which it is built. The male removed a faecal sac from the female and did not return while we observed, and the female spent the whole time incubating. Her tail extended over the edge of the nest, and extending over the opposite rim was her very fine beak. It is extremely rare to find nests of Varied Sittellas so we were duly excited.

Our bird species for the extended outing totalled 141, of which 8 species were Heard only, 3 of those being night birds. We found 4 mammal species, 4 reptiles, and eleven identified butterfly species. The species report is a separate document.



Pink-eared Ducks (Photo: Sandra Harald)



Yellow-tufted Honeyeater – ready to drink



Varied Sittella in typical head-down feeding position



Varied Sittella Female incubating on wonderfully camouflaged nest