

## Upper Dawson WPSQ March Newsletter

Compiled by Ann Hobson

### Those storms

The early morning thunder woke me to the light patter of rain after a sweltering night. Then a 16mm fall of rain. At sunrise, a cleared sky was littered with the tatters of cloud left from the earlier explosive action, thrown around like colourful rags sucked out of a badly-secured load of rubbish on its way to the 'transfer station'. Or a bit like the BOM radar images flung about on the screen in these recent days of 'isolated' storms. If you got one, at the right time and falling at the right speed, good to know. Not everyone has been so fortunate.

### The Birds



Spangled  
Drongo

A single spangled drongo was twitching in a dead tree, 'chatching' harshly. Two crows, so watered down by the recent drenching that I mistook their silhouettes for currawongs, tried to ignore me before lumbering off into nearby branches, without wasting breath on their customary 'squark'. It seemed the plan was to conserve energy and dry out further before patrolling the ironbark scrub for prey. Please drive carefully. I've noticed after rain, that birds take a little longer to fly up off the road, with sometimes fatal results.

The rain has brought out some butterflies, with the lemon migrant and orchard butterfly most conspicuous. Encouraged by the rain, the delicate blue flowers of the *Evolvulus alsinoides* (aka 'fairies petticoats' or 'tropical speedwell') caught my eye in the morning sun, scattered like a constellation of stars among the green of a fine leaved grass sheltered among the hooked tentacles of the *Capparis lasiantha* vine (aka 'wait-a-while' or 'nipan'). The *Turraea pubescens* (native witch hazel) is a riot of pale cream flowers, to the delight of the spotted bowerbird, friar birds and olive-backed oriole.

The cleared grassy flat was the playground for half a dozen wagtails skirmishing with as many black-faced woodswallows. The game seemed to be who would give up their perch when the other approached, but the willies were up against a much less flighty opposition, and got tired of the game very quickly.



Black-faced Woodswallows

### The Book

Theodore Member, Loraine Hellyer has been keen for us to have a book of local birds to provide to interested travellers in the Information Centre, and Allan Briggs of Birdlife Capricornia has kindly lent his expertise and photography for a book to cover the Dawson Valley within the Banana Shire. We'd like to know about the birds you see in publicly accessible places so visitors can be directed to those sites with a guide book to help find them.

### Bird Photographers

The Photographic Society of Qld Convention will be held at the Walter Reid Centre in Rockhampton over the Labour Day weekend of 29/30<sup>th</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> May. Keynote speaker, Georgina Steytler from Perth, will present 'Becoming a Better Bird Photographer' and will host two bird photography workshops. Details at [CONVENTION - PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND \(psq.org.au\)](http://CONVENTION - PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND (psq.org.au))

### The River

SANTOS has made another application to discharge more 'treated' water into the river catchment. Without more detailed water sampling during different levels of flow, the proponent hasn't demonstrated possible impacts of the release under a variety of conditions.

What's more, 'treated' water is not pure H<sub>2</sub>O or entirely chemical-free. Higher than usually permitted levels of boron are currently allowed in this released water. There has been very limited scientific assessment of the impact of these concentrations of boron on the flora and fauna of the



*Photo Lindsay Moffat*

Dawson and its surrounds. The use of boron to kill ants and cockroaches is well-known. The critically endangered White-throated Snapping Turtle nests in the area where water is to be released. Until it is known what the impact of boron is on the insect and other food sources of the fish, turtles, platypus and other aquatic life, the case for this proposal has not been made.

While the base of the Evergreen aquifer is thought to have low permeability, its upper levels are permeable, providing good quality water in local bores. It is likely that releasing water directly above the upper Evergreen will result in leakage into the aquifer. Organisms that live in underground water have not been adequately studied to know how such infiltration will eventually impact the biodiversity of the Dawson Valley and its streams.

Our Branch has, therefore submitted that the application not be approved.

*Ann Hobson- Secretary*