



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

*Affiliated with Bird Observation and Conservation Australia*

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc  
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## 2011 Annual Report

### Introduction

The 2011 Annual Report of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. (HBOC) was presented to members at the Annual General Meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> February 2012. It is available via the Club website.

This Annual Report consists of an overview of 2011 in the main body of the report with the detailed reports, submitted by the section coordinators, attached as appendices. The report reflects the organisational structure of HBOC.

### 1. Management & Administration

***This section of HBOC includes management and administrative areas that facilitate all aspects of Club operations through its committee structure and other appointed positions.***

The Annual Financial Report for 2011, printed and presented separately, forms part of this section of the Annual Report.

HBOC has a membership with a diversity of interests and needs ranging through recreational activities, field studies, conservation, education, and photography, driven by the shared enjoyment of birds and the desire to ensure their future. This mix raises the challenge of keeping these different aspects in balance while promoting each area to the benefit of members. This challenge was met to a satisfactory degree in 2011 as attempts to better integrate both leisure and conservation into the birdwatching experience start to reap benefits. Meeting challenges such as this is well served by the traditional, although at times difficult, consensus method of decision making that operates throughout the Club and which generates healthy and at times robust debate.

The diversity of HBOC endeavours and increasing levels of need stemming from the community will necessitate HBOC establishing a set of future priorities/targets that have high impact and are achievable within the volunteer resources of the Club. HBOC, despite a desire to do so and with already high levels of goodwill, will be potentially unable to address all needs and concerns so prudent selection of priorities will be essential. Setting and achieving these selected priorities will safeguard the HBOC volunteer resource base, uphold HBOC'S reputation and in time further enlarge HBOC's all ready significant circle of influence with resulting benefits for the Region's birdlife.

In 2011 the Committee initiated a strategy to address the issue of "duty of care" within the organisation. Work on developing protocols and record keeping still needs to be completed before the issue is raised for membership approval. OH&S legislation operative from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2012 will potentially place volunteer organisations such as HBOC under revised regulatory requirements. Early resolution of this administrative matter in 2012 is indicated.

HBOC experienced difficulty early in 2011 in securing the services of an Hon. Secretary. Secretarial duties were carried out by the other office bearers and committee members. Following an advertising campaign and a kind offer, the present Hon. Secretary was appointed by the Committee mid-year.

As in previous years, HBOC was assisted to achieve its aims through the continued support of other organisations within the Hunter Region. The fostering of collaborative efforts is, and will continue to be, an important aspect of the role of Club management and that of the membership in general. The benefits of these collaborations are not just evident as financial support but rather as better communication, exchange of information and understanding resulting in improved conservation of our birds which are under increasing environmental pressure. HBOC acknowledges the contributions of collaborative organisations.

The Committee is thanked for its balanced input and for its dedication to maintain HBOC's reputation as a respected, independent environmental organisation in the Hunter Region. As in previous years the Committee and members have benefitted from the regular attendance of (for want of a better word) "ex-officio" members at committee meetings. Their collective high level of experience and contributions to continuity are greatly valued.

The goodwill of members is at the heart of the Club and is responsible for its respected position as an environmental organisation in the Hunter. Members not only absorb costs but also dedicate countless hours of volunteer effort across the full spectrum of Club activities ensuring the continued success of the Club.

A high resolution logo representing the HBOC that better suited the multiple publication and other needs of the Club was developed and is now in use.

## **2. Membership Matters**

### ***Administrative, personal matters and services related to the membership.***

*Membership Secretary:* The Membership Secretary working in collaboration with the Treasurer has produced a comprehensive, regularly updated data base of the membership which facilitates reliable communication with members.

*Club Membership:* HBOC started 2011 with 276 members in February and finished the year with 288 fully financial members in December representing a net growth of 12 members (4%). A high in membership was reached in July with 299 members but this was just before those who were still unfinancial were removed from the list.

Some 19 persons did not renew their membership in 2011 or about 6% i.e. one person more than in 2010. Most of these were not explained, but we know that a number had moved out of the region. During the year we gained 25 new members including six previous members from 2009 or before.

*Hunter 300 & 350 Club:* This group is a testament to the fine bird watching skills of its members. No additions were made to the 300 club roll while one member graduated from the 300 to the 350 Club. Total membership of the 300/350 group in 2011 remained at 24.

*Library:* The extensive library continues to be well used by members each Club Night. Some revised borrowing procedures were implemented.

*Digital Photo Library:* The development of the digital photo library continued this year with an increased bank of images that are available for use in presentations and non-commercial community education. Members are encouraged to use this increasingly valuable and accessible asset.

*E-mail Service:* The e-mail service continued to play a much needed role in Club communications. This efficient means of distributing special messages, bird sightings and other interesting information keeps members informed, especially between Newsletters. It also provides an important link to those who receive their Newsletter electronically.

*Hunterbirding:* This online forum for sharing bird information, reporting sightings and for general discussion saw 27 new members join the list in 2011 which constitutes almost a 30 percent increase. The current membership stands at 124. It is hoped that the steady growth will continue in 2012 with as yet unsubscribed HBOC members being encouraged to join the forum. Regular summary articles appear in the Newsletter giving an overview of discussions covering a wide range of topics including identification, where to go birding, conservation issues, technical advice and the sharing of sightings including rarities. Many thanks are extended to the Hunterbirding moderator and all contributors who make Hunterbirding the informative, interesting and relaxed fun group that it is.

## **3. Activities**

### ***Includes the planning, organisation and participation in the leisure-based bird watching and social activities of the Club.***

*Outings:* HBOC implemented a successful program of outings including the monthly Sunday and midweek outings, camps and annual Twitchathon, primarily focussing on the recreational needs of members.

*Monthly Sunday outings* covered a range of locations and habitats including: Stockrington, Watagan Mountains, Kooragang Is., Broke/Bulga, Kitchener, Hunter Wetland Centre, Bush Haven Wallaroo, Bengalla Mine, Lochinvar, Mungo Brush and Main Creek. Attendance ranged from 6-20 per outing attesting to good locations, enthusiastic supporters and great leaders.

*Mid-week outings* continued to be very popular and well attended with locations including: Woods Point, Stockton Sandspit, Oyster Cove/Lemon Tree Passage, Botanical Gardens/Heatherbrae, Morpeth/Tenambit, Tomago, Kitchener, Minmi Blue Gums Park, Blackbutt Reserve, Swansea/Galgabba Point, and Belmont Reserve. The group has an average attendance of 19 members per outing. The adventurous *mid-week camp* was based at Seal Rocks in 2011 with 40 attendees.

*Long week-end camps:* These camps are an important feature of the Club as they provide opportunities for members to get to better know fellow birders and develop a sense of belonging and cohesion. The Easter camp at Capertee Valley was most successful with 35 members attending. Other camps were held at Myall View and Baerami. An additional opportunity to camp was available at the Rufous Scrub-bird surveys in the Gloucester Tops N.P.

The *BASNA Annual Twitchathon* fundraising and recreational birdwatching event saw a total of ten teams from HBOC participate in the main race (5 teams), the champagne race (4 teams) and one children's team. The Menacing Monarchs achieved 1<sup>st</sup> place, the Hunter Home Brewers 2<sup>nd</sup> place and the Dodgy Drongoes 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the main race. Notable was the achievement of the hardy members of the Dry-throated Buzzards who cycled the entire event. The sponsorship of the Hunter teams raised approximately \$5,700 for the BASNA nominated Powerful Owl conservation project while total sponsorship from NSW & ACT is expected to be again in excess of \$20,000. The Twitchathon provides an accessible conduit through which members can contribute to other bird-related conservation projects while undertaking recreational birdwatching.

In addition to the leisure and social benefits enjoyed by everyone, these outings are also a not to be underestimated source of observational data for the Hunter Region. Members are again encouraged to submit their sightings directly to the Club, via the Atlas, HBOC record sheets, Club night meetings or Hunterbirding.

To the many members including, the Club Activities Officers, those organising, coordinating and leading outings and to all those attending, thank you for your involvement. The generosity of the landholders of private properties is also acknowledged.

#### **4. Club Night**

***The monthly Club Night is one of the feature activities of HBOC.***

Eleven Club Night meetings were held at the Hunter Wetland Centre in 2011, with an average attendance of 51 members per meeting, this figure being slightly less than in 2010 (Av 54 members/meeting) (Feb AGM and Club Meeting 56, March 64, April 47, May 44, June 44, July 32, August 52, September 52, October 54, November 53 December 66.)

The meeting room facilities have been extensively upgraded by the Hunter Wetland Centre and the technological difficulties experienced in 2010 and early 2011 have now been resolved.

The Guest Speaker Program included local and national subjects covering conservation issues, research findings, travel and general interest. Topics included: Feral Animal Control, Broome Bird Observatory, Birding in Western Australia, Rufous Scrub-bird Surveys, Superb Fairy-wrens, Hunter Wildlife Rescue (Birds), The Powerful Owl Project, Observing Falcons in the Wild, White-bellied Sea-Eagles at Sydney Olympic Park, Birding in Iron Range QLD. In formulating the speaker program the committee seeks to establish a balance of topics and a range of speakers. Thank you to all presenters for their time, expertise and effort in preparing and presenting these informative talks.

*Bird of the Evening* is always well received by members and this was the case in 2011. Members are encouraged to volunteer to present a Bird of the Evening segment secure in the knowledge that it is not necessary to use the often daunting technological aids offered by power point and digital photography to give an interesting talk. It is also of great assistance to organisers if members proactively volunteer to present a Bird of the Evening talk rather than waiting to be asked.

The *Observations* segment continued to provide a valuable opportunity for members to share and report local bird sightings, the information exchange complementing Hunterbirding e-mail group discussion forum. The information shared is always valuable as it adds to members' birding experience and augments the club's records and collective knowledge.

The convivial supper time chat after the main meeting is always a social highlight of Clubnight.

The December *Christmas meeting* was again a very successful way to end the year with members enjoying the range of anecdotes, humorous tales, the presentation of the Twitchathon prizes and friendly and social atmosphere together with the chance to win a prize in the raffle and partake of a bounteous supper.

Thank you to all members who cheerfully perform the many tasks associated with Club Night, phone calls, open up, lock up, setting out and packing chairs, distributing name badges, attendance books, the library, audio-visual and technical assistance and providing that much needed cup of tea. Thank you all.

#### **5. Newsletter**

***HBOC's regular newsletter communicates Club news, the event calendar, interesting sightings, Club outing and other reports and birding articles of general interest to members, selected birding organisations and the public, either directly or via the HBOC web site.***

The bimonthly Newsletter continues its history as a quality publication and vital means of communication as it links members within the Club through its news reports, and other birding articles. The Newsletter is disseminated throughout the wider community through its distribution network of community organisations, other bird clubs and through the Club website which also provides ready public, and member, access.

There is always a good supply of articles and photographs submitted to the editor ensuring a high quality and sizeable Newsletter. The many members who contribute articles and photographs to the Newsletter are thanked for their interest, time and effort. The Club is indeed indebted to the dedicated editor and the printing and distribution team for delivering such a high quality service to the Club.

#### **6. Special Interest Group**

***At present, this section offers the opportunity for members with a special interest in bird photography to develop their bird watching and photographic knowledge / skills while promoting birds and the environment.***

Interest in bird photography by members was sustained in 2011 with members contributing to the Club night meeting display, the Newsletter and digital library. Significantly, the display, introduced in 2010, of members' photographs at each monthly Club meeting, continues to provide a focal point for much discussion and enjoyment at these meetings.

Photographers' work was also highlighted at the various educational field days including the jointly organised "Welcome to Shorebirds" event bringing much comment and helping to raise the awareness of Hunter Region birds amongst the wider public. These photographs are a significant educational resource.

The place of photography was further reinforced by members' photographs being used in the identification and tracking of banded birds.

A successful inaugural Photo-twitch event was conducted in 2011 which generated a substantial level of interest and proposals for another event in 2012.

The organisers and contributors are thanked for their efforts in enhancing the recreational aspects of birdwatching and for raising public awareness of Hunter birds. A warm invitation is extended to all members to contribute photographs in the coming year.

## **7. Conservation**

***This section is primarily concerned with issues relevant to the protection of birds and their habitat in the Hunter Region and beyond. It helps link the areas of HBOC endeavour and the community through its collaborative partnerships, networking and advocacy.***

The impressive diversity and number of the conservation matters that were addressed by HBOC in 2011 are difficult to reflect adequately in this overview, so readers are encouraged to refer to the comprehensive Conservation Report in Appendix A.

The report details the scope of the issues, the specific actions taken and the high level of HBOC involvement in seeking the protection of birds and their habitats through regulatory and other means. The ability of HBOC to make and support meaningful statements on bird-related conservation matters is intimately linked to the dedication of members and the bank of quality supporting background information that is forthcoming through other sections of the Club (especially Field Studies and Data Management).

HBOC's success in addressing conservation issues is dependent on HBOC's willingness and ability to maintain and extend its relationships with outside agencies. During 2011 HBOC members met with industry and government agencies, to influence management decisions by providing advice to optimise the implementation of strategies that will benefit the Hunter Region's bird life. HBOC was invited by NPWS, Port Waratah Coal Services Terminal 4 Project, Hunter Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority, the Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project, the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative, the Hunter Wetlands Centre, the Newcastle City Council and other organisations to work with them and provide expert opinion about birds and their habitat. Largely through HBOC's long-term effort, an increase in the level of awareness and willingness to engage with environmental and bird-related matters by these agencies is becoming evident. The number of requests for HBOC to provide representatives to sit on community liaison and advisory groups is evidence that HBOC's effort and expertise are not only recognised but also valued.

Thank you to the Conservation Coordinator and all members of the Conservation Committee for their dedication, expertise and experience in providing a necessary service, not only for HBOC, but also for the community at large, as they strive for better environmental outcomes.

## **8. Field Studies and Data Management**

***This section of HBOC addresses the collection of data, the monitoring of bird populations and maintenance of records which underpin the HBOC research and conservation effort while at the same time making a worthwhile contribution to members' leisure-based bird watching.***

Please refer to the comprehensive Field Studies and Data Management Reports - Appendix B.

The acquisition, recording, analysis and reporting of field studies data represent a highly significant component of the core business of HBOC.

A feature of HBOC's Field Studies program is the high degree of collaboration with other conservation minded organisations - such as the Kooragang Wetlands Rehabilitation Project, the Hunter Wetlands Centre, DECCW offices in Newcastle, Nelson Bay and Gloucester, Crown Lands Department and Birds Australia. Individual Club members often receive similar strong support from relevant organisations when conducting their regular surveys.

The monitoring of Important Bird Areas (IBA) within the Hunter Region was a significant component of the Field Studies program in 2011 and this will remain the focus in future years. Resource constraints limit the HBOC effort and resulted in priority being directed to the Hunter Estuary IBA and the Barrington Tops & Gloucester Tops IBA.

The Hunter Estuary IBA continues to be monitored through the regular monthly team surveys of shorebirds and other waterbirds, surveys by individual Club members, and species specific surveys e.g. Australasian Bittern, Latham's Snipe, Painted Snipe, Australian White Ibis, and egret species. The use of the "songmeter" to monitor the Australasian Bittern will be expanded in 2012.

HBOC has become the lead organisation for the monitoring program for the Rufous Scrub-bird used in NSW and Qld. Two intensive 3-day surveys by a core team of observers confirmed the Rufous Scrub-bird territories identified in the Gloucester Tops NP in 2010. These surveys added to the knowledge of specialist species with restricted range at high altitudes in the Hunter Region.

An initial survey for Rockwarbler in the Yengo NP and Wollemi NP sections of the Hunter section of the Greater Blue Mountains IBA was conducted in late 2010 with a community awareness campaign launched in Jan 2011. Expansion of this program is envisaged for 2012. The formal HBOC surveys for Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot in May and August formed the basis of monitoring in the other Hunter Region IBA's.

The following list summarises other HBOC and individual members' survey activity: Hunter Estuary Shorebirds, Tomago Wetlands, Lake Macquarie Shorebirds, Port Stephens Waterbird Surveys (in conjunction with DECCW), Manning Estuary, Forster Tuncurry, Curricabundi NP, Port Stephens, Birubi/Fingal coastline, Worimi Nature Reserve, Swan Bay, Newcastle Rock Platform, Kooragang/Ash Island Wetlands, Morpeth Wastewater Treatment Works, Walka Recreational and Wildlife Reserve, Blackbutt Reserve, Irrawang Swamp, Hexham Swamp, Green Wattle Creek (in conjunction with Crown Lands), farm properties at Butterwick, Duns Creek and Upper Allyn Valley, *Greswick Angus* Seaham, Regent Honeyeater/Swift Parrot Survey, Ibis Count, Latham's / Painted Snipe Count, Australasian Bittern Survey.

A function of the Field Studies program should be to encourage members to undertake individual projects and for them to take advantage of HBOC assistance if needed.

*Data Management:* 2011 saw further entrenchment of the data management initiative started in 2010 which has enhanced HBOC's data capture and management capability.

*Data Collection:* Leisure time observations and systematic studies remain vital sources of observational data for the Field Studies program as they are extremely valuable in increasing our knowledge of birds and allowing any conservation endeavours to be supported by reliable information. The increased reporting of opportunistic sightings due to the continued growth of the on-line forum Hunterbirding, complements the information obtained from the Birds Australia (BA) Atlas database.

In June 2011 HBOC received the 2010 data for the Hunter Region from the Birds Australia (BA) Atlas database with an updated data set for the period 1998-2009. This data is considerably enhancing our local knowledge of distribution and relative abundance of species in the Hunter and facilitating the tracking of change. Although still due to a small core of observers, the use of BA Atlas sheets has steadily increased in 2011.

*Reporting:* The success of the Field Studies program is reliant on members submitting their sightings. The increased use of the BA atlas sheets and associated electronic reporting is being counterbalanced by a decline in the use of the HBOC record sheet. The HBOC record sheets capture valuable data not necessarily available by other means and their declining use is resulting in unfortunate gaps in our knowledge. Solutions to this issue are being investigated.

The Hunter Region Annual Bird Report is the main reporting vehicle for HBOC data. The Annual Bird Report No 18 (2010) was published in late 2011 with data for 437 Hunter Region species. BA Atlas data were included in the Report as well as a summary of the full 13 years of prior data for locally common species.

*The Whistler*, the occasional journal of HBOC is an important source of supplementary records and analysis of data with both Volumes 4 & 5 including analyses of members' survey work.

Special Report No 6, summarising the Rufous Scrub-bird surveys was published in 2011 and distributed to stakeholders.

HBOC authors have had 2 papers accepted for publication in *The Stilt* and one other has been submitted to *Australian Field Ornithology*.

\*Hunter Region sightings including some intriguing records, noteworthy numbers, noteworthy breeding records, rarities and missing birds are recorded in Appendix C for readers' *general interest* only. Many species in this preliminary listing *are yet to be fully reviewed and finalised by the Records Appraisal Committee*, an essential process that preserves HBOC's reputation for reliable records.

HBOC is indebted to the coordinators and to the many members who organise and participate in acquiring and reporting observational data, for their expertise, dedication, and persistence in the pursuit of knowledge and better environmental outcomes for Hunter Region birds.

## 9. Projects

**Comprises the "hands on" conservation projects that restore selected areas of bird habitat in the Hunter.**

Please refer to Appendix - C for the comprehensive Milhams Pond and Stockton Sandspit Habitat Restoration Project Reports.

*Milhams Pond, Ash Island:* In 2011 this collaborative project between HBOC, KWRP, NPWS, volunteers and with contractor involvement of Trees in Newcastle, achieved notable improvements in shorebird habitat and saltmarsh recruitment. This is evidenced by the significant bird sightings, including Red Knot, made in the latter part of 2011 much to the elation and satisfaction of all concerned.

All follow-up treatment of mangroves has been completed and all funded works are now complete with a total project expenditure of \$30,612.93 and a primary kill of mangroves approaching 2 million plants.

HBOC again acknowledges the financial contributions from Caring for Country and the 2008 Twichathon.

Volunteer hours showed a reduction in 2011 as a response to the reduced need for onsite effort. For Milham's Pond, 68hr in 2011 compared to 303hr in 2010. 117 hrs of HBOC effort were also directed to Swan & Wader Ponds.

*Stockton Sandspit:* Habitat treatment in 2010 focussed not only on roost areas but also on the feeding and breeding habitat at this site. Site works are carried out by HBOC volunteers in partnership with KWRP volunteers and NPWS. Overall HBOC volunteer effort in 2011 was 305 hours which brings the in-kind contribution since 2003 to approximately \$152,000. This program has been highly successful as measured through the breeding success of Pied Oystercatchers and Red-capped Plovers and the large increase in the use of the site by Pacific Golden Plovers.

New NPWS interpretive signage developed with HBOC input, for the site, has now been completed.

Additional activities included the successful Welcome to Shorebirds event, Clean up Australia Day and the production of an ABC program featuring the rehabilitation work at Stockton Sandspit which is to be aired on ABC 24 in February 2012.

*Note:* Much work still needs to be done to maintain the advances made with both the Ash Is sites and Stockton Sandspit. Members are encouraged to contribute their time to these projects to support the volunteer team and ensure the health of these shorebird habitats. The dedicated project manager and volunteer team are to be congratulated for ensuring the successful rehabilitation of these sites.

## 10. The Whistler

***HBOC's research-based, occasional periodical of refereed papers and notes that places on record observational details and analysis of HBOC members' field studies.***

Please refer to the Joint Editors' Report in Appendix D.

Two volumes of *The Whistler* were published during 2011. Volume 4 was dedicated to the theme of Threatened Species of the Hunter Region, while Volume 5 was non thematic.

The distribution of Vol 4 specially targeted those responsible for the regulation and management of bird habitats in the Hunter Region.

In order to extend the authorship base members are encouraged to contribute, especially with regard to short articles.

The costs of publication have been sourced from project funds kindly provided by Hunter Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority (HCRCMA). HBOC acknowledges with gratitude this financial contribution.

*The Whistler* team, of joint editors, authors, referees and production personnel, is congratulated and thanked for its dedication to the demanding task of producing 2 Volumes in 2011 and ensuring that *The Whistler* remains a quality publication of benefit to birdwatchers, decision makers and the community.

## 11. Education & Promotion

***To equip Club members, the organisation and the broader community with the knowledge, skills and capacity to not only enhance the bird watching experience, but also to support the conservation of Hunter birdlife and its various habitats; and This section includes avenues for members to champion birds, the environment and HBOC to the broader community.***

For the purpose of this report these two aspects are linked as many HBOC activities have shared outcomes.

*HBOC Website:* The HBOC website continues to evolve as an important "front line" and convenient source of information for local and international birding community and as a promotional tool for the Club. Its accessibility often means that it is the first point of contact for people seeking information about birds in general or HBOC in particular.

In 2011 the website was expanded to include a 'Conservation' page to house submissions made to Government authorities by the HBOC Conservation sub-committee regarding proposed developments, changes to land tenure, assessment of environmental legislation and future coal/gas proposals that might adversely affect birds and their habitats.

The Field Studies and Surveys page lists reports from field studies and surveys conducted by HBOC members, while the Publications page lists copies of *The Whistler*, Birding Route brochures and Special Reports.

The Website developers from the Club are to be congratulated on this excellent and expanding resource.

*Publications:* HBOC publications such as the Annual Bird Report, *The Whistler*, The Club Newsletter, Special Reports and Birding Routes pamphlets continued to provide educational and promotional benefits in 2011. The Hunter Region Annual Bird Report No 18 (2010) was published in late 2011 and remains the main reporting vehicle for HBOC data. *The Whistler*, the occasional journal of HBOC is an important source of supplementary records and analysis of data with both Volumes 4 & 5 being published in 2011. Special Report No 6, summarising the Rufous Scrub-bird surveys was published in 2011 and distributed to stakeholders (NPWS, DECCW and BA). HBOC authors have had 2 papers accepted for publication in *The Stilt* and one paper has been submitted to *Australian Field Ornithology*.

*BIGnet:* HBOC was active in the BIGnet association of birding clubs through its representation at both BIGnet meetings in 2011 and by its participation in the meeting of conservation officers where conservation issues of common concern were discussed. The associated networking at these meetings provides valuable promotion opportunities for HBOC.

*Events:* Community events in which HBOC members were involved included: World Environment Day, World Wetlands Day, Clean Up Australia Day, Hunter Wildlife Festival, Bengalla Bird Day, Welcome to Shorebirds, BASNA Digiscoping Course, Bird Calls of the Hunter Workshop, Fox Scat Monitoring Workshop, and Field days in the Upper Hunter as part of the OZGREEN Great Eastern Ranges Initiative. These events cut across the age groups with some focussing on school children, others on families and adults. The Bengalla Bird Day and the Welcome to Shorebirds were notable events as they received acclaim and attention in the press thus raising awareness of the local birds for those people attending and the wider public.

*Personal Presentations:* In 2011 active participation saw the presentation of many talks, courses and excursions conducted under the HBOC banner, all of which raise awareness and strongly promote HBOC and the birds of the Hunter Region.

*Photography:* The expanding resource of large-sized printed photographs of Hunter birds is a significantly valuable and not to be under-rated resource for educational and promotional activities. HBOC should further investigate and acquire suitable indoor/outdoor display stands to maximise the potential of this resource as an educational /teaching aid.

*Media:* Hunter Region birds and HBOC were positively promoted through a series of articles on bird-related matters appearing in the local press. An ABC video presentation, "River Story" promoted HBOC and its activities.

*General:* Whether it was through formal presentations to meetings or clubs, being interviewed for media reports or more simply through informal conversations, members are thanked for their personal efforts in promoting Hunter Region birds and HBOC.

Environmental entities such as HBOC possess, through their collective experience and specialist expertise, a "treasure trove" of knowledge that is invaluable for promoting the behavioural change necessary for effective conservation of the environment. I think it is incumbent upon the Club, as a custodian of this knowledge, to make its best endeavours to appropriately share this knowledge with the wider community including government, corporate and general public levels. Whether it be through its technical publications, correspondence, newsletter, website, presentations, the media or personal interaction with the public at field days and displays, it will be via this educative process (and also through its collaborative relationships) that HBOC will be able to influence long-term behavioural changes necessary to ensure a sustainable environment.

## **12. Acknowledgements**

I wish to acknowledge and thank all members of the Club committees for their thoughtful input and dedication to maintaining HBOC as a respected, independent environmental organisation in the Hunter Region. As in previous years we have all benefitted from the regular attendance of (for want of a better word) "ex officio" members at the committee meetings. Their collective high levels of experience and contribution to continuity are always greatly valued. I also thank all of those who have found ways to direct their love of birds into practical ways of assisting the membership and the community and for improving the environmental outcomes for the birdlife. So thank you to the coordinators of the various sections of the Club, activity leaders, members of the sub-committees, small groups, survey teams, editors, record officers, technologists, authors, photographers, Club night assistants, production and distribution teams, field volunteers and those who just enjoy watching the birds, in fact *all* members for their goodwill and contributions to the life of this Club.

## **Concluding Comment**

Through the dedication of its members 2011 has seen further growth of HBOC as an effective, influential, community-based environmental organisation that serves both the needs of its members and those of the community. There will always be challenges, some foreseen some unforeseen, but as implied throughout this report, HBOC has the depth of experience to be proactive and meet them with success.

I have found my journey as President to have been very satisfying and rewarding primarily due to the generosity of spirit, cooperation, sound advice, and friendship that I have received from willing mentors and indeed from you all. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute and be a part of this wonderful Club.

Paul Baird (HBOC President 2011)  
08.02.12