

EASTLAKES BIRDING ROUTE

INTRODUCTION: Although the northeastern side of Lake Macquarie is largely urbanised good examples of coastal woodland, heath and swamp still exist, notably in Jewells Swamp, Belmont Swamp, Glenrock State Recreation Area, Awabakal Nature Reserve and along the Wallarah Coastal Walk. Estuarine habitats can be observed around the entrance to Lake Macquarie with significant gull rookeries on Sandy Island in Lake Macquarie and on Moon Island off Swansea Heads. The variety and number of birds present are highly dependent on the season, weather conditions and even the time of day. However, usually 30-50 species have been observed at most locations. This guide describes birding sites from north to south. A Newcastle street directory is necessary to assist navigation.

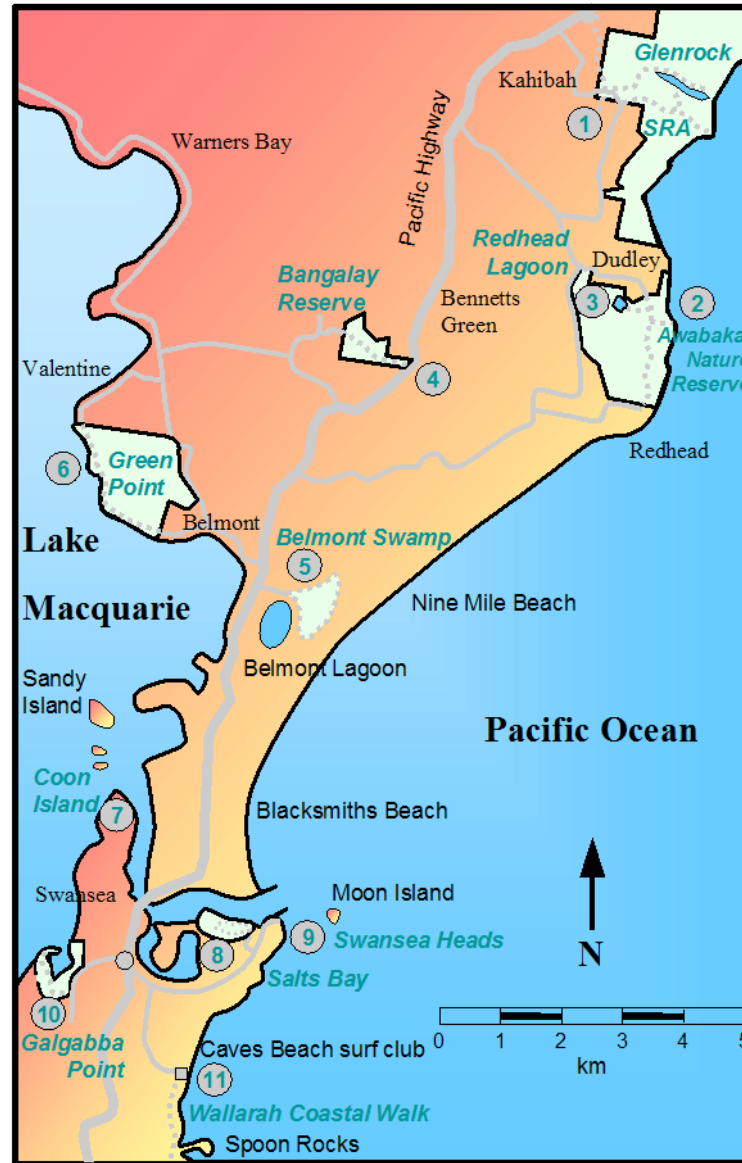
1. GLENROCK STATE RECREATION AREA:

Enter the recreation area from a car park off Burwood Road, Kahibah (signposted). A variety of habitats are present ranging from ocean beach, lagoon, coastal heath, woodland and rainforest. The Yuelarbah Walking Track, part of The Great North Walk, leads down to Glenrock Lagoon (2.3km). Another shorter walk passes through a Bell Miner colony and rain forest to Flaggy Creek (600m). About 100m west of the parking area the Fernleigh Track is being developed along an abandoned railway line, which also facilitates birding to the south and north. Other tracks leading to the coast can be accessed 300m east of the parking area along Burwood Road by turning left at Scout Camp Road and finding a rough carpark a kilometre down the road.

Tawny Frogmouth

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2. AWABAKAL NATURE RESERVE: This is a good location for observing coastal heath birds such as Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Little Wattlebird and Southern Emu-wren. There are two access points into the reserve via Dudley or Redhead.



For the northern access, drive to the end of Ocean Street, Dudley, past the Dudley Nursing Home, where a short track leads to a parking area under trees. A walking track leads into the reserve through to the southern access point at Redhead, off Alison Street. Many offshoot tracks can be taken and it is recommended to take a diversion along the Bluff track (signposted), about 300m from the Dudley entrance, for extensive coastal views.

3. REDHEAD LAGOON: Redhead Lagoon, at the northern end of Awabakal Nature Reserve, can be accessed via Dudley as described above. After about 100m along the walking track into the reserve turn right onto a track leading down to the lagoon, which can be circumnavigated. Grey Goshawk have been seen here in addition to a variety of waterbirds and bush birds in the surrounding forest.



White-faced Heron

4. BANGALAY RESERVE: This forested reserve at Bennetts Green is best accessed by travelling north along the Pacific Highway (divided road). About 1.5km north of the Violet Town Road intersection, just after passing Murray Street, there is an inconspicuous, but signposted, entry on the left. A walking track leads down to Crokers Creek and out at another entrance at Walumbi Avenue, Tingira Heights. Pheasant Coucal and a variety of bush birds can be seen in the area.

5. BELMONT SWAMP: Belmont Swamp occurs to the northeast of the open water Belmont Lagoon. It features a variety of waterbirds, raptors, and coastal bush birds. Access via George Street, Belmont, from the Pacific Highway. Park at the end of George Street and walk east along a disused railway embankment, crossing a dilapidated bridge about halfway along. After about 750m, turn right at an intersection and follow a track southwards, behind coastal dunes, for 1.25km. Look for Brush Bronzewing. Turn right onto the "Pipeline Track" returning to the end of George Street for about 700m. These tracks surround most of the swamp habitat.

6. GREEN POINT FORESHORE RESERVE: Although it is a specific headland, Green Point also refers collectively to a series of high forested headlands sweeping down to the eastern shore of Lake Macquarie. The re-

serve can be entered from the end of Dilkeria Avenue, Valentine, where the 2km Foreshore Walk (signposted) connects with Black Jacks Walk another 1.5km from the end of Ross Street, Belmont. A cycleway also connects the two entry points. Expect a variety of bush birds and lake margin waterbirds. From the Valentine end check out a moist rain forest gully, where traversed by a boardwalk, for more exotic species such as Black-faced Monarch and Rufous Fantail. Powerful Owl frequent the area. About 1.5km from the Belmont end, after reaching toilets and a lookout, a loop can be completed by finding a track leading away from the water and back.

7. COON ISLAND: A flood-tide delta deposited at the western end of Swansea Channel, as it enters Lake Macquarie, provides shallow feeding areas for resident and migratory waders at low tide and roosting sites at high tide. Observe from the end of Dobinson Drive, Swansea, and also from a convenient viewing platform at the northern end of Coon Island. The platform can be reached by turning off Dobinson Drive at the end of the caravan park, crossing a small wooden bridge to a car park and following a walking track for about 500m to the northern end of Coon Island. Eastern Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red-necked Stint and Pied Oystercatcher are often present.

8. SALTS BAY RESERVE: This isolated remnant of coastal (littoral) rain forest is in the process of restoration and protection. It features a stand of cabbage tree palms, casuarina and paperbark with an extensive juncus (spiny rush) swamp. Access via a dirt track turning left from Lambton Parade, Swansea Heads. From the parking area follow Black Neds Walking Track into the reserve (signposted). About 600m along the track, and 50m before a steel gate, find a wooden style over a pipeline. Follow a track to the right into an extensive juncus swamp where Southern Emu-wren and Little Grassbirds may be seen. Follow the track right through the swamp, if dry enough, and out onto Salts Bay beach. Follow the beach back to the car park.

9. SWANSEA HEADS: At the end of Lambton Parade walk to the rocky headland. About a km offshore nesting



Superb Fairy-wren

gulls can be seen on Moon Island Nature Reserve (landing forbidden). Kelp Gulls have been seen from here.

10. GALGABBA POINT: A fauna and flora reserve on the eastern shore of Lake Macquarie, south of Swansea, can be accessed via a dirt track leading out to Galgabba Point off the Old Pacific Highway, 1.2km west of the roundabout south of Swansea. The track is a right-hand offshoot at the entrance to the road into "Bargoed" (signposted, private) and vehicular entry is blocked by a steel gate. A good variety of bush birds is usually present on the walk to the lake. It is a known locality for the threatened Regent Honeyeater when Swamp Mahogany is flowering.

11. WALLARAH COASTAL WALK: This well signposted walk offers splendid views of rugged bays and headlands as it winds through coastal heath, woodlands and along sandy beaches. From the car park south of Caves Beach Surf Club, walk south along the bluff. Later it is necessary to follow the road for about 100m to reach a track to Spoon Rocks. The 5.2km coastal walk commences a few hundred metres further on. There are numerous heath frequenting honeyeaters especially when the heath is in flower. Other bush birds can be observed in woodland south of Pinney Beach. White-bellied Sea-eagle and Whistling Kite are often overhead and calls from a Bell Miner colony can be heard from an adjacent ridge. Look seawards for gulls, cormorants, gannets, albatross and shearwaters.



Eastern Spinebill

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HBOC meets at 7.30pm, every 2nd Wednesday of the month (except January) at The Wetlands Centre, off the roundabout, Sandgate Rd, Shortland.

Lake Macquarie Birding Route No. 2

Hunter Bird Observers Club



EASTLAKES BIRDING ROUTE



Sacred Kingfisher

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