



Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER

Issue 5/07

October/November 2007

Newsletter articles welcome – contact Newsletter Editor Peter Phillips.
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Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.
(affiliated with Bird Observation and Conservation Australia)

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Committee

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Anthony Gooden
Chris Herbert
Ann Lindsey
Robert MacDonald
Michael Kearns
Lorna Mee

Conservation Officer
Ann Lindsey

Life Members
Wilma Barden
Sue Hamonet
Ed Hamonet (dec)

The aims of the club are:

- *To encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat*
- *To encourage bird observing as a leisure-time activity*

New Members: We welcome

Melva Fisher of Elmore Vale
Emma Graham of Wallsend
Mark Evans of The Junction

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE FOR 2007

Edition

Copy Deadline

December2007/January08

December 15

DORA CREEK, MORISSET HOSPITAL & WOODS POINT

Midweek Outing Tuesday 7 August 2007

From Don Moon

Our first stop for the morning was at the Reserve at the end of Dora Creek where it enters Lake Macquarie – which was a new area for some people.

We were soon greeted by Red-browed Finch, Superb Fairy-wren and Yellow Thornbills. On the edge of the lake we found all four species of locally occurring cormorants, Darter, Black Swan, Pelican and a White-faced Heron.

Whilst walking alongside Dora Creek we saw 6 Royal Spoonbill and 2 White Ibis sunning themselves on a jetty on the opposite bank and as we were having a good look at these birds a Striated Heron and an Azure Kingfisher flew past.

We then walked across to Lake Eraring where we saw a Buff-banded Rail and an adult plus juvenile Masked Lapwing making a total of 54 species for this area.

After morning tea beside the Lake in the hospital grounds, we proceeded to the Woods Point walking track where we saw a good variety of birds.

There were Scarlet, Lewins and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Eastern Spinebill, Rose and Eastern Yellow Robins, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush and Satin Bowerbird. Also seen were Mistletoebird, Silvereye, Rainbow, Scaly-breasted and Musk Lorikeet, Eastern Rosella and White-winged Chough.

Meantime flying overhead were 2 Osprey and 3 Sea Eagles (2 adults and a juvenile) and a Grey Goshawk – making a total of 63 species at these locations after morning tea.

The 21 birdwatchers had an enjoyable morning seeing a total of 88 different species.

(An amazing number for such a short period –must be Spring! –Ed)

ENJOYING NATURE'S GARDEN

Club Outing to Myall Lakes

Sunday 15 August 2007

By Caryl Lightfoot

Nine HBOC members enjoyed a wonderful display of wildflowers on the club outing to Myall Lakes National Park on Sunday August 15th. The bush was alive with birds also enjoying the prolific flowerings of the Eucalypts, Banksia, Boronia & many more.

The day was cloudy with misty rain which made identification tricky especially in the tops of high trees but with bird experts present & applying our listening skills for bird calls we managed some excellent sightings including Cuckoos – Fan-tailed, Horsfield's Bronze, & Shining Bronze, Honeyeaters – Brown-headed, White-naped & Blue-faced, and Varied Sittellas.

The Johnson Hill Track is a must for those who appreciate our beautiful native wildflowers which can be accessed on each side of an easy level trail of some kilometres long. We wandered along this track for most of the morning before heading down to the river at Bombah Point. As well as any water birds to add to our count our search was to be for a pair of Burdekin Ducks which are known to inhabit the area.

Two highlights greeted us there! Not Burdekin Ducks but a family of Musk Ducks - 2 females, one male & 3 young. Crèche antics were observed with one female coaxing the young to follow her as she dived for food - which she then fed to each duckling in turn. Another treat in this location was the sight of 180 Little Black Cormorants roosting together opposite our viewing site. Just as our count was completed they were disturbed & scattered by 2 Whistling Kites – a wonderful whirl of black in the sky!

In a shelter at Mungo Brush we shared our picnic lunch with Brush Turkeys & Pacific Black Ducks. Here we added more species to our list to give a count of 62 in all.

No Burdekin Ducks but a great day out in Nature's Garden!

HARRINGTON MIDWEEK CAMP 17-19 September 2007.

From Val and Don Moon

The third mid-week camp held this year at Harrington was a great success with 34 members attending.

We started our activities on Monday afternoon by looking around the caravan park boundaries where many birds were seen and then walked to the nearby rainforest. Some of the birds seen in this general area during the whole time of the camp included Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove, White-headed Pigeon, Brown Cuckoo-dove, Emerald Dove, Wonga Pigeon, Southern Emu-wren, Striped, Blue-faced and White-cheeked Honeyeaters, Golden Whistler, Spectacled Monarch, Spangled Drongo, Varied Triller, Olive-backed Oriole, Figbirds and Regent Bowerbird.

We then proceeded along by the lagoon (behind the park) up to the breakwalls where Pied Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, Sanderlings and Sharp-Tailed Sandpipers were seen plus (flying over) – Brahminy Kite, Sea Eagle and Osprey.

We returned to the park for happy hour and a BBQ.

On Tuesday we spent the day in the Crowdy Bay National Park starting first at the Crowdy Gap Cultural Camp where we walked along the track to the ocean - we saw Red and Little Wattlebirds, Eastern Spinebill, Fan-tailed Cuckoo and Australian Gannet.

We then proceeded up to Indian Head camping area and after morning tea we walked along the headland track. While we did not see or hear many birds we enjoyed looking at the many different wildflowers. Back at the camp we were fortunate to have good views of Regent Bowerbirds.

Our next stop was Kyllies Beach camping area where we were having our lunch. We had great views of two Square-tailed Kites which were flying very low overhead and stayed around the whole time we were there – other birds seen were Rufous Whistler, Spectacled Monarch, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater and a White-browed Scrubwren feeding young in a nest.

We continued back south stopping for a short walk along Bakers Road before finishing our day at the Crowdy Bay lighthouse. Another enjoyable evening was had back at the BBQ area.

Later in the night, eight enthusiastic people went back to the National Park to look for Grass Owls but unfortunately were unsuccessful.

On Wednesday morning we proceeded to the Industrial area where the Ospreys have nested on top of the Telecom tower. We had good views of one bird flying around and landing back on the nest.

We were joined here by Bob Langdown from Cundletown (and Manning BOC) who directed us down beside the sewage works where we had good sightings which included Pallid and Fan-tailed Cuckoos (seen) and Brush and Shining Bronze Cuckoos (heard) plus Brown headed, White-naped and Brown Honeyeaters, Rufous Whistler, Leaden Flycatcher and an Eastern Yellow Robin (on nest).

Our morning-tea stop was at a Riverside Reserve where we were able to walk to see another Osprey nest on a specially built platform nearby.

Our final stop for the morning was back at the Breakwall where we were excited to see a Kelp Gull on the sandspit across the other side of the river entrance. This single bird had been sighted previously by a few people on Monday afternoon but was not seen again until Wednesday morning when it stayed around for a long time – and most of the group had good views of it.

Another great camp! Good company, good scenery and good birding with 141 bird species sighted in the Harrington area and 78 at Crowdy Bay National Park. Putting the two lists together we identified 150 different species for the whole three-day camp.

OTHER PROGRAM NOTES

July Club Night: Ann Lindsey was most informative on Saemangeum Shorebird Monitoring in South Korea and Anthony Gooden entertained (and informed) with Lorikeet comparisons.

Field Outing to Walka Waterworks 22/7/07

A good day with 77 species.

Atlassing to Booral. 28 /7/07

4 people enjoyed a Forest Park lunch and a Pale Yellow Robin and Shrike –Tit plus fun with corvids.

August Club Night – A great Presentation by the Burgins of Gluepot Reserve

SPRING PAINTED SNIPE SURVEY

This is to take place on the weekend of 27 & 28 October (i.e. the Twitchathon weekend) and members are encouraged to report any sightings of this cryptic bird via Ann Lindsey 4951 2008

Don't Mess with the Cowbird

from New Scientist 10/3/07

In America, brown-headed Cowbirds *Molothrus ater* lay their eggs in the nest of Prothonotary Warblers *Protonoara citrea*. Usually the warblers do not eject the cowbird eggs.

When James Hoover of the Illinois Natural History Survey removed the cowbird's eggs he found that the cowbirds returned and retaliated against the nests where the eggs had been removed by eating or destroying the remaining warblers' eggs.

He also found that the nests that had been built early by the warblers, and so had more developed eggs, were trashed by the cowbirds, forcing those warblers to start nesting again. The cowbirds would then return to the new nest and lay their eggs at the right time. Hoover says the overall effect is that the cowbirds bully the warblers into "an evolutionary state of acceptance".

It seems it is better for the warblers if they comply with the cowbirds. On average, they raise three of their own chicks when they also support a cowbird chick, but raise just one of their own if a cowbird egg has been rejected

HWCA REQUIRES A VOLUNTEER TO COORDINATE BIRD SIGHTINGS

By Paddy Lightfoot

For many years Wilma Barden has collated all the bird sightings that have occurred in a 12 month period at Hunter Wetlands Centre Australia (HWCA). Wilma would like to pass this job on to someone in HBOC.

This is not an arduous undertaking. The work, which is only required once a year, consists of collating the monthly sightings of the 4 current observers as well as checking the bird book, which is held in the Visitors' Centre, for unusual sightings.

The idea of having the data is to provide visitors with handouts of birds they are likely to see around the Centre at any particular time of year, whether resident, nomad, breeding etc. The spreadsheets used are on the computer and ready to complete. Wilma would be happy to demonstrate requirements to any volunteer. For further information or to show an interest please contact Paddy (4952 1820) or Wilma (4955 8595).

Male Bias a Problem in Birds

from New Scientist 8/9/07

Male birds are apt to sing a jaunty tune and sport some pretty plumage, making them prominent targets for population studies. But a survey of bird demographics reveals that male birds generally outnumber females – meaning that real population sizes could be much smaller than estimates which assume an equal sex ratio.

Paul Donald at the UK Royal Society for the Protection of Birds analysed the sex-ratio data of 173 species documented in the literature. He found that 112 were male-biased, with males outnumbering females by 30 to 35 per cent on average.

Furthermore, the likelihood of a male-skewed population rose with the degree to which a species was threatened. For example, the vulnerable New Zealand Kea is 66 per cent male, which slashes the number of breeding pairs in half compared to population estimates based solely on male counts. The critically endangered New Zealand Black Stilt is 75 per cent male.

Offspring sex ratios are almost equal says Donald, so female birds must die off faster. One explanation is that females experience greater stress, often migrating or dispersing further to find nesting grounds. Nesting females are also more susceptible to attack by introduced predators.

HBOC Conservation Committee Update

from Mike Newman on behalf of
HBOC Conservation Committee

Much of the Conservation Committee's recent efforts have been channelled into two high profile developments, the Anvil Hill Coal Mine and the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG) Coal Export Terminal. These developments have been the subject of recent determinations by the Federal Government, having been referred under provisions of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. In both cases the Federal Government determined that control under the EPBC Act was not justified and passed the accountability for regulation to the NSW State Government.

HBOC is strongly opposed to these outcomes and the Conservation Committee is drafting letters detailing the grounds for dissatisfaction. We may not be able to reverse the decisions but it is important to ensure that future developments are processed in a manner which restores the balance between the environment and development.

At Anvil Hill HBOC's concern stems from loss of the largest remaining area of woodland on the floor of the Hunter Valley. It is well established that many woodland bird species require extended areas of un-fragmented habitat for their long-term survival so that pockets of the core population survive events like bush fires and drought and can recolonise the area when conditions improve. Hooded Robins and Brown Treecreepers are examples.

While to us there are compelling reasons for opposition to developments, the manner in which the regulations are set out and assessments are conducted make it easier to defend the case for the development as opposed to conservation. For instance it is often argued that there is plenty of other woodland where the species listed under the EPBC and state conservation acts are found, even if these are small fragmented patches of woodland where the species will eventually die out.

Put bluntly the conservation regulations fail to adequately address the threatening processes which will inevitably result in greatly decreased ranges and even local extinction of some species.

HBOC was proactive eight years ago in recognising the threat of industrial development to the bird populations of the Hunter Estuary and their wetland habitats. Monthly surveys were put in place to document the size of the shorebird and waterbird populations and identify the key areas used for feeding and roosting. The various infrastructure developments proposed for the NCIG Coal Export Terminal impact on areas which HBOC has demonstrated to be important to these species.

In handing control to the NSW State Government, the Federal Government has placed a number of requirements on the manner in which the development can proceed particularly covering the new rail lines over the area known as Deep Pond. These requirements include provision of compensatory habitat and creation of new habitat in the event that declines in shorebird populations are demonstrated by ongoing monitoring programs.

The good news is that HBOC, through its proactive implementation of monthly shorebird and water bird populations in the Hunter estuary eight years ago, has established baseline data which almost certainly influenced the drafting of these regulations. The bad news is that the provision of compensatory habitat and the creation of new habitat is at best high risk experimentation with uncertain outcomes.

For instance almost \$1 million has been spent by the NSW State Government on compensation for the area known as Big Pond. The shorebird species which formerly used that area have declined since Big Pond was deliberately managed to the detriment of its natural attributes despite the failure of industrial projects zoned for the area. Remember the much vaunted Protech Steel project; it proved to be as risky and illusionary as the compensatory habitat.

The Conservation Committee often wonders why it spends so much effort bucking the odds and continuing the battle against inappropriate development. The stupidity is we are not opposed to development; rather we demand that it is conducted in a manner which puts the environment first when significant wildlife values are involved. Unfortunately development almost invariably involves the adoption of the easiest and lowest cost option and if the environment is impacted throwing money at the problem through habitat creation and compensation (once-off capital with no provision for ongoing maintenance).

Conservation Report –continued

A constant deficiency in the assessment of the environmental impact of development is the failure to consider the cumulative effect of related projects. For instance the Anvil Hill project and all the other proposed new coal projects create a need for increased coal export facilities at Newcastle.

HBOC's position is that these projects should have been assessed together in order to understand their full impact. We are making this point to the Federal Government. It is ironic that the Anvil Hill EPBC determination does make a link between Anvil Hill and the Lower Hunter Estuary wetlands and their listed species through the effect of green house emissions on climate change, and dismisses the impact of Anvil Hill as small. Why does it not consider the direct impact of the expanded Coal Export Terminal which is more significant and easily quantified?

To be successful we have to be as astute as the developers in exploiting any deficiencies in the environmental laws and regulations. We watch with great interest the outcome of the court case being pursued by the local community group opposed to the Anvil Hill development based on the Federal Government's failure to adequately address the impacts of climate change.

LIBRARY NOTICE

FIVE BOOKS ARE MISSING FROM HBOC LIBRARY

Australian Owls
Tracks, Scats and other Traces
Coastal Birds in Colour
Robins and Flycatchers
(and the appropriately named)
Lost Birds of Paradise

If you have them please return to Robert MacDonald at Club Night or via a Committee Member or simply post to our PO Box – no recriminations will ensue.

Also there are 12 HBOC books that have been borrowed for over 12 months including 6 for more than 3 years – these could fairly be characterised as overdue. **Search your bookshelves/conscience!**

Report to BIGnet September 2007 **HBOC Activities from March 2007 to August 2007**

Report made by Liz Crawford on behalf of HBOC

Community Involvement

Greswick Angus

Greswick Angus is a farm on the Williams River that has been featured by the Catchment Management Authority as a demonstration farm for sustainable agricultural practices. HBOC members have conducted monthly bird surveys as part of the demonstration of sustainability. They have encouraged the owners to become bird-watchers and feature in a book as well as a DVD produced about the property!

U3A Bird Observing Course

Several members organized and ran a course on bird watching for the university of the third age.

Kids' Mini-Twitch

An enthusiastic mother organized a Kids Mini-Twitch to raise funds for the Native Animal Trust Fund and to raise the profile of bird watching at her daughter's school. The event was also advertised at a Catchment Awareness Day run for schools by the Lake Macquarie City Council and several teachers expressed interest. Future events may be better patronized.

Australasian Shorebird Conference, Newcastle, 6/8 July 2007

Phil Straw organized an extremely successful and inspiring conference on *Shorebirds in a Threatened Flyway* at Newcastle University. HBOC members assisted with the organization and running of this event. Presentations featured the marvelous endurance of long-distance godwit flights and the ongoing reclamation of shorebird feeding areas in the Yellow Sea. The reality of the threats to the staging areas for "our birds" on the flyway only emphasizes the need to protect and conserve shorebird habitat here. Chris Herbert, from HBOC, presented a paper on the decline of shorebirds and their habitat in the Hunter Estuary.

Bignet Report -continued

Conservation Activities

Tomago Wetlands

Tomago Wetlands is an area of pasture and saltmarsh on the western side of Fullerton Cove in the Hunter Estuary. Installation of floodgates in the 1970s blocked tidal flow into this area, encouraging pasture development and growth of phragmites reeds. As part of compensatory shorebird habitat development for the loss of Big Pond (soon to become a coal loader), the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) is installing “smart” gates to allow tidal inflow and re-establish wetlands and saltmarsh in this area. HBOC is conducting monthly surveys of birds in this area to monitor their response to habitat change.

Market Swamp

Market Swamp, a SEPP 14 wetland located at Sandgate (near the Hunter Wetlands Centre), used to be an important habitat for Latham’s Snipe. Several years ago, changes to rail works adjacent to the wetland resulted in permanently high water levels and no muddy margins where snipe could forage. Recent construction of the Sandgate Flyover (a railway upgrade for coal trains) provided an opportunity for funding to restore suitable snipe habitat at the wetland. Despite the offer of funding, Newcastle City Council appears to be unwilling to undertake management of the project. HBOC continues to pursue this matter.

Green Corridor Dedication - 1 July 2007

Dedication of 13,800 hectares of land in the Green Corridor to the National Parks Estate took place on 1 July 2007. This partial reservation of Green Corridor Land was a cause for celebration in the Hunter and the result of continued lobbying by a coalition of green groups (including HBOC). The aim is to retain a continuous habitat corridor between the forests of the Watagan Mountains and the coastal sand dunes of Stockton Bight. Lobbying continues.

Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG) Coal Export Terminal

The NCIG Coal Export Terminal has been approved for construction over Big Pond and part of Deep Pond on Kooragang Island industrial area. The project includes construction of a rail spur across the middle of Deep Pond, which would effectively remove shorebird foraging habitat from the southern part of this wetland. HBOC is concerned about the proposed loss of habitat in Deep Pond and the lack of a satisfactory proposal for compensatory habitat.

We have made presentations to Jodi McKay, Member for Newcastle and Josh Gibson, Head of Major Developments in DECC at Newcastle, to raise their awareness of the importance of this wetland and the need for concerted effort to develop compensatory shorebird habitat. The campaign continues.

Dredging of Hunter River South Arm

Proposed dredging of the Hunter River South Arm to allow coal ships to access the proposed NCIG Coal Export Terminal will involve removal of contaminated sediment, which may release toxins into the water column. HBOC has written to the Minister for Planning expressing our concern about adequate protection of estuarine shorebird habitat from the potential adverse effects of dredging contaminated sediment.

Kingshill Town Development around Irrawang Swamp, near Raymond Terrace

HBOC made a submission to Port Stephens Council opposing the wholesale urban development of the immediate catchment of Irrawang Swamp. Years of surveys by Max Maddock were used in the submission to draw attention to the importance of this wetland for birds.

Information Distribution

Hunter Estuary Avian Study

Newcastle City Council commissioned HBOC to compile data and prepare a report on the ‘*Distribution, Abundance and Status of Birds in the Hunter Estuary*’. This report will assist in preparation of the Hunter Estuary Management Plan. It provides maps showing roosting and foraging areas for shorebirds and other significant estuary frequenting birds. The report documents HBOC’s data, including results of monthly shorebird surveys conducted by HBOC over the past 8 years, and compares these results with historical data. It is expected that this compilation will be a useful resource for other government agencies.

Newcastle Coastline Birding Brochure

On behalf of HBOC, Chris Herbert prepared a brochure for Newcastle City Council identifying birds that frequent the local shoreline.

Newcastle Rock Platform Avian Study

As a result of recommendations from a report by HBOC on rock platform frequenting birds and Newcastle University on the marine invertebrates, Newcastle City Council is commissioning the design of educational signs to be placed at strategic entries to the coastline.

NSW & ACT TWITCHATHON 2007

Proceeds to go to the Birds Australia Discovery Centre, Sydney Olympic Park

This year the Birds Australia Discovery Centre (BADC) at Sydney Olympic Park at Homebush Bay will be the recipient of our fund raising conservation efforts. During 2007 the BADC will become the headquarters for the Southern NSW & ACT Branch of Birds Australia (BASNA) and will be manned by volunteers, initially on weekends and some weekdays. The Centre will provide information on the birdlife of Sydney Olympic Park and walking trails, as well as information generally about birds in the Sydney Region and NSW. The Proceeds raised from the Twitchathon will be used to provide education resources for the Centre.

How to join the Twitchathon 27-28 October 2007

1. Contact Frances Czwalinna (see below) for your 2007 Twitchathon Kit
2. Form a team with one or even a dozen friends and family and go birdwatching over this October weekend. You can travel anywhere in NSW and/or the ACT. See how many species of birds your team can find from 3 pm Saturday 27 October to 4 pm Sunday 28 October 2007.
3. Get sponsors. In the weeks before this event, persuade family and friends to sponsor you so many cents or even dollars for each species your team sees. You just need either lots of little sponsorships or a few big ones!
4. Note that Alan Morris, current Twitchathon Co-ordinator, will be overseas attending his son Tim's wedding in Germany during the Twitchathon and so Frances Czwalinna, previous Co-ordinator, has generously agreed to take over once again while Alan is away.

There are prizes for the most species seen by two winning teams in each section, as well as prizes for the most money raised, the rarest bird seen by an individual, a prize for the team that sees the most birds in the shortest distanced travelled in the Main Race & Champagne Race Sections and prizes for children.

This year we have introduced an innovation whereas instead of offering 3rd prizes in the two main classes, we have tried to make people more

environmentally conscious by offering prizes to the team that sees the most birds in the shortest distance travelled, providing that they see over 180 species in the Main Race and 130 species in the Champagne. Participants in the two main races are invited to record the distance travelled from 3pm on the Saturday to 4pm on the Sunday.

So don't think that you have to be an A class birdwatcher to take part. Whichever method you choose for your Twitchathon – the laid back (i.e. the Champagne Race), the deadly serious, or the donor only version, remember it is all about educating others in the importance of nature conservation, particularly the conservation of Australian birds.

Last year we raised \$17,000, and the two years before \$14,000 & \$13,548 respectively! In the past five years we have raised over \$65,000. This is a great achievement and we have been able to make a significant difference for the birds in the Capertee Valley, the Cowra District, Newhaven Station (NT), the Education Unit at Gluepot Reserve & the Australian Bird Study Association's Research Fund. I know that you will join me in making a fantastic contribution one way or another. So, do ask Frances for your Twitchathon Kit **TODAY** or sponsor a Twitchathon team in your bird club or group!

Allan Morris & Frances Czwalinna

Twitchathon Co-ordinator

(For Birds Australia, Southern NSW & ACT)

Tel: 02 9436 0388

Fax: 02 9436 0466

Email Birds Australia - Sydney

E-mail: rosella63@bigpond.com

Don't forget the Fivebough Birding and Nature Fair at Leeton 15-18 November 2007 see www.fivebough.org.au for more details. The Fivebough & Tuckerbil Trust is a major sponsor for Twitchathon 2007

LOCAL NOTE:

Likely contestants and contacts:

Hunter Home Brewers: Steve Roderick 4932 6728

Hunter Thickheads: Ann Lindsey 4951 2008

The Dodgy Drongos: Nick Livanos 4954 5739

The Young'uns: Robert MacDonald 4967 4161

Lesticum phoradae: Liz Huxtable 4954 2570

The Crested Shrike Twits: Lorna Mee 4988 6579

THE TRAVELS OF E7 –Godwit Extraordinaire.

A remarkable story can now be told of a female Bar-tailed Godwit (code name E7) which was implanted with a satellite transmitter on 6/2/07 at Miranda Shorebird Centre, Firth of Thames, New Zealand. She left the nearby Piako River on 17 March. The bird has since been tracked on her 29,000 kilometre journey until her return to New Zealand on 9 September 2007.

The map of her journey is printed below and this may benefit those of you who receive this Newsletter by email and have a colour printer. The remainder may have to rely on my word picture.



The *baueri* subspecies of Bar-tailed Godwit breeds in western Alaska and appears to winter mainly in New Zealand and southeast Australia. The scientists studying the species put satellite tags on a number of birds in New Zealand and Alaska with the intention of understanding better how the species uses the Pacific Basin.

The southward migration of subspecies *baueri* is perhaps the longest non-stop migration of any shorebird – over 11,000 km. The northward migration appears to consist of a series of shorter distance jumps from New Zealand to Australia to Korea/China/Japan and then up to Far Eastern Russia - crossing to the breeding grounds in Western Alaska. It may be, however, that these birds cover this route in two very long legs.

And now for some detail:

6/2/07 Transmitter implanted at Miranda NZ.
17/3/07 Commencement of northern migration.
24/3/07 Arrives Yalu Jiang, flying 10,000 km non-stop; calculated at 181 hours of flight at an average of 56.5kph.
1/5/07 Departs Yalu Jiang –flew eastward well south of the Aleutian Islands before heading northeast to Nelson Lagoon on the Alaska Peninsula.
5/5/07 Arrives Nelson Lagoon having traveled 6459km.
15/5/07 –17/7/97 Resident Manokinak, (Yukon – Kuskokwim Delta) (YKD) where she probably bred.
18/7/07 Flew 155km to Cape Avinof on the SE coast of YKD –where she stayed –“refueling” until 29/8/07.
29/8/07 to 7/9/07 – 204 hours non-stop flying, covering 11570km and arriving back at Piako River NZ - the site she took off from on 17/3/07.

Total minimum distance flown 29,181km Piako – Piako in about 500 hours of flying.

Whilst E7 travelled the migration route described it is interesting to note what happened to the other 13 Godwits tagged at the same time and place.

One decided to skip breeding for the year and stay in New Zealand.

Six birds either turned round or their transmitters stopped working.

The other seven were tracked on their northward migration via coastal staging areas in South Korea, China and Japan ending up in Alaska in May. The transmitters lasted longer than expected and perhaps will go off the air before the other birds move south from Alaska.

The study confirmed and gave more detail of the Godwit migration route. It should strengthen the international pressure to safeguard the staging sites of this most remarkable species.

See www.werc.usgs.gov for more info

OBSERVATIONS FROM CLUB NIGHTS AUG/SEP 2007

Jun 30	Pied Oystercatcher	1	Swansea	V.Moon
	Darter	2	"	"
Jul 17	Pied Oystercatcher	2	Murrays Beach	"
	Darter	1	"	"
Jul 8	Pacific Baza	1	Salamander Bay	L.Wooding
Jul 20 & 31	Australian Magpie		Bonnells Bay & Sunshine	R.Goodenough
Jul	Australian Owlet Nightjar	3heard	Green Wattle Creek	G.Brosie
	Barn Owl	1	"	"
	Eastern Reef Egret	1	Moon Island	"
	Red-necked Stint	1	"	"
	Grey-tailed Tattler	1	"	"
	Whimbrel	1	"	"
	Fluttering Shearwater	~30	Swansea Heads	"
Jul 20	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	3	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Aug 6	Powerful Owl	1	New Lambton Heights	"
Jul 27	Little Raven	~60	F3 Freeway	L.&C.Herbert
Aug 19	Musk Duck	2f+3dy	Myall Shores Ferry	P. & C. Lightfoot
Aug 28	Grass Owl	1	Ash Island	"
Aug/Sep	Osprey	Pr nest	Black Neds Bay	J.Adams
	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	~20	Galgabba Point	"
Jul	White-headed Pigeon	3	Kotara	J.Nicholls
Jul 31	Variiegated Fairy-wren	3+	Cardiff	L.Livanos
Jul/Aug	Rainbow Lorikeet	3+1dy	Sunshine	C.Goodenough
Aug 20	Little Black Cormorant	138	Bonnells Bay	"
Sep 12	Masked Lapwing	Pr+1dy	Pelaw Main	"
Aug 28	Topknot Pigeon	30	Dora Creek	"
Aug 7	Australasian Gannet	2	Port Stephens heads	S. & T. Burgin
Aug 8	Crimson Rosella	1	Nelson Bay town centre	"
Aug 5	Striated Thornbill	2nb	Teralba	A.Lindsey/J.Westphal
Aug 8	Pheasant Coucal	1	Windale	P.Pountney
Aug	Topknot Pigeon	6-12	Belmont South	J.Cockerell
Aug 5	Osprey	1	Buttaba	T.Clarke
Aug 7	Topknot Pigeon	1	Little Pelican	"
Aug 6	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	3	Fingal Head	"
Sep 6	Little Black Cormorant	280	Eleebana	A.Gooden
Sep 12	Grey Goshawk	1	"	"
Aug 31	Little Lorikeet	2	"	"
	Musk Lorikeet	30	"	"
Sep 7	Grey Goshawk	1	Adamstown Heights	P.Pountney
Sep 9	Black-chinned Honeyeater	6	Werakata NP	J.Goswell
Sep 10	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	East Maitland	J.Smart
Sep 12	Blue-billed Duck	Pr	Walka Water Works	"
Sep 13	White-necked Heron	4	Maitland Rly.Station	"
Sep 12	Tawny Frogmouth	1on	Tyrrell St, Newcastle Hill	P.Hansbro
Sep 1	Pheasant Coucal	1	Ash Island	N.McNaughton
Aug 25	Lathams Snipe	4	Woodville	M.Newman
Aug 24	Swift Parrot	8	Martins Creek	"
	Australian King Parrot	12	"	"
Aug 25	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	15	"	"
Aug 25	Eastern Yellow Robin	N 3eggs	"	"
Aug 25	Dusky Woodswallow	6	'	"
Aug 25	Double-barred Finch	20+	'	"
Sep 1	Fairy Martin	~12	Wingen	G.Newling
	Fairy Martin	~15	Aberdeen	"
	White-necked Heron	1	Parkville	"
Sep 13	Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo	1	Wingen	"
	Rufous Songlark	1	"	"
Sep 9	Blue-billed Duck	4	Old Quipolly Dam [nr Quirindi]	"
Aug 18	Pallid Cuckoo	1	Jerrys Plains	H.Tarrant
Aug 19	Pallid Cuckoo	1	Bolwarra	"

Sep 8	Rainbow Bee-eater	Heard	Hunter River nr. Burreen	H.Tarrant
Aug 25	White-throated Gerygone	1	Vacy	“
Aug 30	Latham's Snipe	1	Bolwarra Lagoon	“
Aug 22	Blackbirds		Bolwarra & Maitland	“
Sep 8	Whistling Kite	Pr nest	Walka Water Works	“
	Brown Goshawk	1 nest	“	“
Aug/Sep	Peaceful Dove	1	Bolwarra	“
	Striped Honeyeater		“	“
Sep 6	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1	“	“
Sep 5	Spotted Harrier	1	Bolwarra & earlier at Thornton	J. & H.Tarrant
Aug 25	Topknot Pigeon		Vacy	“
	Torresian Crow		“	“
	Forest Raven		“	“

An interesting observation by Chris Eastham of a Laughing Kookaburra taking a baby Masked Lapwing at Awabakal NR.

Mike Newman has mentioned a decline in the number of Purple Swamphen using properties at Woodville since the June floods.

Also noted a Yellow-faced Honeyeater with abnormal plumage at Woodville on Aug 25. The bird had a white bar on the closed wing and a spike of white extended from the yellow stripe up onto the crown, giving a bridled effect.

The Channel-billed Cuckoo on September 10 is our earliest reported sighting for 2007 so far.

President's Column

Spring is well and truly underway – the camp at Baerami Creek on the October long weekend had lots of nesting honeyeaters and numerous cuckoos lurking in the vicinity, waiting for an opportunity to dupe an unsuspecting surrogate. The Dollarbirds are back from their tropical winters and the Channel-billed Cuckoos and Koels are loudly proclaiming their presence. Rainbow Bee-eaters and Woodswallows are gracing the skies. Migratory shorebirds are gradually returning too – some large flocks of Red Knots have already passed through the Hunter Estuary and our Bar-tailed Godwits, Eastern Curlews, Ruddy Turnstones, Pacific Golden Plovers, Grey-tailed Tattlers and Terek Sandpipers are slowly increasing in numbers. Coloured leg flags have been spotted on some birds – orange leg flags identify birds that have been banded in Victoria; yellow leg flags denote birds banded in northwest Western Australia; while white leg flags identify birds that have been banded in New Zealand. It is always exciting to see these birds and know that these perpetual travellers are en route — most likely heading for the places where they were banded. Any banding sightings can be emailed to Clive Minton at: mintons@ozemail.com.au or call Ann Lindsey on 4951 2008.

At the next Committee Meeting on 7 November, we will be deciding on next year's program and would love your ideas about places to go – we are looking for new places and new trip leaders, so please let a Committee Member know about your favourite birding place! Leaders don't have to be bird “experts” – they just need to know the area and where the amenities are.

As part of our affiliation with Bird Observation and Conservation Australia (BOCA), we will not be holding outings on days when a total fire ban has been declared.

Sunday 21 October is Catchment Day at the Hunter Wetlands Centre. This is a great day out for families and an excellent opportunity for HBOC to raise awareness of birds and attract people to bird watching. Lorna Mee will be coordinating our display and would love to have help from other members – a friendly face and a love of birds is all you need! Lorna can be contacted on 4988 6579.

Tom Clarke's maintenance efforts at Stockton Sandspit have been royally repaid by a Pied Oystercatcher which has chosen to nest in the middle of the island on the Sandspit. It will be wonderful if the birds succeed in hatching their eggs. Please take care when visiting the Sandspit while the birds are nesting – they are extremely wary and will leave the nest at the slightest human intrusion into their vision. They are likely to hatch in the first week of November.

The last weekend in October is the Painted Snipe survey as well as the Twitchathon – check out a wetland for Painted Snipe and help this endangered species by discovering where it lives. Or sponsor a Twitchathon team to raise money for the Birds Australia (Southern NSW and ACT) Discovery Centre at Sydney Olympic Park. And keep your observations flowing in to Alan Stuart for the Annual Bird Report. Happy birding!

Liz Crawford

DATE	EVENT	MEETING PLACE & TIME	CONTACT
Saturday 13 October	Hunter Wader Survey	9.30am Ash Island 10.00 other locations as directed	Michael Kearns 49671978 Chris Herbert 4959 3663
Sunday 14 October	Field Outing Jerusalem Creek Telegherry	8.00am Dungog –Information Park on the Hill	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Tuesday 16 October	Tomago Wetland Survey	7.30am Tomago House.	Please ring to confirm Neville McNaughton 4951 1265
Sunday 21 October	Catchment Day National Water Week Display Helpers required	9.00am to 4.00pm The Wetlands Centre	Alan Stuart 4951 8569
Saturday/Sunday 27/28 October	TWITCHATHON Join a team and/or help raise money for Birds Australia	4.00pm Sun. BBQ at Hunter Wetlands Centre	\$4.50 entry to Hunter Wetlands Centre .
Tuesday 6 November	Midweek Outing Swansea/Caves Beach	7.30am. Park at end of Lambton Parade Swansea Heads	John & Beth Cockerell
Wednesday 7 November	Management Committee Meeting	7.00pm to 10.00pm Garden Suburb School	All members welcome
Saturday 10 November	Hunter Wader Survey	8.30am Ash Island 9.00am Other locations	Chris Herbert 49593663 Alan Stuart 49528569
Sunday 11 November	Volunteer Day Stockton Sandspit	8.00am to Noon Sandspit Car Park	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Wednesday 14 November	Club Night	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Guest Speaker Robert McDonald
Tuesday 20 November	Tomago Wader Survey	7.30am Tomago House	Please ring to confirm Neville McNaughton 4951 1265
Saturday 24 November	Atlassing Dungog area	6.30am MacDonaldis Raymond Terrace	Please ring to confirm Nick Livanos 4954 5739 Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Saturday /Sunday 24/25 November	Field Outing & Camp opt Cooperook SF & Harrington	8.00am Sunday at Rainforest Walk near Harrington Caravan Park	Robert McDonald 4967 4161
Tuesday 4 December	Mid-Week Outing Awabakal Reserve	7.30am Car Park at end of Ocean Road	Judy Thomas 4952 2960
Wednesday 5 December	Management Committee Meeting	7.00pm to 10.00pm Garden Suburb School	All members welcome
Saturday 8 December	Hunter Wader Survey	7.30am Ash Island 8.00am Other Locations As Directed	Michael Kearns 49671978 Chris Herbert 49593663
Sunday 9 December	Volunteer Day Stockton Sandspit	8.00am to Noon Sandspit Car Park	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Wednesday 12 December	Xmas Club Night	7.30pm Hunter Wetlands Centre	Members slides, videos anecdotes. Please bring a plate.
Sunday 16 December	Annual Lathams Snipe Count Pambalong etc	8.30am Minmi Pub	Liz Crawford 49593663