



# NEWSLETTER

*Issue 2/10 April 2010 - May 2010*

## Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc

affiliated with Bird Observation and Conservation Australia

### **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

At the Annual General Meeting in February, the following people were elected to executive positions:

President	Paul Baird	4938 5039
Vice-President	Mick Roderick	0421 761 237
Secretary	Marj Kibby	4969 7413
Treasurer	Joy Nicholls	4957 3612
Committee Member	Grant Brosie	4934 7383
Committee Member	Tom Clarke	4951 3872
Committee Member	Darryl Luck	4982 9248
Committee Member	Ian Martin	4943 9256
Committee Member	Lorna Mee	4988 6579
Conservation Coordinator	Ann Lindsey	4951 2008
Activities Officer	Lorna Mee	4988 6579
Records Officer	Sue Hamonet	4958 1023
Librarian (books, CDs)	Colin Goodenough	0408 664 220
Librarian (slides)	John Cockerell	4945 3008
Newsletter Editor	Liz Crawford	4959 3663

Newsletter articles may be sent direct to the Editor at: [chrisliz@tpg.com.au](mailto:chrisliz@tpg.com.au)  
Deadline for the next edition is 27 May 2010.

The Club's postal address is: PO Box 24 New Lambton NSW 2305

The Club's website is: [www.hboc.org.au](http://www.hboc.org.au)

## President's Column

HBOC was indeed fortunate to host the annual Birds Australia NSW and ACT (BASNA) Symposium and AGM last month. The event brought together a combined total of sixty people from the BASNA organisation and HBOC to share their knowledge and experience in a convivial atmosphere. Substantial progress was achieved with regard to solving issues of field data management when Andrew Silcocks from the Birds Australia National Office met with Mike Newman and other enthusiastic members of the Club. These collaborative efforts will doubtless be of mutual benefit to both organisations and ultimately to the conservation of birds. The diverse speaker program highlighted the value of the BA Atlas Project in the context of shorebirds, woodland birds and habitat rehabilitation while the relaxed outing to the Walka Recreational and Wildlife Reserve provided further opportunities for networking and of course, birdwatching. Despite some early concerns about bird numbers, the bush birds rose to the occasion to compensate for the absence of some water birds and the walk produced a total of 53 species sighted. Also of note was the excellent display of bird photographs contributed by Club members, which served as an important avenue for discussing Hunter birds and adding to the atmosphere and success of the meeting. Thank you to Jim Smart for mounting the display and to the photographers for contributing their photographs to the Club. Thank you also to *all* members for their individual contributions in making this a successful event for the Club. Feedback received from visiting delegates has been very positive and was perhaps best expressed by one of the younger delegates when at the end of the two days remarked, "I've just learnt so much! Thank you!"



Judi Thomas and Max Maddock discussing Max's poster on egrets at the BASNA seminar.  
Photo Jim Smart



Hannes Nothdurster from Swarovski Binoculars and Telescopes demonstrating digiscoping attachments to Bob and Janeen Greig at the BASNA Seminar.  
Photo Jim Smart

In March the NSW Scientific Committee upgraded the status of the Regent Honeyeater from Endangered to Critically Endangered; this new status reflecting that this species is facing the immediate risk of extinction. The Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ) is a site of great significance to this species in the Hunter Region (illustrated by the fact that an important Regent Honeyeater breeding event occurred at this site in 2007) and recent proposals for rezoning of this area will have potentially damaging effects on the remaining habitat. The HBOC Conservation Committee is currently actively pursuing this matter.

At the March meeting Ann Lindsey was enthusiastically welcomed to Life Membership of HBOC for her outstanding contributions to the Hunter Bird Observers Club and to the conservation of birds. A copy of some remarks made in support of Ann's nomination appears elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Hunter birders have enjoyed two highly successful pelagic trips off the Port Stephens coast in March. The first yielded some rarities to the area, however, the second produced the first Australian record for a New Zealand Storm Petrel! Interestingly, a different New Zealand Storm Petrel was sighted off Ulladulla less than twenty four hours later! What an example of good birding and the importance of keeping on looking!

Good Birding, Keep Looking!

**Paul Baird**

# New Threatened Bird Species for NSW

On 12 February 2010 the NSW Scientific Committee made several Final Determinations that affect threatened bird species in the Hunter Region. The NSW Scientific Committee is an independent body that oversees the listing of threatened species in NSW. Once species are listed as threatened, they are predominantly managed by the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW).

In February, 5 new species were listed as threatened in NSW. These were:

- Spotted Harrier
- Little Eagle
- Flame Robin
- Scarlet Robin
- Varied Sittella



Scarlet Robin - photo Chris Tzaros



Varied Sittella - photo Dean Ingwerson

All of these species occur within the Hunter Region. The reasons for their listing are varied, but generally the continuing loss and degradation of habitat is the overriding factor that has led to their declines. Other factors include loss of prey species, impacts from

pesticides / herbicides and competition from invasive native or introduced bird species. A key information source for noting the declines of these species cited by the NSW Scientific Committee was the difference in reporting rates between the two Birds Australia Atlas projects.

This takes the tally of threatened bird species / subspecies to 74 in the Hunter Region. This is a significant proportion of the 120 species / races that are listed as threatened throughout NSW.

Furthermore, another amendment was made by the Scientific Committee, being the upgrading of the Australian Pied Oystercatcher from 'Vulnerable' to 'Endangered'. This means that the Australian Pied Oystercatcher is at a greater level of threat than was originally thought and that extinction within NSW may be a real possibility if the factors causing the current declines aren't reversed.

For more information, visit the following link:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspecies/index.htm>

Whilst there are many ways to assist with the recovery of threatened species (such as getting involved with revegetation projects such as those being done for Regent Honeyeaters in the Capertee Valley), one good way is to submit sighting records of these species to either the Birds Australia Atlas and/or the DECCW Atlas of NSW Wildlife database. See me or a committee member for details on how to do this.

**Mick Roderick**

## Capertee Valley Tree-planting 15-16 May 2010

Birds Australia established the Capertee Valley Regent Honeyeater Recovery Group in 1993 to help conserve this key breeding area for the Regent Honeyeater. Since 1994, the Group and its many volunteer supporters have planted over 75,000 trees and shrubs at various strategic sites throughout the Capertee Valley.

In May 2010 another 3,000 trees and shrubs will be planted - with the essential support of the volunteer workforce. New recruits are always welcome and "on the job" training will be provided.

Contact Pixie Maloney at BASNA for further info and bookings: [basna@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:basna@birdsaustralia.com.au)

## Trip Reports

### Seal Rocks

Sunday outing 21 February 2010

Seal Rocks is a couple of hours north of Newcastle - so an 8am start at Bungwahl meant getting up before dawn. The bonus is seeing the mist rising over Hexham Swamp against a pale pink sky - magic! We were drawn by the promise of rainforest birds and a seawatch from the headland at Seal Rocks Lighthouse.

Seal Rocks is very scenic with wide open views across forested slopes from the car park near the Caravan Park. Just up the road is a small track into the littoral rainforest - it goes just far enough to enclose you inside rainforest and allow the birds to appear. We were rewarded with Rufous Fantail, Yellow-throated Scrubwren, Large-billed Scrubwren, Regent Bowerbird and Catbird.

Back to the cars for a short drive to another car park at the entrance to the lighthouse track. A pleasant walk through coastal forest to the grassy slopes beside the lighthouse, where we set up our scopes for sea-watching. Unfortunately, not much was happening on this calm day - an Australasian Gannet, a Pomarine Jaeger, Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, Pied Cormorants and Little Black Cormorants patterned the seascape. Despite the low bird count, we had a most enjoyable day.

**Liz Crawford**

### The Watagan Area

Mid-week outing 2 March 2010

On a very overcast morning 14 hearty people met at Freemans Waterhole and then proceeded up Mt Faulk Road to the Gap Creek Forest Park. After walking up the valley track, some people continued up to the waterfall, before returning to look around the picnic area. The first and last bird seen was the Superb Lyrebird. Other birds seen included the Australian Brush-turkey, Golden Whistler, Bassian Thrush, Grey Shrike-thrush, Crested Shrike-tit, White-headed Pigeon, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Rufous Fantail and Grey Fantail.

After morning tea, the group continued up to the Heaton Lookout where Eastern Yellow Robin, Brown Gerygone, Eastern Spinebill, Lewin's Honeyeater, Mistletoebird and White-browed Scrubwren were some of the birds seen. After the bird call, with only 29 species recorded, it started to rain, so some called it a day while others continued on to the Hunter Lookout.

**Don Moon**

## Newsletter Name

Having collected suggestions for a Newsletter name over the past few months, the Club is now ready to choose a name! Once again, your input is needed. Please choose three names ("Newsletter" is still an option) and indicate your order of preference by email to [chrisliz@tpg.com.au](mailto:chrisliz@tpg.com.au) or by mail to HBOC, PO Box 34, New Lambton 2305.

Newsletter Name	Suggested by
Huntabird	David Rushton
HBOC Jizz	Darryl Luck
The Hunter Jizz	Darryl Luck
The Jizz	Darryl Luck
The Oil	Alan Stuart
The Hunter Oil	Alan Stuart
Hunter Harrier	Marea Diemar
HBOC Observer	Gaye Drady
Pectoralis Post	Gaye Drady
Whistler Post	Gaye Drady
Hunter Wings	Gaye Drady
Whistler Wires	Gaye Drady
The Tweeter	Ian Kennedy
The Warbler	Marj Kibby
Newsletter	Anon

Jizz - a bird's typical movement and behaviour - formerly 'GISS' an acronym for 'general impression of size and shape', a military term used in the second World War when training pilots and seamen to quickly identify enemy ships and planes.

Editor's Note:

HBOC has lots of excellent photographers whose work was beautifully show-cased at the recent BASNA seminar. It is intended that the birds of Borah Traveling Stock Route, where the Easter camp was held, will be featured in the next Newsletter. Photographic contributions will be very welcome.

# Survey Reports

## Port Stephens Waterbird Survey

12 February 2010

Boat-based waterbird surveys of Port Stephens commenced in February 2004, as a joint venture between HBOC, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the Marine Parks Authority (MPA). HBOC provided bird watchers, NPWS and MPA provided boats and skippers, and Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project also provided a boat. The Port is surveyed at high tide with six routes being covered simultaneously (see survey routes). On Friday 12 February 2010, the 7<sup>th</sup> summer survey took place with about 14 observers. The survey takes 3 to 4 hours and finds large numbers of certain waders, especially Pied Oystercatchers, Bar-tailed Godwits and Eastern Curlews, numerous other waders and many waterbirds. Afterwards, we all met at the NPWS office in Nelson Bay to collate results and enjoy a delicious lunch, thanks to NPWS. Here are some impressions of the survey.

### Di Johnson and Darryl Eggins (Bravo sector):

Bravo sector's survey ranged from half way along Jimmys Beach to Fame Point and around Boondaba Island, a lengthy stretch along the northern shoreline of Port Stephens. We set out from the NPWS heading for Corrie Island where we left Greg Little and Mick Murphy in a small tender to survey the back of the island and the inlet nearby. Calm waters enabled Britt Anderson from the Marine Parks Authority to get in pretty close to the beach running along the foreshore there, which proved to be a favourite spot for waders as we soon counted 161 Bar-tailed Godwits, 11 Whimbrels, 11 Eastern Curlews and 14 Pied Oystercatchers.

Our tally on Pied Cormorants rose slowly to 39 and Great Cormorants to 17 while near Pindimar Bay we counted over 300 Black Swans. As for other species we had good sightings of 5 Arctic Jaegers, 2 White-bellied Sea-Eagles, a Whistling Kite and one Osprey which was flying close to Boondaba Island.

We were most impressed with Britt's professionalism on the way back as she stopped a boat with 2 fellows fishing there in National Park waters and one of them without a licence. The latter was promptly fined.

### Greg Little (Alpha sector):

On a still, sunny Friday morning, Mick Murphy of the NPWS and I motored smoothly about the quiet shores of Corrie Island and Winda Woppa in a little rubber



Port Stephens Survey routes:  
Hot pink - Alpha sector  
Yellow - Bravo sector  
Orange-brown - Charlie sector  
Red - Delta sector  
Blue - Echo sector  
Green - Foxtrot sector



Greg Little and Mick Murphy (NPWS) about to survey Corrie Island - photo Di Johnson

dinghy, discussing life and searching for waders for the Port Stephens Waterbird Survey. Our tally of waders to contribute to the estuary-wide count included Bar-tailed Godwits, Pied Oystercatchers, Red-capped Plovers, Caspian, Crested and Little Terns, Silver Gulls, cormorants, Striated Heron, Pelicans, Black Swans, Red Knot, Grey-tailed Tattlers and an immature Double-banded Plover. Additional species were Arctic Jaegers, White-bellied Sea-Eagles and Whistling Kites. It was great birding with pleasant company on a fantastic day for good cause.

## Alan Stuart (Myall River):

Our survey of Port Stephens this year coincided with a study being undertaken by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) of water quality in the Myall River, and they asked if we would extend our survey so they could have some baseline data about the birds in the River. Brooke and Ben from DECCW picked me up at Nelson Bay wharf in their little zodiac and soon we were across Port Stephens and into action. We started our survey immediately upstream from where the usual survey finishes, and very quickly found a group of seven Grey-tailed Tattlers. These were the only shorebirds we recorded, and the main birds for the remainder of the survey, which extended through to the beginning of the Myall Lake, were pelicans, cormorants and gulls - and also many swans; most of these were lurking within the mangroves and we probably undercounted them slightly because they were hard to spot.

Feeling somewhat shorebird-deprived, I asked Brooke and Ben to take me back via Winda Woppa and Corrie Island, which had been surveyed already by Di, Darryl and Greg, but I enjoyed my brief views of lots of Pied Oystercatchers and Eastern Curlews as we chugged by.

Resource constraints will make it unlikely that we will be able to survey Myall River regularly but if nothing else, we will have to be sure to check out the Grey-tailed Tattler roost site when we do the future surveys of Port Stephens.

## Lois Wooding (Charlie sector):

Brrrrring! Brrrrring! What the .....! It was five bells and time to hit the deck for the summer waterbird survey of the bay. I somehow stumbled through breakfast, made it to the dock, and joined the trusty crew aboard the good (rubber) ship *Bluefin*, all in one swallow of coffee – didn't want to get caught out there.

Living by the bay, I am familiar with its many moods and Friday morning was about as benign as it gets, which was probably a relief to all as we pulled out of Soldiers Point and skimmed across to our starting point. There were no outstanding sightings for the day, but we found our fair share of birds: both oystercatchers, including one Sooty with distinctly yellow eyes; 5 species of waders, including 154 Bar-tailed Godwits and 16 Grey-tailed Tattlers; 12 species of 'Other Birds'; 3 species of terns; the ubiquitous Silver Gulls; 3 species of raptors and, by way of a bonus, a sea turtle.

It's such a big bay. Covering it completely by land or water is next to impossible. I'm always left wondering what might be hiding down the tidal creeks or across

the shallows. But it was a most enjoyable morning with good weather, good birds and good company – the salad wraps and cake at NPWS headquarters weren't bad either.

## Liz Crawford (Delta sector):

The biggest challenge in Port Stephens are the vast open stretches of water that quickly become very choppy and uncomfortable in a small boat if the wind picks up. We have been wet on numerous previous surveys and fully expected this one to be no different.

Delta sector involves circumnavigating Snapper Island then cruising to Little Swan Bay where we motor as close to the mangroves as possible in order to flush the Whimbrel which are roosting there. They are very difficult to count while roosting as they are quite inconspicuous – there are always many more when they flush! Several oyster-farmers have their jetties and sheds in Little Swan Bay and inevitably there are good numbers of Pied Oystercatchers, usually lined up on a long jetty – we counted 26, accompanied by 6 Sooty Oystercatchers with bright yellow eye-rings. Grey-tailed Tattlers are the hardest to see – quietly roosting on rocks along the shoreline. There are only a couple of small shingle beaches that provide roost sites for shorebirds such as Bar-tailed Godwits – so most of these perch on regularly spaced oyster poles off the village of Swan Bay and further south towards Cockleshell Point. Cormorants, terns, gulls and a few Whimbrels also perch on the poles. Eastern Curlews usually roost in saltmarsh to the south of Swan Bay village. We beach the boat and walk into the fringing casuarinas to count them. But this time, they were in the air, disturbed by a raptor perhaps, and a flock of about 80 flew well inland to roost – out of sight. About 100 stayed on the narrow beach just north of Cockleshell Point. Over 120 Black Swans floated lazily on calm water near the entrance to Big Swan Bay. Orobilah Island provided a final surprise – 6 Pacific Golden Plovers and 68 Eastern Curlew roosting on a rock shelf on the northern side of the island. (see photo) A magic day of calm sunny weather – a real gift for a waterbird survey covering such a broad open waterway as Port Stephens.

**Survey results** show consistently high counts of Pied Oystercatchers, and provide excellent data for future planning to protect this endangered species.

Summer Surveys:	Pied Oystercatchers
February 2004	112
March 2005*	30
February 2006	77
February 2007	108
February 2009	134
February 2010	144

\*The March 2005 survey had some operational problems so this is not a full count.

## Paul Baird (Foxtrot Sector)

The rectilinear shape of the computer monitor displays the spreadsheet with numbers and names all neatly arranged in titled columns and rows. What do they tell, those ordered numbers and names? Species of birds and how many there are in a moment of time? Things which are good for the mind? Astute minds will graph and extrapolate, statistically analyse and predict, ponder and discuss and report those numbers and names. The lasting record will be built and conclusions drawn upon which action can be taken to ensure the future of those names and their numbers-essential work, rewarding and satisfying work.

But what do they hide, those numbers and names? An intoxicating mix of early morning sunlight, fresh air tinged with the tang of salt, glassy waters, good company and birds. The heart stirring real birds beneath those ordered names, Pied Oystercatchers upon the rocky island shores, flocks of Whimbrel taking to the wing from the fringing mangroves as "Captain" Richard guides the M.V. Slapper ever closer, Black Swans with long arched necks and glistening plumage, gliding effortlessly, peacefully... all things good for the soul. That's what they hide, those numbers and names.

## STOP PRESS

### A new bird species for Australia discovered off Port Stephens

On 28 March 2010 a significant discovery was made during a pelagic birding trip approximately 25 nautical miles off Port Stephens. For about 15 minutes or so, an unusual storm-petrel was watched as it worked its way south and south-east away from the boat's stern. The bird was obviously different to the numerous Wilson's Storm-Petrels that had been attending the slick during the day and was thought to be either a White-bellied or Black-bellied Storm-Petrel. However, it soon dawned on those on board that we were possibly looking at a NEW ZEALAND STORM-PETREL.

The identification was confirmed later and indeed, we had been looking at Australia's first record of this enigmatic species. The significance of this record cannot be overstated. The New Zealand Storm-Petrel was long thought extinct as it was only ever known from museum specimens collected during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The species was literally "rediscovered" in January 2003 on a pelagic trip off the Coromandel Peninsula in north-east New Zealand and has been recorded on numerous occasions on subsequent pelagics in that area.

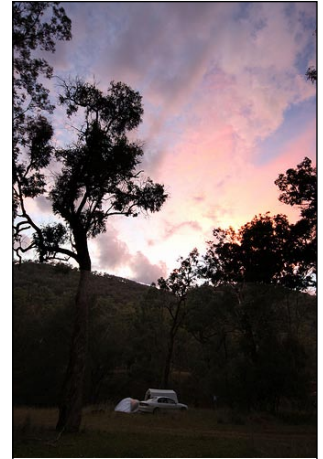
It is incredible then that we should find an individual just

## New Members

The Club extends a warm welcome to new Members:

Jane Ison of Wallsend  
Simon and Helen Palfreeman of Gateshead  
Jan Hissey of Carey Bay  
Helen Windon  
and renewing member:  
Iain Paterson of Maitland

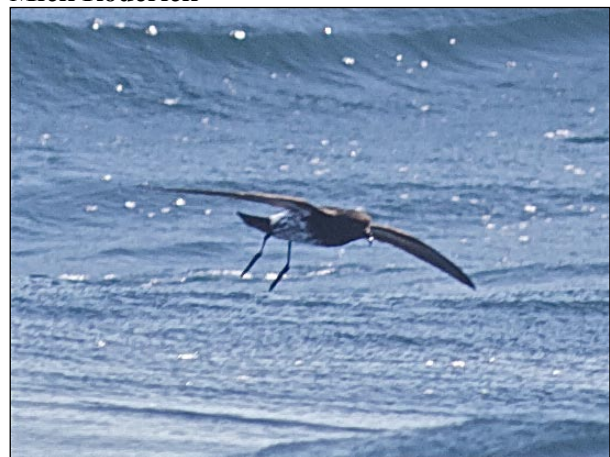
We hope to meet you at Club outings and meetings.



Easter Camp at Borah  
Travelling Stock Route near  
Barraba - photo Marj Kibby

25 nautical miles off Port Stephens. Even more incredible (perhaps not?) is the fact that a bird that looks like a New Zealand Storm-Petrel but for which the ID cannot be confirmed at this time, was seen about 35 nautical miles off Ulladulla the day after our pelagic off Port Stephens! There is clearly a great deal we do not know about this species. We will be making a submission to the Birds Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) and intend to publish the record elsewhere. In the meantime, the New Zealand ornithologists are re-thinking their theories about this species and I will give an update on this in the next Newsletter.

### Mick Roderick



New Zealand Storm-Petrel seen off Port Stephens 28 March 2010. Photo Allan Richardson

## Life Membership - Ann Lindsey

From its early beginnings as a group of 12 people, HBOC has developed into a strong vibrant club which has earned the respect of many sectors of the community. Ann Lindsey has been a major player in this process for nearly twenty years. Ann has brought to the Club strong conviction, leadership, determination, persistence, foresight, idealism tempered with reality and an infectious enthusiasm and joy for bird watching.

Ann first joined a bird club, the NSW Field Ornithologists Club in 1969, spent some time bird watching in Germany before returning to become that Club's Activities Officer and Committee Member. There Ann participated in the BA Atlas pilot project in the mid 1970s. Ann's ensuing work with the first BA Atlas gave purpose and direction to her bird watching and gave rise to what was to become a consuming interest in conservation.

Ann relocated to the Hunter Region and in late 1989 joined HBOC, became a Committee Member in 1991 and was President from 1992 to 1995. Ann has willingly given her services to the committee of this club since 1991, a period of just on 19 years.

Coal entered Ann's life. Working with a strong conservation team Ann's influence and drive were applied to the issues surrounding Deep Pond and the latest coal loader and this work resulted in winning valuable environmental offsets. Coal remains in her life. She continues to work tirelessly for the protection of valuable bird habitat in the face of increasing levels of development within the coal industry.

Ann is an influential communicator and under her leadership has a team of members working doggedly in the difficult field of regulation and legislation and being an environmental watch-dog, to bring HBOC's reputation as an agent for conservation and advocacy for

birds to a level at least equal to, if not greater than, that of any similar organisation in Australia. Ann is also the Conservation Officer for the Australasian Wader Study Group and has been active in the international campaign for shorebirds in Korea.

Ann saw value in collecting data through systematic survey work and set out to promote these activities within HBOC. Special surveys were instigated, all driven by Ann's firm belief that the data would be influential in securing conservation outcomes. How right she was! This data collection was in addition to her continuing dedication to the second BA Atlas and the Ongoing Atlas, for which she has been the Hunter Regional Coordinator since 1999. Ann is now in the wonderful position of seeing those many years of hard work coming to fruition through the application of results from the Atlas project. In her moments of quiet reflection, I am sure that this must be a source of deep personal satisfaction.

Mentors are a part of life and Ann would be the first to acknowledge the role of her mentors; similarly, there would be many members of this club that would acknowledge having Ann as a person of positive influence in their bird-watching endeavours. Ann is always willing to help and teach; by sharing her experience, she introduces people to birds, encourages them to become involved and enthuses each of them with the joys of bird watching – and therein resides Ann's great contribution for the future.

In granting Ann life membership, HBOC acknowledges her many years of dedicated service to the Club, its members, the community and the birds.

**Paul Baird**

### HBOC Membership Fees for 2010

Membership Fees for 2010 are now overdue \$30.00 Single and Family, \$5.00 Junior  
Membership forms can be obtained at Club Night or by downloading from the website:  
**[www.hboc.org.au](http://www.hboc.org.au)**

Please pay at Club Night or send cheque or money order payable to HBOC:  
PO Box 24, New Lambton 2305.



# Hunterbirding - latest email forum

Hunterbirding is an email group set up by HBOC that is run through the Yahoo Groups. It is a great way to keep in touch with the latest goings-on in Hunter Region birding. Members are able to report sightings, post questions to the group and get involved with group discussions on bird-related issues. If you are interested in joining the group then please visit the HBOC website for details on how to sign up: <http://www.hboc.org.au/index.cfm?menukey=27>. You can choose either to receive individual emails or a single daily digest. The following article highlights some of the reports and discussions that have happened on Hunterbirding so far this year.

## January

Following the Christmas festivities the Hunter New Year was brought in with a prolonged period of rainfall and reports of a total washout out west. Unfortunately the arrival of this rain saw the departure of most western-loving birds that had graced us with their presence in December. Gone were the Black-tailed Native-hens and no reports of any Pink-eared Ducks either. Thankfully for those birders embarking on a Hunter "Big Year" in 2010, a pair of Blue-billed Duck remained faithful to Walka Water Works. The Maitland area continued to provide good birding, with many reports of farmland specialists such as Banded Lapwing, Horsfield's Bushlark and Stubble Quail from Phoenix Park and Largs. A movement of Square-tailed Kites was reported passing through the area, prompting discussion on the status of this species in the Hunter and the regular observations of it in the Maitland-Cessnock area at this time of year.

The large flocks of White-throated Needletail that had arrived in early summer were still being reported throughout the area and lucky observers were also treated to views of Fork-tailed Swift. In the Hunter Estuary good numbers of Little Tern were being reported, as were two Lesser Sand Plover at Stockton Sand Spit. There was also discussion on the successful breeding event of Pied Oystercatchers at this site which yielded two lively runners, providing good photo opportunities to those keen on clicking.

With several Hunter year-listers keen to get off to a good start a number of trip reports from some of the more remote locations in the region were posted. Trips to Goulburn River NP proved successful, with reports including Emu, Turquoise Parrot, Black-eared Cuckoo, White-throated Nightjar, Chestnut-rumped Heathwren and White-backed Swallow. A particular highlight was news on the rediscovery of Southern Whiteface in the

Hunter Region, reported for the first time in eight years, along Durrigere Road. Other trip reports included Copeland SCA and Gloucester Tops. The latter reported good numbers of Satin Flycatcher and Flame Robin, and also Crescent Honeyeater and Logrunner. The star birds seen at Copeland were Pale-yellow Robin, Russet-tailed Thrush, Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Logrunner, Emerald Dove, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Noisy Pitta, Varied Triller and Lewin's Rail.

The undisputed star rarity was the reporting of a male Forest Kingfisher in Port Stephens. Unfortunately the bird was seen on private property and could not be relocated after the initial sighting. The one that got away! Other threads included discussion on the intricacies of the Hunter Region boundary around Ulan, the relative merits of both the Birds Australia and Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water atlases, the potential for occurrence of Little Bronze-cuckoo in the region and the rare observation of a Masked Owl devouring a Flying Fox!

## February

February proved to be a particularly active month for rarity news from the Hunter Estuary. It began with a spate of Sooty Terns being wrecked on to the coast by some stormy weather. First one, or possibly two, adults were reported at Stockton Breakwater on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. An adult and immature bird were then reported from Newcastle Ocean Baths on the 6<sup>th</sup>, with an adult and two immatures reported from Flat Rocks (the south-eastern extremity of the Hunter Region landmass) the following day. Large numbers of Jaegers were also being reported, particularly Pomarine, with many very close to shore and even within the confines of harbours, as too were large numbers of Wedge-tailed Shearwater.

Elsewhere, a couple of lucky (and I should imagine highly excited) individuals reported flushing a pair of King Quail at Tomago, last reported in the Hunter Region ten years ago! A Bush Stone-curlew was photographed at Horseshoe Beach on the 16<sup>th</sup> before being relocated to safer climes, away from the prying dogs. This was followed three days later by a mega alert, when a Eurasian Curlew was reported from Stockton Sand Spit. Despite frantic searching by avid twitchers over the weekend the bird was unfortunately unable to be relocated. Finally, a Streaked Shearwater was reported from Fort Drive, Newcastle on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, a very good record from land.

Both Oystercatcher species featured prominently in discussions this month. With Pied recently being listed as endangered in NSW it was encouraging that counts

## Hunterbirding cont.

were made of 55 at Forster/Tuncurry, 25 in the Manning Estuary and 144 from the Port Stephens Wader Survey. There were also regular reports of Sooty Oystercatcher roosting at Newcastle Ocean Baths, with a peak count of 38. Not so encouraging was the discussion on the status of Terek Sandpiper in the Hunter Estuary, which has declined rapidly since the 1990s. Where counts of hundreds were not uncommon, a recent report of 24 birds represents the highest count for four years. On a brighter note, a nesting record of Gould's Petrel on Broughton Island took the tally of world nesting islands from two to three.

Trip report details that were posted included excursions to the Manning Estuary and the first of many Port Stephens pelagics timetabled for this year. Highlights from the Manning included Varied Triller, Red-backed Fairy-wren and Beach Stone-curlew. The feedback from the pelagic was that the logistics of the trip worked very well and those on board were pleased with the service provided by skipper, crew and trip leader. Unfortunately the birding was not too flash, with the bird of the trip being unable to have a positive id confirmed - it was a *Fregetta* type Storm-petrel, sporting either a white or black belly!

Other interesting discussions included the act of bird species mourning their lost kin, with Common Myna, Welcome Swallow, Eastern Rosella and Magpies being amongst those witnessed performing last rites. Also the topic of Ornithomancy, the practice of reading signs from birds, was discussed on Valentine's Day. Apparently the first bird an unmarried woman sees on this day is an omen of her future husband's character. Unfortunately for those making such observations, the omens were generally not good, with Scaly-breasted Lorikeets in flight indicating "over in seconds"!

### March

The highlight of the March threads was an extensive and in-depth discussion on the merits of various camera lenses used for bird photography. It was initiated through a request for help in selecting a suitable lens to purchase and was met with a swift and enthusiastic response from our many avid photography buffs. Advice was given on which brands and models were favoured, with the various pros and cons being discussed. People shared their personal experiences with using particular camera lenses and even offered tips to help overcome problems that some users were having with focusing. It was very informative and now provides a good source to refer back to when deciding to buy a camera lens. More discussions of this nature are strongly encouraged, so

please help with initiating more if you have a particular question that can be asked of the group. On the subject of bird photography, an invitation was also made to the group to participate in an outing to Stockton Sand Spit, to photograph the migratory waders before they depart for the winter.

Other threads included a request for information on where to see Double-banded Plovers in the Hunter Region. Again this was met with an enthusiastic response which will hopefully aid some of those birders still waiting to tick this species strike lucky this winter. The occurrence of Leucism in birds was also discussed, with particular reference to a white Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo in Tasmania. Following a recent price increase for entry to the Hunter Wetlands Centre a debate was initiated over the importance of such a facility within the Hunter Region.

There was good news from the Lower Hunter woodland as the first reports of Regent Honeyeater for the year emerged, with up to six birds at a site near Kitchener. Hopefully more individuals of this majestic species will be located during the cooler months, maintaining the Hunter Region as a valuable winter refuge. Other highlights from the reporting of unusual birds included the annual appearance of Yellow Wagtails on Ash Island, the continuing presence of a single Radjah Shelduck at Myall Shores Resort and a roosting Masked Owl in Fassifern. Again twitchers were set on mega-alert when a probable Magellanic Penguin was reported from Elizabeth Beach, Booti Booti NP – the first living bird of this species reported in Australia! Let's hope it hangs around and is re-located.

The month closed with a bang as the trip reports from a double-header of Port Stephens pelagics were posted. There were high hopes for these trips after the disappointment of February's excursion and the paying customers were well rewarded. The Saturday produced one of the finest pelagics ever run out of the Hunter, with a distinct tropical flavour. Tahiti Petrel, White-bellied Storm-Petrel and Streaked Shearwater were reported amongst others, but the stars of the show were both Brown Booby and Red-footed Booby on the same trip – a first occurrence for NSW pelagics. It seemed impossible for this to be topped by Sunday's effort, but the report of a New Zealand Storm-Petrel would be a first for Australia! Sooty Shearwater and Common Noddy provided an admirable supporting cast.

**Dan Williams**

## Opportunities

### Off-Peak Camping at *Belltrees* 4-6 May 2010

Last year I flagged the possibility of HBOC members spending a few days at *Belltrees*, a property near Scone. *Belltrees* has a rich ornithological history, being the family home of the White family including HL White, a very prominent birdo of 100 years ago (he would never have used the expression “birdo”, I bet). HL White wrote many articles about the birds of *Belltrees*.

Your feedback was: strong interest in this prospect (and also to go to other places in future), and high preference for mid-week camping opportunities. So, I have arranged for a camp on the *Belltrees* property over 4-6 May (Tues-Thurs). If you are interested, let me know, and I will send the directions.

Also, there is a 3 bedroom cottage available on the property that could accommodate 3 sets of close friends. The cottage is \$330/night and apparently has all mod cons. So, that’s an option for non campers – again, contact me if you are interested in this particular option. I am not offering to do any more than put interested parties in touch with one another and let you sort out between yourselves who sleeps where, who makes the booking etc.

*Belltrees* is a working farm. We recorded 52 species in about 3 hours in November last year, at the “wrong” time of the day to be out birding. The Hunter River flows right through the property, and there is a large reserve or national park nearby, based on Mt Woolooma. I think there is plenty of potential for interesting birds over the three days.

We will also use the time on *Belltrees* to further the cause of Field Studies, for those that are interested to participate - more about that when on site – but that aspect will not be compulsory.

Let me know if you are interested in the *Belltrees* opportunity, either camping or in a cottage.

Email [almarosa@bigpond.com](mailto:almarosa@bigpond.com) or phone 0409 978 171

**Alan Stuart**

### Hunter Region Site Guide

The Hunter Region Site Guide is an HBOC project aimed at getting a large proportion of the membership involved. It will provide a valuable resource for club members and visitors to the region to learn about birding sites within the Hunter, details on when and how to visit the site and what birds may be seen. It will be an on-going project with sites being continually added or updated as appropriate.

The main interface to the Site Guide will be a map of the Hunter Region with individual site locations marked on it. This will be available for viewing using either Google Maps or Google Earth and will allow easy access to the individual site guide documents, which will be hosted on the HBOC website. A map of the Hunter Region boundary, without site locations, is currently available on the HBOC website under Hunter Region: <http://www.hboc.org.au/index.cfm?menukey=28>. Please take a look and explore the Hunter Region in Google Maps or Google Earth.

It is planned that the Hunter Region Site Guide will go live sometime during the next month and it requires your help to be a success. The Site Guide map will initially be populated with a large number of site locations, but with no site guides yet available for them. If you see a site on the map that has no guide available and you would like to write one for it, you can download the site guide template, fill it in and send it to me. I will then have the guide checked and edited before uploading it to the website for inclusion in the Site Guide.

The Site Guide will be hosted on the HBOC Website under Hunter Region > Site Guide:

<http://www.hboc.org.au/index.cfm?menukey=33>. Any questions regarding the site guide may be emailed to me at [morgdan@tpg.com.au](mailto:morgdan@tpg.com.au) or [scythrope@yahoo.com.au](mailto:scythrope@yahoo.com.au).

I look forward to your contributions!

**Dan Williams**

### Telescope in need of a good home

Bob Reid of Shortland has been clearing out his garage and found a perfectly good spotting scope. He doesn’t want to sell it but would be very happy if someone with a proper need for it would take it off his hands. The scope is a Bushnell x22 wide angle complete with tripod. His phone number is 49514768.

## Bush Stone-curlew - Port Stephens Seminar March 2010

On Sunday 14 March 2010 more than 20 people gathered at the Tomaree Library and Community Centre at Salamander Bay to hear about work being undertaken to recover the endangered Bush Stone-curlew. In NSW this species mainly occurs in woodlands of the Western Slopes and Plains, however small populations occur in the local area at Gosford and Port Stephens.

Alan Morris reported on the Gosford population where there are only 4 regular breeding pairs known. Breeding and foraging habitat is concentrated on the edges of Brisbane Water. The urban environment that the birds inhabit presents some special management challenges, the most significant being getting access to private land to monitor breeding success. Key habitat for the species also corresponds to off-leash dog exercise areas which is a threat to the birds. Mangroves invading salt marsh reduce the area of suitable habitat and may also be a threat. Friends of the Bush Stone-curlew have been active in raising awareness and monitoring the species. Call-playback census nights coordinated by the Friends group have been held since 2008. For the 2009/10 breeding season Gosford Council funded a project that monitors the nest sites using remote cameras to determine other causes of nest failure, but final results are not yet to hand. Funds raised by the **Birds Australia Twitchathon** have been used to engage the Central Coast Community Environment Network (CEN) to coordinate recovery efforts.

Susanne Callaghan from NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service reported on the Port Stephens population which is estimated to contain about 15 birds. Bush Stone-curlew has been recorded nesting at four locations in the Port Stephens area: Lemon Tree Passage, Swan Bay, Fenninghams Island/Bobs Farm and Karuah (see purple dots on map below). Habitat includes foreshore reserves, saltmarsh, public parks and grazed farmland. Actions taken by council and NPWS have focused on monitoring, fencing, signage, feral animal control and raising community awareness. Despite a number of known nesting events the survival rate of chicks



is low. Some of the known causes of breeding failure include predation by Kookaburras and destruction or disturbance of nests by humans. Monitoring of nest sites using remote cameras has begun to determine other causes of nest failure.

Headlining the afternoon were Neville and Jan Lubke who travelled from Jindera in the Murray Valley. The Lubkes spoke about their passion for Bush Stone-curlews, and how Neville's embarrassment at not being able to fulfil a promise to find a Stone-curlew nest for a photographer turned into a very unique and personal commitment to conservation of this species. The Lubkes' community-led program has navigated mountains of 'red tape' to establish a captive breeding program for this species on their own farm. Together with the Redfearn family, who have a farm 300km further west at Moulamein, they formed the Murray Nature Conservation Working Group, and successfully managed to rear 9 chicks and release them on the Moulamein property in 2009. Another 13 chicks are to be released later this year. The release site contains a large area of box woodland along a timbered creek which is fenced to keep predators out and undergoes intensive fox baiting. The survival of released birds is monitored by banding and radio tracking. The success of the program is undoubtedly due to the personal commitment and determination of Neville and Jan not to see this species lost from their local landscape.

Thank you to the afternoons' speakers and to all those who attended. Anthony Marchment from Port Stephens Council organised the venue and helped promote the event. The Murray Nature Conservation Working Group receives funding from the NSW Environmental Trust.

**Shawn Capararo**  
Hunter-Central Rivers CMA

## Bush Stone-curlew on the NSW Central Coast 2009-2010

Since September 2009 the Gosford Friends of the Bush Stone-curlew have been kept very busy monitoring the local Brisbane Water birds as well as assisting with the monitoring of the small population that is found around the Port Stephens foreshore. Banding the chicks with colour bands that are inscribed with an alphanumeric code allows tracking of this sparse population. The colour bands are subtle so as not to conflict with the camouflage of these birds whose survival often depends on their ability to merge with their surroundings.

The **St Huberts Island pair** have had their usual breeding traumas, with their eggs rolling out of the nest and into the water in the first clutch! In the second

## Bush Stone-curlew on the Central Coast cont.

clutch, two chicks hatched, one disappeared fairly soon, and the remaining chick at the critical 7 weeks old period disappeared and could not be found for banding purposes. It re-appeared after its parents decided to nest again, this time in Boyd Close, St Huberts Island, sitting alongside its mother while she sat on the eggs of the 3<sup>rd</sup> clutch! Attempts to catch it failed due to it flying swiftly away from us!! At least one if not two eggs hatched in the 3<sup>rd</sup> clutch on 5/1/10, but the adults plus chick(s) disappeared the following day! While they have been heard since then, they have not been seen to confirm whether any chicks are still present.

The pair that nest in the **Umina High School** grounds lost their first chicks, soon after they hatched. Their second nesting attempt again in the school grounds almost ended in disaster as soon after the eggs hatched one chick died (apparently of starvation) and the other got injured, was cared for by WIRES and was soon returned to its parents. They hung out in the back of the playing fields at the school until school ended when they moved the chick to the grounds of the nearby St John the Baptist School. Here we were able on 7/1/10 to band and colour-band this chick at 7 weeks. The adult female AB04, whose blue colour-band we could easily see, was originally hatched on St Huberts Island in November 2005 and banded on 5/1/06.

We had good news on 20/1/10 when Sharyn Gale saw and photographed a pair of Bush Stone-curlews at the **La Salle Camp, McKillop Rd, Kincumber**, and one of the birds was seen in the photograph to be colour-banded. This female BC01 was a bird that was raised by the Umina High School pair, colour-banded on 30/11/07 and 9 months later was found down at Dee Why in a small park. This bird was subsequently caught and returned and released at the Bouddi Pony Club/Nautical Village area at Kincumber on 16/12/08 where a lone male bird was resident. (For previous story see Birding NSW Central Coast Group Newsletters Jan 2009 & Dec 2008). Two birds have occasionally been seen and heard at that site since but we have never had any confirmation that one of the birds was BC01 until today! More good news was to follow, in that Paul Briggs, of the La Salle camp, emailed to say that this pair nested a few months ago, the eggs hatching on 1/11/09 and have raised one young!

This is great news as we now have 3 nesting pairs in the Brisbane Water area. In the past 3 months pairs have also been seen and heard at **Bensville** (last reported 23/1/10)

and at **Gordon Bay, Empire Bay** (last reported 4/11/09), while the one at **Saratoga** wetlands still occasionally calls. None of these pairs have been found nesting this season!

On 17 January 2010 a group of bushwalkers photographed a lone Bush Stone-curlew in **Merritts Rd, Daleys Point**, and it turned out to be banded, a yellow band with black text, AC03! This female bird was banded as a chick at the **Woy Woy tip** on 13/11/04 and has not been seen since 23/5/05 when it was still at the tip with its parents. This bird could be the mate of the pair that is occasionally seen in the mangroves at Empire Bay.

On New Year's Day, the pair that live around **Careel Bay, Pittwater** were photographed visiting a garden near the waterfront throughout the morning! This pair presumably raised a chick in 2008/9 as three birds were present there throughout the year until September 2009.

Meanwhile up at **Bobs Farm**, after two unsuccessful breeding attempts, the local pair finally raised a chick to 7 weeks which we were able to band/colour-band on 15/1/2010. In the previous January 2009, we were able to band two chicks raised by this pair. Over at **Swan Bay**, the local pair has nested 3 times this season but each time the eggs and or chicks disappeared quickly. However, a male chick, colour-banded in March 2009, is still present with its parents at this site, last seen 22/1/10.

Finally, a young lone male bird was seen and photographed in the dog walking area at Horseshoe Beach, near Nobbys Breakwall on 16/2/10. It was decided to take it into care as it seemed unsure of itself and very tame, possibly weak. It was subsequently banded, fed and released at Tilligery National Park on 18/2/10. Two weeks later this bird turned up on a house verandah at Boat Harbour, Anna Bay. It was taken into care, where it was given a good feed and released in the **Bobs Farm** area, close to where the three birds referred to above, hang out. On 6/3/10, four birds were reported there by the local landowners!

Please report any sightings to Narelle Leate at [wetlands@cen.org.au](mailto:wetlands@cen.org.au).

**Alan Morris**

# Observations from Club Nights November 2009 - March 2010

*These reports are not authenticated records: researchers are advised to check with the observers before citing.*

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer
Arctic Jaeger	2	2/02/2010	passing Walsh Point	M.Kibby
Australasian Shoveler	6	6/01/2010	HWCA	P.Lightfoot
Australian Brush-turkey	1	Jan-10	Hunter Botanic Gardens	D.Rogers
Australian Hobby	<b>1fdy</b>	19/02/2010	Stockton Sandspit	F.van Gessel
Australian Hobby	1	6/03/2010	HWCA	P.Lightfoot
Barn Owl	1	20/12/2009	Mt Arthur Mine site	G.Newling
Barn Owl	1	27/12/2010	Mt Arthur Mine site	G.Newling
Black-fronted Dotterel	6	1/06/2010	HWCA	P.Lightfoot
Black-necked Stork	1	3/03/2010	Ash Island [Milhams]	N.McNaughton
Black-shouldered Kite	Pr	Jan/Feb 2010	Narone Creek Rd	R.Greig
Black-tailed Native-hen	1	16/12/2009	Bolwarra Wetland	H.Tarrant
Brown Quail	4	7/02/2010	Fernleigh Track	P.Lightfoot
Brown Quail	2	19/12/2009	Medhurst Bridge	H.Tarrant
Buff-banded Rail	<b>1+1dy</b>	11/02/2010	HWCA	P.Lightfoot
Crested Pigeon	24	10/02/2010	Hamilton [National Park]	C.Anderson
Diamond Firetail	12	19/12/2009	Medhurst Bridge	H.Tarrant
Eastern Curlew	287	19/02/2010	Stockton Sandspit	F.van Gessel
Eastern Osprey	1	5/02/2010	Stockton Sandspit	C.Anderson
Eastern Osprey	1	19/02/2010	Stockton Sandspit	F.van Gessel
Eastern Osprey	1	24/02/2010	Seaham N.R.	M.Maddock
Eastern Spinebill	2	11/01/2010	Fassifern Railway Stn.	P.Durie/J.Westphal
Eastern Yellow Robin	1	10/02/2010	Toronto [Ron Hill Oval]	P.Durie/J.Westphal
Eastern Yellow Robin	2	6-7/03/2010	Wollombi	R.Greig
Figbird	<b>nest 2dy</b>	1/01/2010	Warners Bay [garden]	R.Walker
Gang-Gang Cockatoo	2	27/02/2010	Narone Creek Rd	R.Greig
Glossy Black Cockatoo	20	11/12/2009	Wollombi	H.Tarrant
Glossy Black Cockatoo	20	4/03/2010	Wollombi Road	R.Greig
Grey Fantail	1	23/01/2010	Adamstown Hts [garden]	P.Pountney
Grey Goshawk	1	8/02/2010	Blackbutt Reserve	P.Lightfoot
Grey Goshawk	1	1/02/2010	Blackbutt [Lookout Rd]	J.Nicholls
Grey Goshawk	1	5/01/2010	Blackbutt Reserve	M.McDonald
Grey Goshawk	1	6/03/2010	HWCA	P.Lightfoot
Horsfield's Bushlark	2	29/01/2010	Mt.Arthur Mine site	G.Newling
Latham's Snipe	1	6/03/2010	HWCA	P.Lightfoot
Leaden Flycatcher	1m	18/02/2010	Wingen	G.Newling
Lesser Sand Plover	2	24/01/2010	Stockton Sandspit	T.Clarke
Little Lorikeet	B	19/12/2009	Medhurst Bridge	H.Tarrant
Little Wattlebird	1	31/01/2010	Wallsend [garden]	T.Clarke
Nankeen Kestrel	1	28/02/2010	Cardiff	J. Westphal
Nankeen Kestrel	Pr [co]	15/03/2010	Warners Bay	J. Westphal
Noisy Pitta	<b>1juv</b>	1/01/2010	Upper Allyn S.F.	P.Lightfoot
Olive Whistler	1	29/01/2010	Barrington Tops	T.Clarke
Olive-backed Oriole	6	6/01/2010	HWCA	P.Lightfoot
<b>Olive-backed Sunbird</b>	2	25/12/2009	Bolwarra	H.Tarrant
Painted Honeyeater	~8	19/12/2009	Medhurst Bridge	H.Tarrant
Powerful Owl	1-2	Jan/Feb 2010	Blackbutt Reserve	P.Lightfoot

## Observations continued

Note\*: Pr = pair  
dy = dependent young  
y = young

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer
Powerful Owl	Pr	7/01/2010	Blackbutt Reserve	P.Lightfoot
Powerful Owl	2	28/02/2010	Blackbutt Reserve	P.Lightfoot
Rainbow Bee-eater	14	17/01/2010	Wingen [after storm]	G.Newling
Red-capped Robin	1	19/12/2009	Medhurst Bridge	H.Tarrant
Regent Bowerbird	1	28/01/2010	Blackbutt Reserve	M.McDonald
Ruddy Turnstone	18	13/02/2010	Newcastle Ocean Baths	J.Thomas
Scarlet Honeyeater	1	31/01/2010	Barrington Tops	J.Nicholls
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	2000	19/11/2009	Morpeth STW	F.van Gessel
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	2460	21/11/2009	Morpeth STW	A.Lindsey/M.Newman
Sooty Oystercatcher	32	13/02/2010	Newcastle Ocean Baths	J.Thomas
Southern Boobook	2	8/01/2010	Wingen	G.Newling
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	1	19/12/2009	Martindale	H.Tarrant
Spotless Crake	1	28/01/2010	HWCA	P.Lightfoot
Spotless Crake	1	28/01/2010	HWCA	P.Lightfoot
Square-tailed Kite	1	10/02/2010	Green Hills	G.Brosie
Tree Martin	10	16/01/2010	Wingen	G.Newling
Tree Martin	>30	29/01/2010	Barrington Tops	T.Clarke
Wandering Whistling-Duck	D	6/01/2010	HWCA	P.Lightfoot
Welcome Swallow	10	16/01/2010	Wingen	G.Newling
White-necked Heron	6	29/01/2010	Parkville	G.Newling
White-winged Triller	1	19/12/2009	Doyles Creek	H.Tarrant
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	2	29/01/2010	Parkville	G.Newling

### HUNTER BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB MID WEEK CAMP 13 - 15 September 2010

This year the mid-week camp will be held at Dorrigo on the edge of the New England Escarpment of the Dorrigo Plateau west of Coffs Harbour. It has one of the highest rainfalls in NSW, so come prepared! Dorrigo is a 5 hour plus drive from Newcastle via the Pacific Highway. At Urunga turn left into Waterfall Way towards Bellingen (more coffee shops per head than anywhere else in Australia), and Dorrigo. Just past the turn off to the Rainforest Centre (round the next left bend in the road) is Dorrigo Mountain Resort, the caravan park where we will be based. It has plenty of "rustic" cabins with ensuites (\$60 for 2 people), powered sites (\$24) and camping. They do not accept eftpos or credit card. Other accommodation, all within 5 min of the camp are: Commercial Hotel Motel (6657 2003), Heritage Hotel Motel (6657 2016), or for a bit of style the Lookout Motor Inn (6657 2511).

Dorrigo can also be accessed via the New England Highway, taking the Waterfall Way turnoff at Armidale. This is a much longer route (6.5- 7 hrs + stops) but passes a lot of national parks and waterfalls along the way. A good way to return home slowly or take your time to get to the camp.

#### ITINERARY

MONDAY: 2.00pm. Meet at the caravan park entrance and car pool for a 20 min trip, on mostly dirt road (OK for 2WD) to Never Never Picnic Area, then birding on trails in the area. Happy Hour 5.30pm at camp. Barbeques available. No open fires.

TUESDAY: 8.30am. Meet at the park entrance for the short trip to the Rainforest Centre. We'll bird on the lower track this morning. Back to the camp for lunch - or the Rainforest Centre has a cafe that does lunches.

2.00pm. Meet at the Glade Picnic Area which is on the left about 0.5km past the turnoff to the Rainforest Centre on Waterfall Way. From the road it just seems like a carpark, but walk through the trees and it opens to a large picnic area. We'll meet just through the trees. Happy Hour 5.30pm at camp.

WEDNESDAY: No planned walk.

For those who arrive early or stay later (or just want to do their own thing) some other locations are:

Norman Jolly Memorial Grove (untouched old growth forest); Platypus Flat Camping Area (campground on Nymboida River); Dangar Falls; Griffiths Lookout; Rose's Park, Thora (riverside park at bottom of escarpment on the Bellinger River).

For more information contact Garth Cooksey, 4954 9620.

## HBOC Activities - April 2010 to June 2010

Date	Event	Meeting Place & Time	Contact
Friday 16 April	Saltmarsh restoration (mangrove removal)	Milham Pond, Ash Island from 7.00am	Tom Clarke 0418411785
Saturday 17 April	Hunter Wader Survey	9.30am Ash Island 10.00am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 – Ash Island Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Grant Brosie 4934 7383 - Tomago
Tuesday 20 April	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Friday 23 April	Saltmarsh restoration (mangrove removal)	Milham Pond, Ash Island from 7.00am	Tom Clarke 0418411785
ANZAC Day long weekend Saturday - Monday 24 -26 April	Camp at Martindale on private property "Springdale"	For directions please contact Lorna Mee	Lorna Mee 4988 6579 or email: <a href="mailto:lornamee33@gmail.com">lornamee33@gmail.com</a>
Tuesday 4 May	Mid-Week Outing Belmont Lagoon area	Reserve McEwan St Belmont: turn left at lights Belmont South, into Beach St, then 2 <sup>nd</sup> left into McEwan St	Leader: Keith Laverick 4958 8365
Tuesday - Thursday 4 - 6 May	Off-peak camp at "Belltrees" near Scone	For directions please contact Alan Stuart	Alan Stuart <a href="mailto:almarosa@bigpond.com">almarosa@bigpond.com</a> or phone 0409 978 171
Wednesday 5 May	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Sunday 9 May	Volunteer day at SSS – prepare shelly sand	Stockton Sandspit 8.00am	Tom Clarke 0418411785
Monday 10 May (also 17 <sup>th</sup> , 24 <sup>th</sup> & 31 <sup>st</sup> )	Saltmarsh restoration (mangrove removal)	Milham Pond, Ash Island from 7.00am	Tom Clarke 0418411785
Wednesday 12 May	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: Joy Nicholls – Newhaven after the Wet
Saturday/Sunday 16/17 May	Regent Honeyeater/ Swift Parrot Survey	Various locations as directed	Mick Roderick 0421 761237 / 4023 0322 Steve Roderick 0409 452 921 Please contact for information
Saturday 15 May	Hunter Wader Survey	8.30am Ash Island 9.00am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 4959 3663 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Grant Brosie 4934 7383 - Tomago
Sunday 16 May	Stockton Sandspit Planting Day with KWRP	9.30am Stockton Sandspit car park	Alison Appleby 4964 9308
Tuesday 18 May	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Sunday 23 May	Field outing to Walka Water Works	Walka Water Works car park 8.00am	Grant Brosie 4934 7383 Jim Smart 4933 7761
Tuesday 1 June	Mid-Week Outing Shortland Wetlands Centre	8.00am Car Park, Wetlands Centre	Leader: Anthony Gooden 4946 9110
Wednesday 2 June	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Monday 7 June (also 21 <sup>st</sup> )	Saltmarsh restoration (mangrove removal)	Milham Pond, Ash Island from 7.00am	Tom Clarke 0418411785
Long Weekend 12 - 14 June	Camp at Kerewong State Forest	Swans Crossing camping ground.	Tom Clarke 0418411785
Wednesday 10 June	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: Kristy Peters – Detecting Woodland Birds
Tuesday 15 June	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm