



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

affiliated with the Bird Observers Club of Australia

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# NEWSLETTER

Issue 2/09

April – May 2009

Newsletter articles welcome –  
contact Newsletter Editor  
Robert McDonald.  
2/608 Glebe rd Adamstown 2289  
Tel: (02) 4952 2941  
[spinifex@y7mail.com](mailto:spinifex@y7mail.com)

### *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*

## Committee

### President:

Paul Baird

### Vice-president:

Grant Brosie

### Secretary:

Tom Clarke

### Treasurer:

Rowley Smith

### Committee Members:

Robert McDonald

Ann Lindsey

Liz Crawford

Craig Anderson

Ian Martin

Mick Roderick

### Conservation Coordinator:

Liz Crawford

### Activities Officer:

Lorna Mee

### Life Members:

Wilma Barden (dec)

Ed Hamonet (dec)

Sue Hamonet

Alan Stuart

## NEW MEMBERS

The Club extends a warm welcome to

**Stephen Happ** of Islington,

**Maureen Goninan** of Toukley,

**Darryl Luck** of Medowie,

**Amanda McDonald** of Adamstown,

**John Thompson** and **Meredith Jordan** of Cooks Hill,

**Rod Warnock** of Kilaben Bay,

**Bob Rech** of Hawks Nest,

We hope to meet you often at Club Nights and on Club Outings and Camps.

## Photo of the Month

By Robert McDonald



**Scarlet Robin** *Petroica multicolor*

## NEWSLETTER DEADLINES FOR 2009

Edition	Copy Deadline
June-July 2009	31 May 2009
August-Sep 2009	2 August 2009
October–Nov. 2009	4 October 2009
December 2009- Jan 2010	29 November 2009

**Membership Fees for 2009:** \$30.00 Single and Family. \$5.00 Junior

Members may pay at Club Night or send cheque or money order payable to HBOC to PO Box 24 New Lambton 2305

Membership forms can be obtained at Club Night or by downloading from the website [www.hboc.org.au](http://www.hboc.org.au)

## President's Column, April 2009

Welcome!

As incoming President may I say that I accepted the position with considerable excitement, albeit tempered by a degree of trepidation, at the prospect of working with such a dedicated group of people to further, not only the welfare of our wild birds but also, the best interests of the birds' observers.

My purpose in this column of the Newsletter is to highlight various club activities and to promote thought and discussion about Club matters and birding in general. To which end may I offer a few thoughts and an invitation!

There is no doubt that HBOC has a well respected reputation within the Hunter Community and beyond. This reputation is grounded firmly on the Club's promotion of bird observing as a worthwhile leisure activity and on its dedication and long standing record of practical contributions to the conservation of birds and their habitat.

To ensure that HBOC not only continues to consolidate this work but also importantly to build on it and grow, it is essential that the club is *proactive, evaluative and adaptable* in a climate of ever changing demands. This position can be best achieved through an inclusive approach utilising the diversity of opinion, inspiration and depth of experience embedded within the HBOC membership.

You are therefore *invited* (strongly encouraged) to contribute your ideas regarding the nature of any future directions to be taken by HBOC, their planning and implementation.

Listed below are two similarly worded "open ended" questions designed to elicit your No 1 priority, regarding HBOC's leisure and conservation based activities.

Question 1. In your opinion, and in one sentence, what is the *single, most important* thing that HBOC can do at this time to "promote bird watching as a worthwhile *leisure* activity?"

Question 2. In your opinion, and in one sentence, what is the *single, most important* thing that HBOC

can do to "further the *conservation* of birds and their habitat within the Hunter Region?"

The wording of each question is designed to intentionally challenge you to decide the *single* most *important* aspect, with the further challenge of expressing your opinion in one sentence. Many things may come to mind and need consideration, however do try to decide on the most important.

Perhaps a cuppa, a glass of red, a friendly ear or a quiet spot under a gum tree will assist you to decide and once you're "on a roll" don't stop as any suggestions for implementing your ideas would be very helpful.

You may use one of the following methods to forward your response by 29th April 2009: e-mail (preferred) [pbaird@exemail.com.au](mailto:pbaird@exemail.com.au); post to P.Baird, 503 Butterwick Rd Duns Creek. 2321; phone P. Baird 49385039 (A.H.); contact any member of the committee. Responses will be summarised and circulated to you via the email, Newsletter and Club Meeting.

Again, may I encourage you to respond as your contributions will be highly valued and play a vital role as HBOC formulates plans to ensure the future of our birds and enrich the leisure time of the observers.

Good birding, keep on looking!

**Paul Baird.**

### Photo of the Month

This is a new initiative that as newsletter editor I am trialling, although it is called bird of the month it will only appear on the front cover of our bi-monthly newsletter.

Each newsletter will have a theme for bird of the month and I would like for other club members to contribute to this. If the photos could be e-mailed to me at [spinifex@y7mail.com](mailto:spinifex@y7mail.com), and the files to be compressed to less than 100KB.

The theme for the next issue will be parrots

**Robert McDonald**

## **Bicentennial Park (Olympic Park), Sunday Outing: 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2009**

Eight HBOC members met at the Hunter Wetlands Carpark at 6-30 a.m. for this visit to Sydney. I personally had not been to see where our money for Twitchathon had gone some years ago & the last time some of us had been there was for the Olympics in 2000.

After car pooling we travelled to Sydney with an easy journey to Homebush Bay. At the lovely Waterview Lilies Café we enjoyed a coffee and met other HBOC members. Judy Harrington, from Birds Australia met us here and gave us advice on the current birding situation and where to go to find the birds.

Our first visit was the lagoon nearby where we found many Darters on nests or brooding lovely little fluffy chicks, as well as Coots and Dusky Moorhen carrying nesting material in a frenzy of effort. We then proceeded to an area of swamps where there had been recent reports of Lewin's Rail and Crake, but alas no sightings. The track then led us to the Shipwreck viewing platform and the Bird Hide overlooking the Waterbird Refuge, where we saw stilts, pelican, teal & avocets.

The Brickpit was another destination, a huge expensive structure of a walkway over the historic brick pit where a lot of Sydney's house bricks originated. No birds, but we could see the frog ponds well below us. Before we reached the Brickpit a family of Brown Quail wandered along the track, providing the photographers with a great opportunity.

By this time we were ready for lunch so we proceeded to the Birds Australia Discovery Centre, located in the grounds of the Newington Armoury. We met other people working at the centre, enabling us to put names to faces of some of the people that we regularly read about in articles from Birds Australia.

After a lovely lunch at the Discovery Centre and a look through the centre we proceeded to a series of little lagoons on the western side of Hill Road. This whole area is a credit to the people who rehabilitated this area which once was a wasteland of industry. Despite some ongoing reported pollution problems, the birds have returned and are breeding.

The surprise for me was the extensive nature of the whole area and the fabulous recreational area provided for cyclists, walkers, birdwatchers and picnickers. There was only one hiccup in the proceedings when we remembered that our cars would be locked in the Wetlands grounds on our return. Thanks Tom for helping us out on that one. A total of 57 birds were recorded. Thanks to all who participated. I had a good day and enjoyed the excellent company.

**Lorna Mee**

## **Greswick Angus Property Seaham, Midweek Outing: 3 March, 2009**

Thirty seven HBOC members turned out for our visit to John and Janelle Spearpoint's beef cattle property just north of Seaham. This was a record attendance for the mid-week group and it was a pleasure to welcome so many new faces.

We were welcomed by Janelle who told us how she and John were intent on developing a beef grazing enterprise that is environmentally sustainable, profitable and a very pleasant place to live. We then set off on a walk by the river where we could see first hand the tree planting and riverbank restoration work as well as an interesting variety of birds.

In this habitat alone we saw 64 species, including Satin Bowerbird, Superb and Variegated Fairy Wren, Brown, Striated, Yellow and Yellow-rumped Thornbill, King Parrot and Crimson Rosella, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike and European Goldfinch. There was also a good representation of raptors, namely Whistling Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle and Australian Hobby. We also saw some large mixed flocks of Australian White and Straw-necked Ibis.

Some of our sightings were a first for this property which already has a list of over 110 species.

We would particularly like to thank Janelle Spearpoint for making us so welcome to their property and the opportunity she gave to so many members to be a small part of this ongoing project.

**Robert Stewart**

## **Walka Waterworks – Maitland Mid-week Outing Tuesday 3/2/09**

A good crowd of 24 birders meet at the Walka Waterworks for the first outing of the new year.

We slowly walked the lake trail around the dam and had good views of Grey & Chestnut Teals, Hoary-headed & Great-crested Grebes, Pacific Black Duck, Black Swan, Royal Spoonbill, Dusky Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Musk Duck and Black-fronted Dotterel. It was lovely to see 6 young Great-crested Grebes swimming after their parents. We also saw 2 young Purple Swamphens on the edge of the water. Up the western end 4 Latham's Snipe were disturbed.

In the surrounding bush we sighted Sacred Kingfisher, Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Satin Bowerbird, Figbird, Golden & Rufous Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Olive-backed Oriole, White-winged Chough, Mistletoebird, Red-rumped Parrot, White-brested Woodswallow and Australian Reedwarbler with young. Flying overhead a White-breasted Sea-eagle, Whistling Kite and Nankeen Kestrel.

After Morning tea it was decided to do an early bird list as the day had got extremely hot and some folks decided to leave for home, others stayed sitting in the shade of the trees. While a few hardy ones ventured back to the waters edge to get another view of the Blue-billed Duck which was seen earlier and they added a White-faced Heron to the list. The total number of species for the morning was 72 seen and 4 heard- what a good start for the year.

**Don Moon**

### **Mid-week Camp at Nundle**

The mid-week camp this year will be held at Nundle. The camp will be based at Fossickers Tourist Park on the Peel River in the small town of Nundle on 14, 15, 16 September. Nundle is about 4 hours travel from Newcastle. The park has cabins with and without ensuites and powered and unpowered sites. Nundle is a highland area and nights and mornings will still be cold in September.

For further details contact:  
Don and Val Moon ph 4359 1670 or  
Robert and Margaret Stewart 4963 2029.

## **Twitching the Twitcher**

I deliver Chinese food three nights a week, when there are no deliveries to be done I may have to peel a few vegies or I may have an hour or so where there is nothing to do. Since KFC opened up down the road having nothing to do is becoming quite regular.

I hate having nothing to do, I'll buy the Newcastle Herald, but it is so light on content that it can usually be read cover to cover in half an hour. I refuse to read the Sydney papers because they are riddled with conservative propaganda and opinions.

Months ago I came up with something to occupy myself. I could tally up observers' records in the Annual Bird Report to find out which observer is the most keen reporter of observations.

It didn't prove to be as straightforward as I thought it would be. What if it was written that Joe Bloggs Reported a Common Koel in Timbuktoo from 8<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> October? Should this be worth more points than if the report published a sighting of a Common Koel on the 8<sup>th</sup> October by Jane Dough?

More effort would have been required to record the bird on the extra 12 days. A general definition was therefore required for point scoring. I decided that one species reported at one location on one day scored one point for the observer.

Scores have been compiled for the 2005 and 2006 bird reports. The top ten placegetters for each year are as follows:

### **2005**

1<sup>st</sup>: Harold Tarrant  
2<sup>nd</sup>: Robert McDonald  
3<sup>rd</sup>: Michael Todd  
4<sup>th</sup>: Max Maddock  
5<sup>th</sup>: Grant Brosie  
6<sup>th</sup>: Ann Lindsey  
7<sup>th</sup>: Jenny Musicka  
8<sup>th</sup>: Mike Newman  
9<sup>th</sup>: Greg Newling  
10<sup>th</sup>: Alan Stuart

### **2006**

Penny Drake-brockman  
Jenny Musicka  
Greg Clancy  
Michael Kearns  
Judi Thomas  
Paul Osborn  
Ann Lindsey  
Alan Morris  
Mike Newman  
Lorna Mee

**Colin Goodenough**

## BIRDS AT EPPING FOREST

May this year saw Suzi and me heading north into Central Queensland. Our destination was Epping Forest National Park some 130 km north west of Clermont, in a remote isolated part of the sunshine state. Epping Forest is a highly restricted scientific park, off limits to the general public, being the last known habitat of the Northern Hairy Nosed Wombat. Our job: - to monitor the movements of and care for these elusive, extremely rare mammals (more rare even than the Red lored Whistler) for one month. To our eternal shame, most Australians know nothing of this endangered animal, fifth on the list of endangered species across the whole planet. Only 115 wombats remain in Epping Forest, protected behind a dog proof exclusion fence, the remnants of a population which once spread right down the western side of the Great Dividing Range, as far south as Deniliquin in southern NSW. Their numbers have been decimated by habitat loss, predators and of course human interference. These solitary, shy, mysterious mammals can spend anything up to twenty three hours a day underground, emerging only in the depth of the night to feed, making management and control extremely difficult.

This sole remaining colony is cared for by a band of volunteers led by Andrew Dinwoodie of the Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service. Their aim is to breed up the colony and establish further breeding populations by translocation to new sites-a method similar to that practiced at Gluepot Reserve with the endangered Black eared miner. Whilst we were on the park a translocation program was announced with regard to the establishment of a breeding colony at St George in Southern Queensland. Parks are being assisted in this by a three million dollar grant from Xstrata, the giant Swiss mining company.

Our principal function was to care for wombats. This presented an ideal opportunity to examine the bird life in an area where human habitation is almost non existent and where remnants of pristine habitat remain. Unfortunately in large areas of the park Buffel Grass, an invasive South African weed, dominates. It provides ideal feed for beef cattle, the main industry in Central Queensland, prior to the coming of the mining boom. However the Buffel Grass also provides habitat for some of our smaller native birds. With diligent application and a great deal of patience one may find Tawny and Little

Grassbirds, Golden-headed Cisticolas and a collection of Variegated and Red-backed Wrens.

Our work at Epping Forest included twice daily trips around the three thousand hectare reserve on a Polaris Ranger 4x4 a perfect workhorse, but also a fun all terrain vehicle and an ideal mobile bird watching platform. Our monthly total for the Park was ninety-one birds, comprising an eclectic mix of raptors, woodland and water birds, including a number of species not previously recorded on the park. This tally was pleasing, as the maximum recorded species list on the park computer, before our efforts was seventy seven-and that was in a summer when the Cuckoos, Dollarbirds and other migratory birds were present. As a result of the January floods in Central Queensland much "casual" water remained and the gilgais still retained significant quantities. Consequently there was a surprising number of ducks, herons and the smaller finches, usually found near water. Plumed and Wandering Whistling-Ducks, Wood, Pacific Black and Pink-eared Ducks and Hardheads abounded and Zebra, Double-barred and Plum-headed Finches were ever present.

Perhaps the most memorable part of the experience was the number of Brolgas and Bustards sighted. It was common to wake in the morning to the trumpeting of the Brolgas and families of Brolgas and Bustards were regular sightings along the exclusion fence, the Bustards walking majestically away from us, as we approached on the Polaris. The guide books say that Bustards are common away from human habitation and I can now verify this to be true. We saw not one Bustard but mostly family groups of three, in which the younger bird was readily identifiable by the size difference. We also found immature Brolgas, with yellow beaks and no brown over the head, characteristics not shown in any of the guide books, as far as I am aware.

The Park contains meshed cages forming artificial feeding and watering points for use by the wombats in times of climatic stress. The food supply seems to have had a significant effect on bird populations (and the Swamp Wallabies). Diamond Doves, Peaceful Doves, Crested Pigeons and Squatter Pigeons had easy access to the wombat feed in the cages and appeared to be breeding up preferentially. Interestingly the Common Bronzewing appeared less interested in opportunistic feeding at the cages. To a lesser extent Magpies and Magpie-Larks were also opportunistic feeders. Black-headed Pythons

also found the lure of water irresistible and we needed to be cautious when approaching the feeding stations, lest we disturb one of these reptiles drinking.

Flushed by the oncoming vehicle, flocks of Budgerigars formed a green blanket in the blue sky as they wheeled and turned in characteristic formation flying and flocks of Dusky and Little Woodswallows were visible all over the park. Red-winged Parrots, Cockatiels, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Galahs and the occasional Rainbow Lorikeet completed the parrot role call.

Raptors abounded. Collared Sparrowhawks, Brown Goshawks, Wedge-tails and Nankeen Kestrels were all listed in the book whilst Black-breasted Buzzards glided low over our camp site on a number of occasions. Brown Falcons, both light and dark morphs, (not Black Falcons) appeared daily perched on a dead limb, or on the exclusion fence, presenting an ideal photo opportunity. Our “pet” Tawny Frogmouth haunted the camp site, appearing nightly, flying silently to perch at the bird bath and on a couple of notable occasions landing on a nearby work bench causing an unholy clatter. Amongst the Honeyeaters the Striped and Blue-faced were dominant species, although they deferred to a Spotted Bowerbird when he appeared on the bird bath and displayed. In these circumstances the Honeyeaters, Pale headed Rosellas, Pied Butcherbirds, Little and Noisy Friarbirds, Olive-backed Orioles, Grey-crowned Babblers and Yellow-throated Miners quickly took flight.

It is difficult to summarize the experiences of a month’s bird watching in this avian paradise. The experience was made even more memorable by the addition of six new species to our list. We did not expect this outcome. “New” birds for us were the Wandering Whistling-Duck, Squatter Pigeon, Little Woodswallow, King Quail, Western Gerygone and Spotted Quail-thrush, though not all of these were recorded at Epping Forest.

We enjoyed the environment, the beauty, peace and solitude of the Australian bush, the flora and the avifauna. Epping Forest has a charm of its own which must be experienced to be appreciated. Like those who came before us, and those who follow, we have been privileged to be involved in an environmental project of supreme importance viz. the protecting, caring for, breeding and ultimately securing the future of the Northern Hairy Nosed

Wombat, the fifth most endangered species on our planet. Our only regret is that this project is not more widely known. Others need to be made aware of the plight of these little fellows and of the work that is going on there to secure their future. It was also a rare opportunity to spend an uninterrupted month in an ideal location, studying at our leisure the behaviour of birds, not generally resident in our local area.

We trust you have enjoyed sharing our experience, if vicariously. Needless to say we intend to return to continue assisting with the good work. Finally if you are interested in learning more about N.H.N.W.’s just type N.H.N.W. into Google on the web and you will find all you need to know.

Lastly an epitaph, which appeared after I had finished this article: N.H.N.W.’s achieved a moment of fame in late June, as reported on the ABC’s PM programme. The Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Brendan Nelson rose in Question Time to query the P.M. as to why the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Ken Henry was allowed one month leave in July, to care for wombats, with the country in such a parlous economic state. Perhaps the wombats are achieving the recognition they deserve. They have made their presence felt in Canberra!

**Tony Burgin**  
**June 2008**

### **Seeking Assistance with Threatened Bird Species in the Hunter**

HBOC, in conjunction with the HCR-CMA and DECC, is currently seeking assistance with regards to threatened bird species in our region. This is with a view to building community awareness about threatened bird species in our area. We are particularly interested in Bush Stone-Curlews and threatened woodland birds in the Kurri-Cessnock region.

Assistance sought includes general information, photographs and possible help with field outings. If you have any information that may be of assistance, please contact Mick Roderick on 4908 6828 or at [mick.roderick@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mick.roderick@environment.nsw.gov.au)

**Mick Roderick**



## **The Nature Watch Project (Hunter Region) – a brief description**

The present Nature Watch (Hunter Region) initiative had its origin in my own nature watching hobby. I had always been interested in natural history, and from 1969-78 I was editor of the quarterly journal of the Newcastle Flora and Fauna Protection Society: *Hunter Natural History*. In 1993 I retired from the University of Newcastle where I had been a Senior Lecturer in Biological and Environmental Science and at the end of 1994 I moved from Newcastle to live on a 4.6ha (11 acres) bushland block at Balickera (East Seaham). I resolved from Day 1 (1<sup>st</sup> January, 1995) to maintain a diary of my natural history observations.

I soon found out that a few local people were similarly interested in observing nature, and in 1998 I produced a diary format booklet for each of us to record and share our observations. In 2000, Port Stephens Council agreed to print an expanded form of this diary and issue it free of charge to anyone who requested a copy. This was an exemplary biodiversity initiative on the part of Council. A small network of nature-watchers evolved from this modest beginning, and some of these people have stayed with the project ever since. In 2007, I initiated an occasional Nature Watch e-newsletter which is now emailed to any interested person. Currently there are 68 people receiving this newsletter.

As the years have passed, some people have dropped out of the project while new people have joined. It is only an informal network, and no costs are involved. A small number of dedicated participants maintain daily diary entries. Some of these people, including myself, summarise our observations each month, and at the end of the year, produce an annual summary. A website was commenced: [www.geocities.com/liveattentively](http://www.geocities.com/liveattentively) with the aim of people posting their observations for others to see. However, after a promising start, this initiative has become somewhat neglected.

It is gratifying to see that other local government areas have adopted the Nature Watch Diary project. These include Newcastle City Council, and the combined Gosford and Wyong Councils. In

addition, there are small local “cells” of nature-watchers who organize their own field trips and occasional meetings, e.g., the Tilligerry Nature Watch group.

Part of the inspiration to undertake these nature watch records has stemmed from the **Timelines Australia Project** initiated by the renowned naturalist, Alan Reid, of the Gould League of Victoria. Whilst this project has now lapsed as an Australia-wide project, Alan continues his observations from his home base on Flinders Island, and encourages other nodes of interest around Australia to continue their work.

Another source of inspiration has been the phenology projects in various countries, particularly the USA and the UK. In Australia, Macquarie University has established a Biowatch website.

The Nature Watch project has provided a great hobby interest for those who participate in it. Some of these people have fairly specific interests, such as bird-watching, maintaining gardens of Australian wildflowers, nature photography, nature illustration and bush walking. Whereas there are formal clubs and societies which cater for these more specific interests, the central focus of the Nature Watch project is to record ANY natural event, thus reflecting a “big picture” approach to the natural environment. Many participants in the Nature Watch project also keep daily records of the weather, principally temperatures and rainfall.

Most of the participants in the NW project do not have formal training in the biological sciences and need assistance in identifying plant and animal species. As the honorary convenor of the NW Project, I have produced a 200-page booklet: **Observing Nature throughout the Year**, to assist people who might seek advice as to how they might go about maintaining their hobby in a reasonably organized manner. The main intent of the project is that people should enjoy their nature-watching as a relaxing hobby, and where appropriate, share their enjoyment with others through field excursions or simply emailing each other.

**Kevin McDonald**

## Request for Short Notes for the Whistler

During Tom Clarke's recent talk on the Stockton Sandspit he described the change-over antics of a pair of Pied Oystercatchers incubating eggs. If I remember rightly the male tapped his bill on the ground while waiting for his mate to leave the nest. I suspect this is undescribed behaviour which needs to be followed up. Perhaps oystercatchers do it all the time but we don't usually see this behaviour because most of our observations are of birds inadvertently flushed from a nest.

Tom also described how adult Pied Oystercatchers eject fledged young from their breeding territory. I am currently involved in a review of the biology of the Pied Oystercatcher in conjunction with its conservation, particularly at Lauderdale in Tasmania. These studies have demonstrated how little is known concerning how long Oystercatchers continue to feed their young after fledging. Again Tom has valuable knowledge that needs to be widely available.

In my opinion Tom's enthusiastic curiosity has provided two excellent examples of information which should be recorded in the Whistler as short notes so that his knowledge becomes widely known.

Harold Tarrant is following up on material, originally presented orally as a "Bird of the Evening" talk, regarding the local distribution, particularly in winter, of the Restless Flycatcher. This interest arose out of his observation that a single bird reappeared at Bolwarra Lagoon (and locally only at that site) for several winters in a row from April to August. He is keen that anybody who has noticed similar seasonal behaviour in this species contacts him. If you are contemplating a similar note on a particular topic you may also find it useful to pick the brains of other HBOC members.

Preparing a short note for the Whistler does not require much effort. It is like making a contribution to the Newsletter. The difference is that Whistler gets sent to libraries and similar organisations where it is archived and your information becomes accessible during literature searches.

Articles can be as short as a couple of paragraphs and certainly no longer than two or three pages. Ideally you should check to see if your observation has been recorded before. The HBOC library, including its volumes of HANZAB, is a good

resource. So also is the Web. A little reading may inspire you to make more observations.

Unfortunately there are not too many pairs of Pied Oystercatchers you can watch in the Hunter to see if they all do the bill tap on change-over. A short note may trigger observations by bird watchers in other regions; I will be looking carefully when I am in Tasmania next spring.

Published Past volumes of Whistler (note the plural; volume 2 is very close) provide some examples of short notes. We would like to see many more of them; the shorter the better. They are easier to write, easier to edit, and much easier and often more interesting to read than long papers. We need your observations to increase our knowledge and ability to conserve Australian birds. I will be provocative and suggest that Tom's observations of the behaviour of nesting shorebirds are much more valuable than the incidental records he has made of vagrant waders at the Sandspit.

If you think you have something suitable for a Whistler short note please discuss it with the Editors (Harold Tarrant and Mike Newman). Alternatively you could start by raising a discussion during the observations section of the Club meetings or round the fire at a camp. An alternative is to put some comments into the HBOC newsletter as a first step. We will be on the look out for suitable material. Indeed I intend to trawl through the HBOC newsletters to find some of my past observations which should be more permanently recorded in Whistler. For instance a Swamp Harrier trying to drown a Black Duck at the Morpeth Waste Water Treatment plant.

Photography often provides new insights into bird behaviour. The classical approach was to sit patiently in a hide at a nest waiting for a bird to feed young. Apart from the photographs this provided valuable information on food items and sometimes on nest predation (e.g. by snakes). The new breed of bird photographer using high powered lenses discards numerous sub-standard frames on their way that one trophy shot. How much previously unsuspected bird behaviour is captured in their discards?

Hopefully this article will stimulate increased interest in what birds are doing and sharing this knowledge with others.

**Mike Newman**



## Easter Camp

For those of you who wish to book accommodation for the Easter camp @ Macquarie Marshes or the extension to Bowra station south west Qld the types of accommodation, cost and contact details for each of the locations is detailed below.

### Directions to Willies Retreat:

To get to Willies Retreat there are two alternative ways to get there. Either through Coonabarabran or through Dubbo which is probably the more appropriate way for caravans to get to Willies Retreat.

Going through Coonabarabran you can get there via Quirindi and Premer or via Cassilis and Coolah. From Coonabarabran head north to Baridine than turn left onto Coonamble rd until you get to Coonamble. From Coonamble head west to Quambone, turn right following the signs to Macquarie Marshes on Gibsons wy until you get to Willies Retreat.

Going through Dubbo you head west from Mitchell hwy to Nevertire then heading north on the Oxley hwy to Warren. From Warren head northwest on the Macquarie valley wy until you get to the Gibsons wy turnoff and then turn right on to it and following it you get to Willies Retreat.

If you have any questions or problems contact Robert McDonald or Myra Tolhurst.

Powered sites - \$22 (2 persons per night)

Camping - \$10 per person per night

Woolshed 20 single beds  
\$15 per person per night

Bunkhouse 11 bunk beds (22people)  
\$22 per person per night

Retreat 10 bunk beds (5 rooms) (20 people)  
\$35 per person per night

To book contact Myra and Phillip Tolhurst  
(02) 6824 4361  
(02) 6824 4301  
0428 244 361

Contact: Robert McDonald 4952 2941  
Mobile: 0408877827

## Directions to Bowra Station:

The Bowra section of our Easter camp exodus will start on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April. Anyone wishing to go to Bowra station earlier, can if they are camping. The bunkhouse is booked out until Tuesday afternoon by another group.

I hope you all know how to get to Bourke, if you don't look at a road map.

From Bourke travel on the Mitchell Highway through Enngonia and Barrington, there should be adequate signage to Cunnumulla.

At Cunnumulla drive west, out of Cunnamulla on Eulo Road, over the bridge. 500 metres past the bridge turn right at signs, top one "Bowra". Approximately 9.5 kms along this sealed road there is a 44 gallon drum mail box also signed "Bowra". Turn left here over a cattle grid onto a dirt road, and the homestead is 6.5 kms to your left along this road. This is the only property on the road once you turn over the grid.

Please call in at the homestead for information about accommodation in the bunkhouse and camping. The owners Julie and Ian have a map of the property with birding routes and a list of possible birds to be found.

If you have any questions or problems contact Lorna Mee or Julie McLaren. I will be away from 23<sup>rd</sup> March until 4<sup>th</sup> April

5 powered sites - \$12.50 per person per night

Camping - \$10 per person per night

3 rooms twin bed (2 people)  
1 room single & double beds (3 people)  
1 room single bed  
All above \$30 per person per night

1 room 2 double bunks (4 people)  
\$25 per person per night

To book contact Ian and Julie McLaren  
(07) 4655 1238  
(07) 4655 6904  
0438 551 238

Contact: Lorna Mee 4988 6579

**OBSERVATIONS FROM CLUB NIGHT FEB/MAR 2009**

2009				
Jan 21	Crimson Rosella	1	Speers Point [garden]	Sue Hamonet
Jan 28	Olive-backed Oriole	1	“	“
	Figbird	1	“	“
Jan	Blue-faced Honeyeater	1	“	“
Jan 26	Blue-faced Honeyeater	1	Warners Bay	R.Walker
Jan 30	Buff-banded Rail	1	H.W.C.	P.Lightfoot
Jan 28	Rufous Fantail	2	Blackbutt Reserve	“
	Tawny Grassbird	2	“	“
Jan 30	Brown Quail	3	H.W.C.	“
	Latham's Snipe	1	“	“
	Torresian Crow	1	“	“
Feb 4	Southern Emu-wren	1	“	“
Jan 31	Black-necked Stork	1Juv.	Ash Island	A.Friis
Jan 31	Australian Pratincole	1	“	P.Hansbro
Feb	Galah/Little Corella [hybrid]	2+	Tanilba Bay	W. Saunders
Dec-Jan14	Eastern Koel	1	Mulbring [garden]	B.Clifton
Mid Jan	Lewin's Honeyeater	1	“	“
Feb 11	Figbird	1	“	“
Feb 18	Pheasant Coucal	1juv	“	“
	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	“	“
Jan 15	Brown Quail	1	Swansea [Reserve]	J.Adams
Jan 17	White-throated Needletail	>100	Swansea	“
	Fork-tailed Swift	20	“	“
Jan 27	Black Bittern	1	Black Ned's Bay	“
Jan 30	Lewin's Rail	2	Swansea [Reserve]	“
Jan 10	Glossy Black Cockatoo	2	Seaham	L.Mee
Jan 5	Powerful Owl	1	Cromarty Bay	T.Clarke
Jan 6	Grey-crowned Babbler	6	Kitchener	“
Jan 30	Blue-faced Honeyeater	1	Wallsend [garden]	“
Jan 26	Square-tailed Kite	1	Kurri Kurri	G.Brosie
Jan	Fork-tailed Swift	50+	Ash Island	“
	Lewin's Rail	1	Belmont Lagoon	“
Feb 11	Spotless Crake	1	Tenambit	“
	Chestnut-breasted Mannikin	10+	“	“
	Brown-headed Honeyeater	5+	“	“
	Spangled Drongo	1	H.W.C.	“
Jan 28	Bar-tailed Godwit	21	Corlette	T.Clarke
Feb 1	Red-kneed Dotterel	40	Ash Island [Milhams]	“
Feb 8	Tawny Frogmouth	4	Merewether	P.Durie
Feb 7	Superb Fairy-wren	6+	Fassifern	“
Jan	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	4	Toronto	“
15/1-10/2	Glossy Black Cockatoo	12	Wollombi	
Feb 11	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	5	“	
Feb 10	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	10	Eraring Power Station	D.Johnson
Feb 4	Black Bittern	3	Cockle Creek [Barnsley]	J.Smart
Dec/Jan	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	8	Hamilton South	C.Anderson`
Feb 10	Wedge-tailed Eagle	6	Mt. Arthur mine site	G.Newling
Feb 11	Eastern Koel [fed by Wattlebirds]	1imm	Wingen	“
Jan1-8	Crested Pigeon	2+1dy	Dora Creek	C.Goodenough
Jan 7	Buff-banded Rail	1	“	“
Jan 15	Brown Falcon	3	Carrington [waterfront]	M.Evans
Mar 9	Sooty Oystercatcher	30+	N'cle. Ocean Baths	“
Jan 8	Little Corella	42	Yarrawonga Park	C.Goodenough
Jan 15	Glossy Black Cockatoo	2 + 1dy	Watagans	“
	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	8 +1dy	“	“
Jan 18	Dollarbird	2 + 1dy	Dora Creek	“
Jan 8	Long-billed Corella	2 + 1dy	“	“

Jan 15	Grey Butcherbird	2 + <b>1dy</b>	“	“
Feb 20	Australian King Parrot	9	Martinsville	C.Goodenough
Feb 26	Black Bittern	1	Barnsley	G.Brosia/N.Livanos
	Brown Treecreeper	1	West of Pelaw Main	“
	Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	2	“	“
	Black-chinned Honeyeater	2	“	“
	Superb Lyrebird	3	Watagans	“
	Musk Lorikeet	50+	Watagans [Mt. Falk Rd.]	“
	Little Lorikeet	20+	“ “	“
Feb 1-8	Glossy Black Cockatoo	3	Wye Point	V.Moon
Mar 3	Glossy Black Cockatoo	3	“	“
Feb-Mar	Musk Lorikeet	10+	“	“
Mar 10	Musk Lorikeet	~20	Lemon Tree Passage	“
Mar 10	Latham's Snipe	1	Pambalong N.R.	T.Clarke
	Black Swan	2 + <b>2ne</b>	“	“
Feb 12	Little Wattlebird	3	Wallsend [garden]	“
Feb 20	Olive-backed Oriole	1	“	“
Mar 2	White-headed Pigeon	2	Whitebridge	“
Mar 3	Peaceful Dove	1	Wingen village	G.Newling
Mar 7	Figbird	4	Scone	“
Mar 10	Stubble Quail	Many heard	Morpeth	G.Brosie
Mar	Black Kite	1	East Maitland	“
Mar 10	Sacred Kingfisher	1	Morpeth	“
Mar 6	Rainbow Bee-eater	16	Raworth	“
Mar	Striped Honeyeater	2	Morpeth	“
Feb 24	Brown Songlark	1	Yarrawa	“
Mar 6	Pheasant Coucal	1m	Wollombi	R. Craig
Mar 4	Glossy Black Cockatoo	3	Toronto [Golf Course]	D.Johnson
Mar 9	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	1	Rankin Park	T. Mille-Evers
Mar 9	Sooty Oystercatcher	37	N'cle Beach [canoe pool]	J.Thomas
	Ruddy Turnstone	17	Horseshoe Beach	“
Mar 13	<b>Yellow-throated Miner</b>	1	Seal Rocks	G.Brosie/N.Livanos
	<b>Common Noddy</b>	1	“	“
	Short-tailed Shearwater	1,000+	“	“
	Arctic Jaeger	3	“	“
	Little Penguin	2	“	“
	Eastern Reef Egret	1	“	“
	Eastern Osprey	1	“	“
Mar 6	Pectoral Sandpiper	3	Ash Island	M.Roderick
Mar 10	Great Crested Grebe	1imm	John Brown's Lagoon	“
Feb 24	Brahminy Kite	1	Stockton Sandspit	“
Mar 5	Golden Whistler	1imm	Lambton [garden]	“
Feb 23	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	5	Freemans Waterhole	“

## HBOC ACTIVITIES 2009

EASTER 10 – 13 April	Camp at Macquarie Marshes plus optional Bowra Station, near Cunnamulla, Qld.	“Willies Retreat” 02 6824 4361 02 6824 4301 “Bowra Station” 07 4655 1238 07 4655 6904	Book your own accommodation Willies Retreat contact - Robert McDonald 0408 877 827 Bowra Station contact – Lorna Mee 4988 6579
Tuesday 14 April	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265
Sunday 19 April	Field Outing to Seaham	8.00am Seaham Swamp Bird Hide, then to “Wattlewood”	Pam Hill 49845270
Saturday 25 April	Hunter Wader Survey	7.30am Ash Island 8.00am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Jack Adams 4971 5334 - Swansea
Sunday 26 April	Hunter Seawatch	2.00 pm Fort Drive, Nobbys	Mick Roderick 0421 761 237
Tuesday 5 May	Mid-Week Outing Myuna Bay	8.00am Car Park at Myuna Bay	Don Moon 4359 1670
Wednesday 6 May	Management Committee Meeting	7.00pm – 10.00pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
<b>Wednesday 13 May</b>	<b>Club Meeting</b>	<b>7.30pm The Wetlands Centre</b>	<b>Speaker: Chris Herbert – Tanami Track - Pilbara</b>
Sunday 17 May	Stockton Sandspit Volunteer Day	7.00am Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
Tuesday 19 May	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265
Saturday 23 May	Hunter Wader Survey	6.30am Ash Island 7.00am Various locations as directed	Robert McDonald 0408 877 827 Chris Herbert 4959 3663 Jack Adams 4971 5334 - Swansea
Sunday 24 May	Field outing to Broke/Bulga area	8.00am Cessnock McDonalds	Robert McDonald 0408 877 827
Sunday 31 May	Hunter Seawatch	2.00 pm Fort Drive, Nobbys	Mick Roderick 0421 761 237
Tuesday 2 June	Mid-Week Outing Speers Point Park	8.00am Car park at end of Creek Reserve Road	Robert & Margaret Stewart 4963 2029
Wednesday 3 June	Management Committee Meeting	7.00pm – 10.00pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Long Weekend 6 - 8 June	Camp at Kerewong State Forest	Swans Crossing camping ground.	Tom Clarke 4951 3872
<b>Wednesday 10 June</b>	<b>Club Meeting</b>	<b>7.30pm The Wetlands Centre</b>	<b>Speaker: Mick Roderick – Back Packer Birding Part 2</b>