



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with Bird Observers and Conservation Australia

Newsletter

Issue 4/12
August - September 2012

The Club aims to:

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

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Road-side Barn Owl - Grant Brosie
See "When It Rains It Pours" on pages 13-14

Please send Newsletter articles direct to the Editor,
Liz Crawford at: chrisliz@internode.on.net
Deadline for the next edition - 30 September 2012

HBOC postal address:
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Website: www.hboc.org.au

President's Column

Well, we're in the thick of winter now. The chilly sou-westers are howling outside my room as I type this, Straw-necked Ibis have arrived in numbers, hordes of albatross have been chasing fishing trawlers, White-fronted Terns are feeding on baitfish in Stockton Bight while Double-banded Plovers hunker down in the sand dunes, Swift Parrots are feeding on our Spotted Gums, Rose Robins are in the open woodlands and the numbers of avocet are peaking at Stockton Sandspit. Isn't winter great?!

But – there are signs of spring in the air already. The resident Red-capped Plovers at the Sandspit have already started their breeding efforts with three hens sitting on two eggs each. There have been reports of Channel-billed Cuckoos in Sydney and Fairy Martins in the Hunter and in Sydney too – very early for both of these species. I think a lot of us “birdos” associate the onset of spring not so much with what date is showing on the calendar on the wall, but by the arrival of things like the Channel-bills and Koels, amongst a host of other migrants. Personally, I look forward to the arrival of the first Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, back from their wintering waters in the

Central Pacific, followed later in spring by the spectacle of the Short-tailed Shearwater migration. At least these birds don't herald their arrival by announcing it to the world at 4am in a suburban street!

It is the seasonality of many of the birds we share our environment with that adds a great spice to birdwatching as a hobby. When you look closer at the reasons that so many birds do migrate north (or south, how intriguing are Spangled Drongoes?) in winter, it gives you an extra appreciation of what they've just been through when you first encounter them each year.

Yeah, it's still cold outside but I love the fact that all of the things I mentioned in the opening paragraph are happening right now and August really is an exciting month filled with the promise of the arrival of migrant breeding birds and other summer visitors.

Here's to happy birding, whatever season it may be!

Mick Roderick

Meeting Highlights

SHOULD WE OR SHOULDN'T WE?

I am asking members this question following our June HBOC meeting night. On the evening no definite opinions were made as to whether we should or should not artificially feed our native birds.

Occasionally I give talks to groups about growing Australian plants as well as the development of the Hunter Wetland Centre (HWCA). I am often asked, 'is it right or is it wrong to feed the birds?' In the past I have suggested it was not a good idea and have quoted some old chestnuts about not feeding:

- Feeding interferes with migratory behaviour of some birds discouraging them from following the naturally occurring sequence of food sources throughout Australia's bush – flowering and seed production;
- Infection may be transmitted through use of communal feeding stations;
- Infection may occur from birds over-breeding - as an example using nest hollows more frequently than was the habit before artificial feeding;
- Birds may develop dependence on hand-feeding practices. Young birds could cease learning how to forage on their own;
- Nutritional deficiencies may be caused by the provision of incorrect food through lack of understanding of their natural diet.

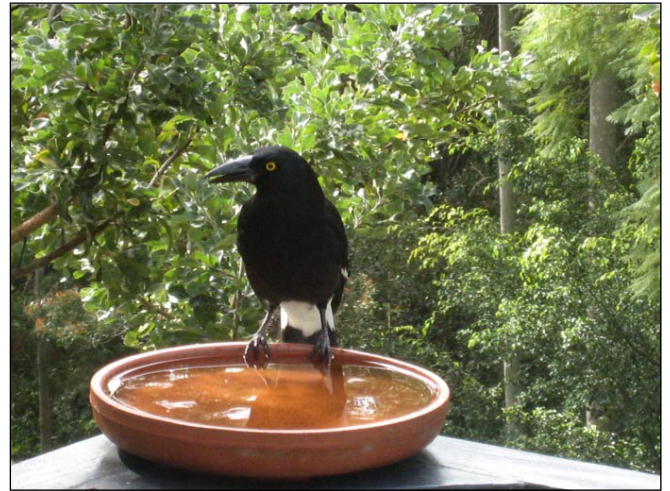
Recently two UK expats, Mike Newman and Gina Hopkins, have chatted about the discrepancy in numbers between registered members of bird clubs in the UK and here in Australia. There are over five hundred thousand members of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in the UK. They have a population of just over seventy million persons. We have twenty-one million residents in Australia and only ten thousand bird club members. Statistically we should have at least one hundred thousand members in our clubs. Could this be due to the fact that bird feeders adorn many UK gardens? In fact, in winter many bird species in the UK and USA survive because of this very abundance of food in the feeders.

I have recently read the entertaining book 'Bird Watchingwatching' by Alex Horne. This is the true story of Alex – a twenty-plus years old and a non-birder – who challenges his father, a retired GP and lifelong birdo, to see which of them can see the most species of birds over a twelve-month period. One of the first things young Alex does is to become a 'peeping Alex' staring into his neighbours' yards to find out which super model bird feeder he should purchase to attract more bird species into his own garden.

If we decide not to artificially feed our local birds then two safe and assured methods of attracting and protecting our own birds are to:

- plant our gardens with Australian native plants. No need for wildlife corridors to link up isolated bushland islands around our cities if every garden is full of natives!

Should we or shouldn't we? cont.



- provide water for the birds – keeping birdbaths clean, shrubs near the baths for small bird protection and situating baths off the ground as protection against feline predators.

Caryl and I have four birdbaths in our smallish garden in New Lambton with the back boundary being Blackbutt Reserve. The bath featured in the photos is located on our top verandah where we eat out and relax. There are two Banksias adjacent to the birdbath - *Banksia serrata* (Old Man Banksia of May Gibb's fame) and *Banksia integrifolia* (Coastal Banksia) – both of which are locals and provide cover for the attendant birds.



The garden is, with the exception of a small number of exotics, planted with Australian native plants growing in close association with each other – great cover. We have several nectar-producing shrubs such as Grevilleas and Callistemons. Luckily for us there is alongside our boundary a Celery-wood having abundant fruit for those fruit-loving species inhabiting the local bushland.

Birds that have used our birdbath include Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Lewin's Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Noisy Miner, Red Wattlebird, Satin Bowerbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Grey Butcherbird, Crimson Rosella, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, (as well as hybrids between these two Lorikeets), Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Crested Pigeon, Spotted Turtle-Dove, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, and Australian Figbird. Laughing Kookaburras hang about on the rail but have not used the bath.



Well, what's our membership consensus? Should we or shouldn't we artificially feed our birds? Email Paddy your opinion on feet@swiftdsl.com.au

Paddy Lightfoot

Birds enjoying birdbaths clockwise from top left: Rainbow Lorikeets, Pied Currawong, Rainbow Lorikeet in bliss, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Brown Cuckoo-dove.
- Paddy Lightfoot



Trip Report - Camp at *Oaklands* near Coolah Tops

8-11 June 2012

The June Long Weekend Camp always threatens cold weather and often rain as well.. . This year was no exception - showers and rain were predicted for the coast but an SMS to the ABC weatherman on Friday revealed that rain west of Merriwa was unlikely over the weekend. So, a total of seven well-clad campers braved the clear freezing nights, revelled in the stars crowding the Milky Way and enjoyed the warmth of the campfire. Saturday and Sunday were clear and sunny, encouraging an additional four day-trippers to make the long journey west. En route they were rewarded with lots of raptors - Black-shouldered Kites, Nankeen Kestrels and Brown Falcons perching on power poles, fence posts and dead trees.

Oaklands is a partly cleared grazing property at the end of Pembroke Road, which heads north from the Golden Highway about 25 km west of Merriwa. The property extends along Jemmys Creek to the foothills of Coolah Tops National Park. The past wet year has resulted in thick grass over the camping area and plenty of water in the creek. Tall casuarinas line the creek and scattered White Box dot the hillsides. Ironbarks and stringybarks dominate the forested foothills below Coolah Tops.

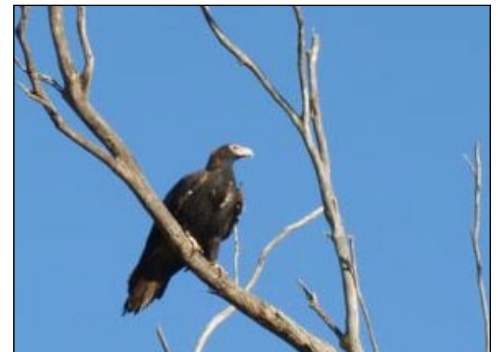


Frost crisping the long grass around the Storms' caravan
- Rowley Smith

Although there was very little blossom, about 30 Musk Lorikeets were found feeding on a few flowering White Box; occasional mixed foraging flocks of Yellow, Striated, Buff-rumped and Brown Thornbills accompanied by Grey Fantail, Golden Whistler and White-naped, Brown-headed and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters passed through the woodland, concentrating mainly on insects. Flocks of Red-browed Finches, Silveryeyes and Superb Fairy-wrens occurred in dense vegetation along the creek. Speckled Warblers were found in two places. Four magnificent Wedge-tailed Eagles soared above the valley. But the night birds (if present) were silent. In all, about 60 species were identified.



Di Johnson and Melva Fisher at *Oaklands* - Rowley Smith



One of four
Wedge-tailed
Eagles at
Oaklands -
Di Johnson

Highlights included the frosted landscape, Rowley's jokes, Di being chased by a wild pig, and gum leaves etched against a clear blue sky.

Liz Crawford

Trip Report - A Walk at Walka Water Works

24 June 2012

A group of eight well rugged-up members gathered for the June outing at Walka Water Works. The morning started out in overcast, chilly conditions but warmed appreciably as the day progressed to end in bright sunshine. It's often good to have a challenge for the day so Judy threw down the gauntlet: she was really keen to see a Rose Robin, not a common bird at Walka!

As we headed off between the water's edge and the old cooling water channel, en route to Pelican Point, the usual suspects were sighted: plenty of Eurasian Coot, Pacific Black Duck, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant and Australasian Grebe. A scan across the water to the far edge revealed loafing Chestnut Teal and on the open water, groups of Hardhead. Hoary-headed Grebes were spotted as was the deep-water specialist, Great-crested Grebe. Walka supports a breeding,

Trip Report - A Walk at Walka Water Works cont.

resident population of Great-crested Grebe and as such it is the most reliable place in the Lower Hunter to see this species. Walka provides the necessary habitat requirements of permanent deep, open, fresh water with fringing vegetation and is only one of three wetlands in the Lower Hunter to support this species. The very high water level reduced the chance of seeing the crakes or rails that are infrequently reported in the verge on this part of the lake.

On arrival at Pelican Point, alas, no pelicans but, much to the delight of the group, some Pink-eared Ducks were travelling in line astern across the western bay. Several of the recent members enjoyed ticking this species for the first time. Disappointingly, the Musk Ducks, which up to the start of 2012 were regularly present, were nowhere to be seen, continuing the trend for this year. Hopefully they will return soon.

During the leisurely and relaxing wander along the track, and over the dam wall with a scan of the ephemeral ponds on the Hunter flood plain, the tally of species grew steadily until we arrived back at our starting point.

Reinvigorated by a hot cuppa, it was back onto shanks' pony for the trip along the Kangaroo Track which passes through the locally endangered spotted gum/ ironbark community located on the ridges behind the Walka Lake. Just before entering the woodland the group enjoyed, for some time, the sight of a flock (18 birds) of Australian Pelicans lazily circling above. The woodland was very quiet with hardly any bird activity, but all changed when we reached a sun-drenched gully near the end of the track. However despite the increased activity, no Rose Robin! Hopes fell and disappointment pervaded the group as it seemed our challenge would remain unmet. But, just at the edge of the woodland that negative mood evaporated as sitting in bright sunlight, and in full view for the entire world to behold, was a small bird with its rose-red breast contrasting with the grey of its back - a male Rose Robin! Judy was delighted!

Walka had lived up to its reputation as a great local birding spot, yielding 56 species for the outing and a wonderful surprise.

Paul Baird

Trip Reports - Hunter Wetlands Centre

Tuesday Outing - 3 July 2012

Waterbirds were in abundance on a clear and sunny day at the Hunter Wetlands Centre. We started off with a count of 94 Magpie Geese and went on to see over 300 Grey Teal and 250 Dusky Moorhens. There were also plenty of Chestnut Teal, Australasian Grebes, Hardheads and Eurasian Coots. The Australian White Ibis are starting to nest again and we also saw 4 Nankeen Night Herons in the same area. Four species of raptors soared overhead – 2 Whistling Kites, a Black-shouldered Kite, Grey Goshawk and Swamp Harrier. There was no shortage of land birds either – a flock of 30 Little Corellas flew over and 3 Spangled Drongoes settled briefly in a nearby tree. A very respectable total of 62 species was seen. This was in stark contrast to our June outing to Awabakal on a cold and windy day where we saw only 27 species and aborted the outing at morning tea time because of the weather.

Margaret Stewart

New Members Day - 22 July 2012

Our trusty membership secretary had 19 positive RSVP's to our annual event in welcoming our new members. Weather conditions in June or July can always be a problem for us humans, but for the birds it's business as usual. Weather forecast was wet, showers and overcast and it provided thus. A bird walk armed with binoculars and spotting scopes around the ponds at the Hunter Wetlands Centre had the birds doing business as usual.

For us it was rain coats. It was such a pleasure to give the new members an enthusiastic and passionate person like Ann Lindsey to help them get excited about the common and not-so-common birds in our local area. All up we had 27 attendees. During the bird walk when a shower of rain came we sheltered under branches of trees, not much different from a bird really. Mostly the rain stayed away. A Collared Sparrowhawk did a lap over our heads and with consideration for the observers it flew and perched close enough for everyone to see and enjoy. A male Golden Whistler showed his stunning plumage. A good mix of ducks provided an educational project for new members in identifying their differences and their habits. All up 65 bird species were observed.

Lunch, provided by HBOC volunteers, consisted of barbecued kangaroo and beef sausages, salads, fruit and cake. Rowley and Paul were dab hands on the cooking and, when it was all done, Rowley whistled them in on his mobile phone. The barbecues we used this time were fast and hot and I overestimated the cooking time.

On display was our new banner to be used for outings and educational days, displaying our gorgeous Golden Whistler logo. A stunning addition to our Club's equipment.

Thanks to the new members for attending and to the old and not-so-old members who assisted in catering and company, and to the Hunter Wetlands Centre for a great venue.

Lorna Mee

Port Stephens Waterbirds Survey

20 July 2012

Doesn't time roll around quickly! All of a sudden it's late July and time once again for the winter survey of Port Stephens waterbirds. For anyone who is not familiar with these surveys, we do a boat-based survey of all the important habitat for waterbirds (especially waders) in the Port. The survey is done in conjunction with the National Parks & Wildlife Service and also assisted by the Great Lakes-Port Stephens Marine Park Authority. Those organisations provide most of the boats and the skippers – we just have to kick back, count birds, and enjoy ourselves! Afterwards, we all assemble at the NPWS office in Nelson Bay to debrief while enjoying lunch overlooking the marina complex.

On the eve of the survey, the weather forecast was a bit worrying, with strong winds forecast to arrive from mid morning, and the distinct possibility of rain. On the day itself, although there was a stiff breeze early on, it eased off later and we had reasonable conditions overall, and no rain. There were 11 surveyors, in 6 boats (plus there was the one who slept in).

Once again we found large numbers of Australian Pied Oystercatchers – 154 birds this time, which is the equal

highest winter count that we have had. Port Stephens is, without doubt, the Pied Oystercatcher capital of NSW! It's also becoming increasingly important for Sooty Oystercatcher – we found 28 of them this year, which is the highest count that we have had (for either summer or winter).

The situation for migratory shorebirds was not so good. Normally we find more than 300 over-wintering immature Bar-tailed Godwits, but this year there were only 122. We found small numbers of Eastern Curlews and Whimbrels, and also 37 Double-banded Plovers some of which were already in full breeding plumage and looking very smart.

As usual there were lots of cormorants, of all four types, and modest to good numbers of several other waterbirds e.g. Pelicans. Overall though, the waterbird numbers were down 30-40% on previous years. We also saw less raptors than normal – maybe the conditions in the Port were less attractive this year and the birds had gone elsewhere. We'll see how things pan out in next winter's survey.

Alan Stuart

Stockton Sandspit

Just about every Sunday Tom Clarke can be found at Stockton Sandspit, working on vegetation management to optimise the area for shorebird roosting and nesting opportunities. Tom and any assistants who come to join him, are rewarded with great bird-watching opportunities and close encounters with the local residents.

On Sunday 22 July 2012, Red-capped Plovers were observed indulging in nesting and courting behaviours. One pair on Big Island were witnessed courtship dancing and nest test-scraping until the birds flew off to the beach for the low tide. This gave the observers a chance to check the test scrapes of the previous week and at least two of these sites had been fully decorated with shells ready for eggs. So it was with great excitement that on Sunday 29 July, the first Red-capped Plover eggs for the season were found. One of the two nests seen on 22 July had been taken up and a hen was sitting on two eggs - in the last week of July. At least two other pairs of Red-capped Plovers were seen in courtship behaviour on Big Island, so next week's visit may see additional hens sitting.

There is always something exciting to observe at the Sandspit; it's a great place to visit and if it's a Sunday, there's the opportunity to lend a hand with vegetation management that will benefit the birds.



STOP PRESS
On Sunday 5 August, three Red-capped Plover hens were found sitting on two eggs each, in widely separated nests!

Red-capped Plover nest with eggs at Stockton Sandspit 29 July 2012
- Tom Clarke

Featured Birdwatching Site - Port Stephens



BAY

BIRDING

Bird-watching opportunities abound in Port Stephens. The extensive estuary attracts waders; sea birds can be spotted along the coast; tracks and fire-trails provide access to bush birds, and there is almost always a raptor flying overhead. It's also worth mentioning that regular pelagic trips organised by Mick Roderick are run out of Nelson Bay. Their impressive list includes several rarities. For calm-water sailors the Nelson Bay/Tea Gardens ferry is a birding option that comes with a dolphin bonus.

The Coast: Any local map will guide you to car-accessible, coastal view-points between Birubi Beach and Barrie Park. Gulls, terns and gannets are always present, but it's not uncommon to see a few pelagic species, especially shearwaters, and a scan of the rocks will usually turn up cormorants, oystercatchers, and if you are lucky, the resident Reef Egret. Whales in migration are an added attraction.

Birubi Beach is an excellent spot. Large numbers of Silver Gulls and Crested Terns roost on the rocks, and at low tide Sooty Oystercatchers and the elusive Reef Egret forage around the tidal pools. In 2008 a Wandering Tattler called this part of the beach home for almost all of September. If you have the time and you're up for a longer tramp, ditch the boots, toss a sandwich and some water in the backpack and paddle along the firm, flat, clean sand in the direction of Newcastle. Pied Oystercatchers, Double-banded Plovers, Red-capped Plovers, Curlew Sandpipers



Pacific Golden Plover at Birubi Beach - Lois Wooding

and Little Terns can sometimes be found further down the Stockton Bight, depending upon the season.

Barrie Park offers great views across Fingal Bay and a sand-spit, much favoured by terns and cormorants. A note of warning! The sand-spit has been breached for several years; crossing is treacherous and the tide turns quickly. A recently repaired walking track leads south from Barrie Park along the cliff edge. The views are wonderful, and birds shelter in the lee of the windswept scrub, the cliffs and the offshore rocks.

The Estuary: The southern edge of the bay is a highly developed tourist destination, probably best avoided by serious birdwatchers during holiday periods, although some birds are always present. Mobs of patrolling gulls and pelicans materialize around the fish-filleting tables at the slightest hint of action offering great photo-ops, and waders drop in to feed on the rich pickings available on the low-tide mud flats of quieter beaches such as Salamander Bay and Soldiers Point.



Sooty Oystercatchers at Birubi Beach - Lois Wooding



Soldier Crabs at Pindimar - Lois Wooding

There is an easy walk to Tomaree Head. Park outside the gate to Tomaree Lodge, at the eastern end of Shoal Bay, and take the shoreline path. Little Penguins have been spotted here, and a Peregrine Falcon lives on a ledge high on the headland. Pull up a rock and sit a while. Birds often fish the restless water between Tomaree and Yacaaba headlands, or follow returning trawlers into the

Featured Birdwatching Site - Port Stephens cont.

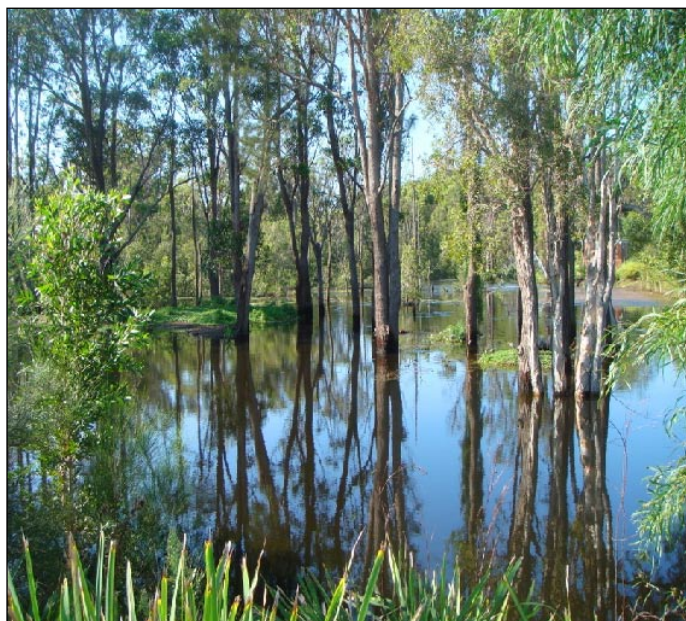
bay. In spring you might even spot some jaegers. Little Penguins have also been seen at the Nelson Bay Ferry Terminal, the OEH dock and at Wanda Point, Salamander Bay.

Currently, at Soldiers Point, a pair of Beach Stone-curlews move between Dowardee Island and Pearson Park. They are hard to find, but it's such a nice place for a walk and there are so many other things to see, that it doesn't really matter if you miss them.



Beach Stone-Curlews at Soldiers Point - Lois Wooding

While in the Soldiers Point/ Salamander Bay area it's well worth taking a detour to the sports ground/ recycling and waste facility off the round-about on Soldiers Point Road. The sports ground parking lot is usually closed, but there are six parking bays available outside the entrance. The sports fields, the two drainage ponds, their connecting channel, and the surrounding natural bushland have formed a happy intersection of habitats in which 113 species of birds have been recorded over the past five years of atlassing. The abandoned road along the side of the ponds is an easy, quiet, rewarding walk, especially early in the morning.



Salamander Recycling Depot drainage pond - Lois Wooding

Lemon Tree Passage provides great birding. A walking track follows the shoreline southwards from the shops. Songbirds can be seen and heard all along this track; waders frequent the water's edge, and the 300m section closest to the shops is a reliable spot for Grey-tailed Tattlers during summer.

Northwest of the Lemon Tree Passage shopping centre, a park edges the shoreline all the way to Mallabula Point, an excellent, low-tide shorebird spot. Drive around to Tanilba Bay for more, good shorebird viewing (access from Tanilba's Peace Parade) and while you're there don't miss the "Tilligerry Habitat". Many small songbirds have taken refuge in this stretch of preserved, natural shoreline. Strolling the Habitat's walking trails is a delight for anyone interested in birds and plants, but do remember to take the insect repellent!

Much of the inner estuary shoreline is only accessible through private land or by boat at high tide, but Swan Bay, North Arm Cove, Carrington, Karuah, Pindimar and Bundabah all have good access roads leading to long stretches of quiet, relatively undisturbed bush and shorebird habitat. Stop off at any of these locations on a falling tide and you can be fairly certain of a reward.

Eastern Curlews and smaller shorebirds like to roost on Gir-um-bit National Park. The track is difficult, but the birds feed along the Big Swan Bay shore at low tide. Walk the beach or the 4WD track leading off Waterfront Drive at Swan Bay to view more shoreline and the neighbouring bay.

Tea Gardens, is another excellent birding location. Check out the fire-trails for bush birds, and the wharves and poles of the Myall River from its entrance to the Tea Gardens CBD for large waterbirds. The river's shoreline also attracts tattlers, oystercatchers, and plovers, while squadrons of gulls hang out by the fish and chip shops.

Walk out to Jimmys Beach and you are on the estuary's north shore. Walk right, towards the end of Winda Woppa, for views across to Corrie Island - shorebirds will often shelter there. Turn left towards Yacaaba and another low-tide sand-spit used by terns, occasionally Little Terns, and cormorants. It's a spot worth checking during the summer season.

The surf club at Bennetts Beach (also known as Hawks Nest Beach) is a good spot to scan the northern surf beach for that rare Sanderling, and remember, Tea Gardens is the gateway to the Myall Lakes, always a productive bird area.

Information Centres at Nelson Bay and Tea Gardens carry a wide selection of maps, books and brochures covering Port Stephens' tracks, trails and wide diversity of flora and fauna.

Also, any member of the Tomaree Birdwatchers Club would be happy to help out visiting birdos (contact the President, Diane Hatfield on 4982 1783 or Lois Wooding

Featured Birdwatching Site - Port Stephens cont.

on 4919 1235). Port Stephens is one of those civilized locations where good birding is never far from good coffee and good food, but it is not a place to be taken lightly. Thanks to the on-going work of many HBOC

members, its ranking as an important bird location has risen significantly.

Lois Wooding



Pied Oystercatchers, Eastern Great Egret and Australian Pelicans waiting for the tide to fall at Tilligerry Creek - Lois Wooding

Future Activities - HBOC

Directions for HBOC outing to Munmorah State Conservation Area

23 September 2012

Travelling along the Pacific Highway from the south, turn right at traffic lights into Elizabeth Bay Drive at Lake Munmorah. Alternatively, if coming from the north, turn left into Elizabeth Bay Drive.

Travel about 2 km along this road to a roundabout, take the left exit into Birdie Beach Drive.

National Park car entry fee of \$7 per car applies. Coin-operated or credit card "pay and display" machines are at the entrance to the park. Please bring the correct coins.

Directions to HBOC camp at Woko National Park

29 September 2012 to 1 October 2012

From the Pacific Highway, after Raymond Terrace, turn onto the Bucketts Way and follow until you reach Gloucester. At Gloucester, get onto Thunderbolts Way, which is the road to Walcha. Travel approximately 16km then take the left turn onto Curricabark Road (there should be a green sign stating Woko National Park). After approximately 13km, turn right into Flood Detour Road which is just before the first low-level causeway. The park is 1km along this road. The road is dirt but suitable for 2-wheel-drive vehicles. There are picnic tables, a free gas barbecue and pit toilets plus some great walks and birds. National Parks camping fee is \$10 per adult per night. In addition, there is an HBOC Camping fee of \$2 per person for the whole camp.

Future Activities - BirdLife Australia Congress and Campout

14 - 19 September 2012

BirdLife Northern NSW is hosting the BirdLife Australia Congress and Campout in mid-September 2012 at Coffs Harbour. Two days of spoken papers will be presented on Saturday and Sunday, 15-16 September, with early registration and an informal get-together on Friday 14 September between 5pm and 7pm at Club Coffs, 61 West High Street, Coffs Harbour. Senator Bob Brown will open the Congress on Saturday morning and a Congress dinner will be held on Saturday night at the Surf Club Restaurant and Bar.

The Campout will follow the conclusion of the Congress, beginning on Sunday afternoon and continuing until Wednesday 19 September, at Urunga Heads Holiday Park on the banks of the Kalang River, just to the south of Coffs Harbour. The Urunga Heads Holiday Park is reserving an area for those attending the Campout and there are also cabins available. Delegates attending the Congress and Campout are offered a 10% discount on published rates. For more details of the Congress and Campout and to download a registration form, visit the BirdLife Australia website at: <http://www.birdlife.org.au/get-involved/whats-on/congress-campout>

Future Activities - BirdLife Southern NSW

Activities at the Discovery Centre, Sydney Olympic Park

To register for any event, please contact southernnsw@birdlife.org.au or phone 02 9647 1033

Speaking about Sea-eagles - Saturday 18 August 2012

Free, but please register

Learning about Raptors - Saturday & Sunday 25 & 26 August

Lecture and field trip
Members/non-members \$110/\$120

Bird ID by Sound - Saturday & Sunday 1 & 2 September

Lecture and workshop
Members/non-members \$89/\$99

Spring Bird Walk/Life in the Park - Sunday 16 September

Free but please register

Introduction to Bird Portraiture/ Birds of Prey

Saturday & Sunday 22 & 23 September
Learn to draw & paint with artist Peter Wale
Also a brief intro to Raptor physiology
Members/non-members \$110/\$119

Don't forget to register for the Capertee Valley Tree Planting weekend

Saturday & Sunday 18 & 19 August

Join us in the beautiful Capertee Valley to create precious habitat for the endangered Regent Honeyeater. Great camping (free), accommodation \$40 per night and Saturday night dinner (\$30) available. New recruits are always welcome and no experience is necessary.

Time & Place: 8:00am, "Little Crown", Capertee Valley (near Lithgow).

Price: Free. For info or to register, contact: 02 9647 1033
southernnsw@birdlife.org.au

Hunter Wetlands National Park

MUD SWEAT AND CHEERS

Join Newcastle NPWS staff for an adventure to a remote area of the Hunter Wetlands National Park. Paddle up the iconic Hunter River and its tributaries, swamp-walk to inaccessible endangered habitats. Once there, help regenerate saltmarsh habitat for threatened and migratory shorebirds.

Last chance in 2012:

Wednesday 29 August at Windeyers Reach,
8:30am to 2:30pm

For more information call 02 4946 4107
Visit www.nswnationalparks.com.au

Participants must be over 18 years of age, have a reasonable level of fitness and be able to swim.
Bookings are essential.

Erratum



Did you spot the error?

The Editor apologises for mislabelling this beautiful **Large-billed Scrubwren** as a Yellow Thornbill in the June Newsletter.

Photo by Allan Richardson

Advertisement

4 BED COTTAGE FOR RENT Wallingat Coastal Hideaway

Wallingat National Park overlooking the beautiful Wallis Lake



Explore the National Forest from your own back yard!
Under 2 hours from Newcastle

- ✔ CD/DVD Player
- ✔ Microwave
- ✔ Rumpus Room
- ✔ Decking/BBQ
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- ✔ Great birding
- ✔ Open Fireplace
- ✔ Stereo
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- ✔ TV Reception
- ✔ Iron
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- ✔ Large fenced yard
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Black-winged Stilt & Red-necked Avocet Behaviours

Swan Pond, Ash Island, 15 July 2012

After enjoying the organised walk around Swan Pond on 1 July, wife Heather decided that when son David arrived from New Zealand on 13 July for the weekend we would take him, daughter Michele Keith and friend David Atkinson to walk along Wagtail Way from Bell Frog Track to Fish Fry Flats and return. In mid-afternoon of 15 July, the five of us set out along the causeway, armed with our cameras. The light was good, it was a clear day, but a strong, very cold, buffeting wind created some difficulties with camera management.

Our cameras worked overtime, capturing shots of some Royal Spoonbills, a large group of White-faced Herons and Black-winged Stilts feeding in large and small groups all over the wetland area. It constituted one of the biggest congregations of them I have ever come across in the Hunter. The groups included many juveniles, indicating a successful breeding season. However, the highlights of the trip were an intriguing set of bird behaviours observed and caught on the cameras.

Conflict: Two Adult Stilts versus a Juvenile Stilt

We had noticed many juvenile Stilts foraging among the adults without any evidence of conflict and a few small isolated groups of juveniles. However, on the way back I spotted two adults with two juveniles in conflict while foraging close to the shore. I stopped to watch, while the others kept walking. I managed to get two consecutive photos, seconds apart, showing the typical action. The conflict was similar to that of other bird species, such as Magpies, where the parents try to drive off their offspring to make them become independent. One or the other adult Stilt would wade up to the juvenile, attack it, causing it to take flight, and repeat the pattern every time the juvenile settled to forage again. I left them to get on with it while I set out to catch the family.



Left: One of the pair of adult Black-winged Stilts closes in to target the juvenile - Max Maddock

Below: The juvenile escapes by flying off - Max Maddock



Conflict: Stilts versus Red-necked Avocets

When I caught up with the other four, Michele and Heather bailed me up to help identify two strange birds that they discovered foraging amongst the Stilts. I confirmed that they were Red-necked Avocets. Satisfied with my identification, they left with the two blokes, heading back towards Bellfrog Track, leaving me to try and get photos of the Avocets. As with the Stilt conflict, I noticed disturbance between the Stilts and the Avocets, which became repeated vicious attacks and I was lucky enough to take two consecutive photos, which show the strategy employed. A Stilt would detach itself from the mob to swoop on the two Avocets and attack one of them, while the other scurried off to escape. Once again, I left them at it and set out to catch up with Michele, Heather and the two Davids.



Above: A Black-winged Stilt swoops to attack the Red-necked Avocets. Below: A Stilt and one of the Avocets engage in a fight. The other Avocet had escaped and scurried off - Max Maddock



A Lonely Handicapped Stilt with a Survival Strategy

As I closed the distance, I could see both fellows engrossed in taking multiple photos of a single Stilt. It was a juvenile, foraging for food, but after probing for a while, instead of the usual Stilt progressive probing while walking, it used a repeated strategy of fluttering up, then flopping back to a new position in order to probe again. When airborne, we could see that the right leg was deformed, thinner, shorter and less robust than the left leg. Perusal of the two Davids' numerous photos confirmed this conclusion. Even in the shots of the foraging probes, when the lower right leg was hidden in the water, it was clear that it was much thinner and less robust than the left leg.

Max Maddock

See photos next page

Black-winged Stilt & Red-necked Avocet Behaviours cont.



When foraging, the deformed right foot of the Stilt is hidden in the water but it is clear that the leg is thinner and less robust than the left leg - David Maddock



The Stilt flutters up before flopping back to the new foraging position. The right leg is exposed as shorter and less robust than the left leg and the foot revealed as deformed - David Maddock

Editor's Note:

Newcastle's Coal Terminal Action Group organised a walk around Swan Pond on Sunday 1 July 2012 to raise awareness of the importance of Swan Pond and the proposed removal of significant sections of the pond by rail development for the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group's coal export terminal and for the proposed Port Waratah Services Coal Export Terminal known as T4.

NCIG's Proposed Rail Flyover Modification affects Swan Pond

Following project approval granted by the Minister for Planning in 2007, the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG) constructed its coal export terminal on Big Pond, with a rail loop from the Kooragang Island Main Line to service the coal dumps. Current export production is 33 million tonnes per annum. The approval included provision for an "optional spur line" across the middle of Deep Pond, which would be constructed when export production was ramped up to the maximum approved of 66 million tonnes per annum.

On 18 July 2012, NCIG submitted a modification of its project to the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure, requesting approval to construct a rail flyover as part of the construction of the "optional spur line" across Deep Pond. The rail flyover is to facilitate the passage of empty trains from Port Waratah Coal Services as they pass by the spur line leading to NCIG's Coal Export Terminal.

In order to construct the rail flyover, NCIG plans to move the Kooragang Island Main Line some 25 metres westward from its current position into Swan Pond. At the same time NCIG will move the two sets of powerlines that are located parallel to the main line further west into Swan Pond. These works will remove shorebird habitat

from the eastern margin of Swan Pond over a distance of 790 metres. The proposed works affect land that was not included in the original project approval.

NCIG's Environmental Assessment for the proposed modification did not acknowledge the impact on shorebird habitat in Swan Pond, nor did it propose any offsets for the destruction of shorebird habitat.

On behalf of HBOC, Ann Lindsey compiled a comprehensive submission to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, pointing out the deficiencies in the Environmental Assessment and requesting that the Department reject the Rail Flyover Modification. The submission is on the Conservation page of the Club's website (www.hboc.org.au). The Australasian Wader Studies Group, Cumberland Bird Observers Club, Birding NSW, BirdLife Australia, Central Coast Birdwatchers, National Parks Association, Australian Wetlands Rivers and Landscapes Centre (Univ of NSW) as well as many HBOC members have also written submissions concerning this project. In all, more than 40 submissions opposing the proposed rail flyover modification were lodged with the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure by the due date of 1 August 2012.

Liz Crawford

New Members

The Club extends a warm welcome to:

Claire Lindsey and Josh Baumgart of Wyong and Bryan Havenhand of Newcastle.

We hope to see you at Club outings and meetings.

When It Rains It Pours

A story of Masked Owls and other night goodies

On 26 April 2012, after 15 years of searching, I finally saw my first Australian Masked Owl *Tyto novaehollandiae*.

The conditions were perfect, a clear, star-lit night with only the slightest breeze off the lake. The habitat didn't look ideal but all the goss suggested that this was THE spot to see Masks in the Lower Hunter. We lads (Nick L, Robbie K and I) played the BOCA calls at several spots but it wasn't until our third attempt that our nocturnal spotter Robbie pointed out the ghostly white shape circling high above us. The bird was silent and reminded us of Silver Gulls circling high above the city lights of Sydney CBD. After a few nervous minutes the bird finally landed in a large eucalypt nearby and gave the boys a good view while I held the spotty in place. After having their fill I quickly palmed off the torch and raised my binoculars to see the arse end of my bogey slipping through the back of the tree. As you could imagine the language that followed would not be suitable for such a fine publication as our newsletter. The bird had vanished.

A long time passed without a sign so we discussed leaving the site and coming back later. It was suggested that one last try was in order and almost immediately there was our ghostly shape and once again the bird disappeared. Not wanting to give up, our nocturnal spotter grabbed the torch and started scanning the trees and there like magic was my first tickable Masked Owl! We guessed the bird was a male due to his very white appearance (not a great guide I might point out), and we separated him from his cousin the Barn Owl by the size and thickness of his talons and legs, extremely dark back and wings and beautiful round face with a heavy, dark facial ring. I was in heaven! The bird then departed but was spotted again in a nearby tree before flying off. His parting gift to us was a single, very loud screech which to us sounded like "Rack off, I'm done!"

This sighting started what could now be called an Owling obsession and whenever the opportunity arises I head out to some large patch of bush or quiet country road in the hope of spotting something new. Most nights I come home cold, hungry and completely owl-less, the joy of looking for birds that only come out at night and occupy large territories. But other nights are just magic.

On 18 May I headed north of Gresford to try and find some road-side Barn Owls. Luckily it didn't take long to spot my first Barnie for the night and as usual it allowed a fairly close approach. Chuffed with my effort I kept heading north and soon found another Barnie. This bird looked a bit unusual but I didn't think much of it and even managed a few photos.

Eventually I made it up to the Chichester State Forest (Allyn River). My aim here was Sooty and Powerful Owls and after several stops I finally had a response; well actually I heard a thud as the bird landed nearby. Up went



Sooty Owl - Grant Brosie

the spotty and there was a gorgeous Sooty looking back down at me. They are truly amazing birds, being both dark and silvery at the same time. I cut the playback and just stood there watching as the bird changed position several times and occasionally uttered its soft trilling call.

On the other side of the Allyn River valley I came across another Sooty that responded well to playback and this bird perched right in front of me, practically at eye height. Unfortunately my camera flash was getting fixed so I had to rely on the in-built flash which is not sufficient for night bird photography.

On arriving home I downloaded my pics and was shocked to find the second Barn Owl was actually my second Masked Owl! I sent the photos off to some more knowledgeable birders than myself and they all agreed. The ID was quite obvious and I'm still annoyed I missed it in the field. The bird was much more solid than a Barnie and had an obvious chestnut wash across the breast. The wings were dark and the talons huge.

On 24 May Nick, Robbie and I headed back up to Allyn River in the hope of scoring another three-Tyto night. It wasn't to be. We heard a Sooty Owl calling in the distance and even the Barnies failed to show up. However, we did see ANOTHER Masked Owl on the drive home. This bird was seen perched in a dead tree down in a cleared valley not far from the road and was pure white on the underside and very dark on the wings, just like the male (?) we had seen by the lake. My immediate thought was that this was the mate to the brownish bird I saw on the 18th. A close approach was impossible and there were no nearby trees for the bird to perch in so a quick blast of the play back only resulted in a quick flyby. Still, an excellent sighting for an otherwise disappointing night and my 3rd Mask for the year.

Two days later we were back down by the lake with some friends from Sydney who hadn't seen a Masked before. After about an hour's wait we heard a reply and soon located a magnificent all chestnut coloured female. She was gorgeous....cute round face, massive talons and rich

When It Rains It Pours cont.

body colour. Once we had our fill (a maximum of 2-3 min) we let her be and as we walked off a second bird could be heard nearby. My 4th individual Mask for the year.

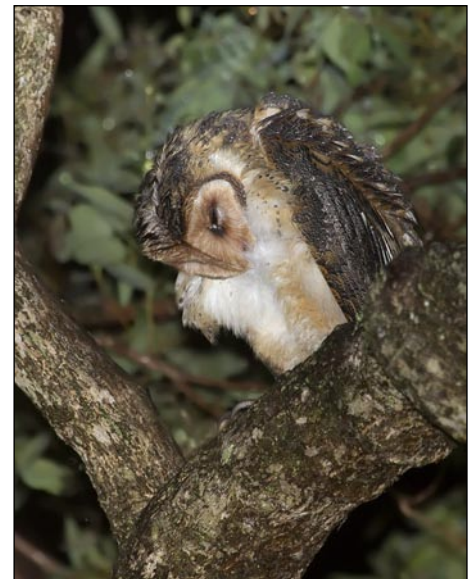
On 3 June, three friends from Sydney come up to try and relive the three-Tyto night I had north of Gresford. The conditions were shocking with constant rain, stiff breeze and once night fell, a thick fog setting in. Sooty Owl was abandoned pretty quickly so we headed back south where the weather improved considerably. As we drove slowly down the valley with torches pointing in all directions one of my mates spotted a distant owl perched in a eucalypt. Not knowing any English (although fluent in Turkish) didn't stop him from getting the car to stop quickly and all of us glued to another Mask. To our amazement the owl took off and landed in the tree next to us. This rich chestnut bird, although not as rich as the lake bird, was presumed to be a female and was undeterred by the three flashes going off below her, in fact she started to preen. My 5th Mask for the year and my third individual between Gresford and Allyn River.

Over the space of 38 days I saw 5 separate Masked Owls, proving the fact that once you've seen your bogey bird you'll never stop seeing them. Here are a few simple rules I try to follow when owling:

- Suitable habitat and known locations are the best ways to find Owls.
- Once an Owl has been located try to minimise playback use.
- If the Owls are known to be breeding in the area DO NOT use playback.
- Try to use a red filter over your spotty when possible. I believe this results in a more natural viewing experience e.g. the bird is more likely to stick around longer, start to preen or even call to its mate. I personally don't believe a white light causes any damage to a bird's eyes but clearly minimising the amount of light pointed into the bird's face will improve your experience and not deter the bird.
- When photographing at night a better beamer (a plastic, flash magnifier) is a must.
- The bird's welfare must always come first; if in doubt move on.

Having now seen three species of Tyto so far this year plus White-throated Nightjar, Owlet-nightjar and a million Tawny Frogmouths, several of us have decided to try and see every nocturnal bird on the mainland before the year is over. A trip to Cape York is planned so we should come pretty close.

Grant Brosie



Masked Owl perching for a closer look; Masked Owl preening; Tawny Frogmouth - Grant Brosie

Hunterbirding

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. Alternatively, email me at scythrops@yahoo.com.au and I'll sort it out for you – what could be easier?! The following article highlights some of the reports and discussions that have happened on hunterbirding within the last two months.

Hunterbirding activity in the last week or two has been dominated by discussion on submissions against the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group Coal Export Terminal Rail Flyover Modification. HBOC submitted an objection to the proposed development on the basis that it posed a serious threat to migratory shorebirds using Swan Pond, which was not adequately addressed by the Environmental Assessment. This issue was brought to attention on hunterbirding and a great deal of support was received, resulting in a large number of personal submissions from hunterbirders. It was very rewarding to see hunterbirding being used as a mechanism to raise awareness of local conservation issues. Hopefully the interest that was generated will help to ensure that the environmental impacts of the proposed development are investigated and mitigated to a satisfactory standard. Other key talking points in recent months included:

- The recent decision by the NSW Government to allow shooting in State National Parks;
- The distribution of Rockwarbler in the Hunter, which is the northern limit of its range;
- The perplexing inactivity of a surprisingly static Cattle Egret;
- Regular updates on volunteer conservation efforts in habitat improvements at Stockton Sand Spit and its grateful residents;
- The occurrence of yellow-plumaged King-Parrots;
- The comings and goings of the various Tern species frequenting the Newcastle Ocean Baths rock platform; and
- The frustrations of a particularly taxing Birdlife Crossword!

The focussed discussion this month is on the status of Corvids in our Region. It began with the observation of one hunterbirder who, “Was working in a patch of

bushland at Rothbury, between Cessnock and Branxton, yesterday and heard what sounded like a Torresian Crow. Could not get a look at the bird but it certainly sounded much different to the Aus Ravens nearby.” This then led to a more general discussion as to people’s observations of Torresian Crow across the Hunter.

In East Maitland “Initially they seemed to restrict themselves to the trees on the northern side of the New England Highway near Green Hills. More recently they have expanded their territory.” In the greater Cessnock area it was noted that “Over the last 5yrs or so I have had birds around the vineyards and Hunter Valley Gardens, also on the outskirts of the vineyards towards the Branxton/Rothbury end” and “The birds are resident at Pace Farm along George Booth Drive, which would most likely be connected to the birds around Mulbring.” Closer to Newcastle “I also heard one calling constantly at the Wetlands Centre two weeks ago. I’ve had them at that location a couple of times and at Hexham Swamp.”

These observations all relate to the patchy extents of the species’ range. Further north they are known to be more common. A brief commentary of their status in the Region was then provided, stating that ten years ago “Torresian Crows were well established in the Hunter. At that time I had recorded them at Bob’s Farm, Tomago, Kooragang, Shortland (Wetland Centre), Beresfield, Maitland, near George Booth Drive and at Pokolbin and I said they have been gradually moving south for years, being formerly recorded only north of the Karuah River. Currently, the most southern record accepted in the NSWBA Atlas database is from Cooranbong.”

The question was also asked of the possible occurrence of Little Raven (another Hunter Corvid) at the original reported location – “And why wouldn’t Little Ravens push into Rothbury? Some ‘western’ birds appear to show up there and there’s plenty of habitat in that area I reckon Littles would like.” The distribution of the species in the Hunter was then summarised as being at “Breakfast Creek (near Rylstone), on the Liverpool Plains and in the Moonan Flat-Barrington-Gloucester districts with possibly some creep on the western side towards Muswellbrook” and also “along the northern edge of Wollemi, from about Sandy Hollow (actually, they’re usually a tad further west, close to Yarrowa Rd turn-off) through to Bylong and Wollar. As I’ve mentioned before, they appear fairly common along Ringwood Rd in the agricultural landscape north of GRNP.” [Goulburn River National Park]

The various species of Corvid that occur locally within in the Hunter Region may often be overlooked. It is difficult to tell them apart in most casual observations

Hunterbirding

and extended views and/or positive identifications of bird calls are usually required to determine the species of Corvid that is being observed. Records of these species in new locations within the Region can help to further our understanding of their local distributions. So, what species of Corvid do you have living in your area? If you don't already know, then take your time to listen to them and try to work out what they are. It is a good idea to get hold of some bird-call recordings and learn to recognise the difference in vocalisations between the various species.

We have four species locally:

- Australian Raven – the most widespread;

- Torresian Crow – predominantly north of the Hunter River and east of the Paterson;
- Little Raven – localised in the north and west of the Region; and
- Forest Raven – located in the north-east of the Region and predominantly coastal.

So, don't overlook the Corvids. Take time to learn how to identify them and observe which ones frequent your local area. Your observations may help better understand current distributions and any future expansions or contractions in their range.

Dan Williams

Bird Strike on Ash Island Powerlines

In February 2011, Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC) approached the Environmental Officer of Ausgrid's Environmental Services department at Wallsend about birds striking power infrastructure on Ash Island. Wagtail Way, which divides the wetland complex, Swan Pond/Wader Pond, was identified as one of several bird-strike hotspots. It was indicated to HBOC that Ausgrid would make appropriate investigations and implement a strategy to divert birds from powerlines. That was 18 months ago, but no works have been carried out.

Up to three thousand birds can be observed on the wetland complex with birds flying to and from wetlands on both sides of Wagtail Way. Several species are listed under state, national and international Acts and/or Treaties.

Swan/Wader Pond is a wetland of international importance as it meets Criterion 6 of the intergovernmental treaty, The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention): "A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of a waterbird". Two species of international migratory shorebirds, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* and Red Knot *Calidris canutus* and one species of waterfowl, Chestnut Teal *Anas castanea*, have been observed in significant numbers representing > 1% of the total population (Stuart 2003). On the same basis, Swan Pond/Wader Pond fulfils the requirements for listing in the Directory of Important Wetlands Australia and Birdlife International's Important Bird Area initiative.

Three migratory shorebird species, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* and Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* are listed under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act) as Vulnerable, Endangered and Endangered respectively.

The Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*, listed as Endangered under the TSC Act and the Australasian Bittern *Botaurus poiciloptilus*, listed

under both the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and TSC Act as Endangered, have been recorded.

Fourteen species are listed on the HBOC database of injured and dead birds found beneath the Wagtail Way powerlines:

- Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*, 1 found alive with one wing cut off
- Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, 5 dead, 1 found alive with broken wing
- Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, 3 dead, 2 found alive with broken wings

The above three species are migratory shorebirds commonly found on Swan Pond and are listed under the EPBC Act.

- Australian Pelican *Pelecanus conspicillatus*, 3 dead
- Australian White Ibis *Threskiornis molucca*, 3 dead
- Straw-necked Ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis*, 1 dead
- Royal Spoonbill *Platalea regia*, 1 dead
- Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*, 1 dead
- Chestnut Teal, 1 dead
- Grey Teal *Anas gracilis*, 1 dead
- Silver Gull *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*, 1 dead
- Australian Magpie *Cracticus tibicen*, 1 dead
- Cormorant (species unable to be identified), 2 dead
- Egret (species unable to be identified), 1 dead

This list is only an indicator of the gravity of the situation as many more birds would have suffered similar fates but their bodies were not discovered. Foxes are common on this site and would most likely remove dead or injured birds promptly.

HBOC has written to Ausgrid to request that bird diverters be installed on the powerlines on Wagtail Way as a matter of urgency. HBOC understands that suitable technology for retro-fitting bird diverters to existing powerlines is available and has been available for some time.

Ann Lindsey

Club Night Observations June - July 2012

Please note that all sighting reports published in HBOC's newsletter or its on-line forum (Hunterbirding) are unofficial and have not been confirmed by the club. Such reports are publicised in order that others can be made aware of the sighting(s) reported and have the chance to help verify them. Official records of bird sightings in the Hunter Region appear in the Annual Bird Report, for which written submissions supported by field notes and photographs are a vital part of the process for acceptance of locally uncommon/rare species.

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer
Australasian Grebe	30	13/06/12	Walka Water Works	L. Mee
Australian Brush-turkey	Pr	2/07/12	Brunkerville [Old Brush]	D. Williams
Australasian Darter	1	9/06/12	Rathluba Lagoon	M. & H. Maddock
Australian White Ibis	206	19/06/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Australian White Ibis	150	11/06/12	Adamstown Park	R. Nicholas
Banded Lapwing	1	1/07/12	Phoenix Flat [Ash Island]	N. McNaughton
Bar-tailed Godwit	15	13/06/12	Lemon Tree Passage	J. Pettifer
Bassian Thrush	2	2/07/12	Brunkerville [Old Brush]	D. Williams
Black-necked Stork	1	22/06/12	Morpeth STW	A. Lindsey
Black-necked Stork	1	20/06/12	"Greswick Angus"	A. Gooden
Black-necked Stork	1	2/07/12	Bulahdelah	D. Williams
Black-necked Stork	1	19/06/12	"Greswick Angus"	J. & J. Spearpoint
Black-necked Stork	1	3/07/12	"Greswick Angus"	J. Spearpoint
Black-necked Stork	1f	1/07/12	3km west of Dungog	L. Mee
Blue-billed Duck	1	13/06/12	Walka Water Works	L. Mee
Blue-faced Honeyeater	1	2/07/12	Elernmore Vale	R. Walker
Brahminy Kite	1	11/06/12	Crowdy Bay National Park	C. Anderson
Brown Cuckoo-Dove	1	2/07/12	Brunkerville [Old Brush]	D. Williams
Brown Falcon	2	5/06/12	Maitland Riverside Walk	M. & H. Maddock
Brown Goshawk	2	8/07/12	Waratah	G. Anderson
Buff-banded Rail	1	3/06/12	Stobbard Res., Eleebana	A. Gooden
Buff-banded Rail	1	May/June	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Bush Stone-curlew	1	10/06/12	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Cape Petrel	1	27/06/12	Off Stockton Beach	M. Newman et al
Caspian Tern	1	5/06/12	Maitland Riverside Walk	M. & H. Maddock
Chestnut Teal	50	19/06/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Double-banded Plover	40	27/06/12	Stockton Beach	M. Newman <i>et al</i>
Eastern Osprey	1	11/06/12	Crowdy Bay National Park	C. Anderson
Eastern Osprey	1	Mid June	Speers Point [over lake]	C. Mann
Eastern Osprey	1	27/06/12	Stockton Beach	M. Newman <i>et al</i>
Eastern Osprey	1	30/06/12	Newcastle Baths to Nobbys	M. Roderick
Eastern Osprey	1	17/06/12	Throsby Creek	T. Clarke
Flame Robin	4	27/06/12	Barrington Trail	T. Clarke
Flame Robin	4	29/03/12	Polblue Area	T. Clarke
Flame Robin	6	29/03/12	Little Murray's Hut	T. Clarke
Flame Robin	6	29/03/12	Polblue Trail	T. Clarke
Glossy Ibis	1	22/06/12	Morpeth STW	A. Lindsey
Great Crested Grebe	20+dy	13/06/12	Walka Water Works	L. Mee
Grey Goshawk	1	18/06/12	Waratah	G. Anderson
Grey Goshawk	1	19/06/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Grey Teal	228	19/06/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Grey-crowned Babbler	6	13/04/12	Jerrys Plains	T. Clarke
Gull-billed Tern	30+	27/06/12	Stockton Beach	M. Newman <i>et al</i>
Hardhead	52	13/06/12	Walka Water Works	L. Mee
Hardhead	22	19/06/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Hoary-headed Grebe	63	1/07/12	Grahamstown [Finnan Pk]	D. Luck

Club Night Observations June - July 2012 cont.

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer
Hoary-headed Grebe	30	13/06/12	Walka Water Works	L. Mee
Large-billed Scrubwren	several	1/07/12	Allyn River	L. Mee
Leaden Flycatcher	1	11/04/12	Jerrys Plains	T. Clarke
Olive Whistler	1	27/03/12	Polblue Area	T. Clarke
Olive Whistler	1	29/03/12	Little Murray Swamp	T. Clarke
Pied Oystercatcher	2	2/07/12	Carey Bay	D. Turner
Pied Oystercatcher	54	13/06/12	Lemon Tree Passage	J. Pettifer
Pied Oystercatcher	4Pr+6imm	27/06/12	Stockton Beach	M. Newman <i>et al</i>
Pink-eared Duck	1	22/06/12	Morpeth STW	A. Lindsey
Pink-eared Duck	3	16/06/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	R. & M. Stewart
Plumed Whistling-Duck	~1,000	10/07/12	Doughboy Hollow	L. & C. Herbert
Plumed Whistling-Duck	48	9/06/12	Rathluba Lagoon	M. & H. Maddock
Plumed Whistling-Duck	137	17/06/12	Doughboy Hollow	P. Alexander
Powerful Owl [heard]	1	31/05/12	Kahibah	C. & R. Goodenough
Powerful Owl [heard]	1	1st wk May	Narone Creek Road	J. Greig
Red-capped Plover	several	27/06/12	Stockton Beach	M. Newman <i>et al</i>
Regent Bowerbird	1m	1/07/12	Allyn River	L. Mee
Regent Honeyeater	2	21/06/12	Kitchener	V. Moon
Restless Flycatcher	1	11/04/12	Jerrys Plains	T. Clarke
Royal Spoonbill	4	11/07/12	Teralba [5 Islands]	S. Rennie
Ruddy Turnstone	1	13/07/12	Newcastle Ocean Baths	R. Nicholas
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	2	5/07/12	Warners Bay	R. Walker
Sooty Oystercatcher	1	13/06/12	Lemon Tree Passage	J. Pettifer
Spangled Drongo	2	19/06/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Spotted Harrier	1	16/05/12	Thornton	C. & R. Goodenough
Spotted Harrier	1	29/06/12	Willow Tree	G. Brosie
Star Finch [escapee?]	1	7/06/12	Cooranbong	L. Kuiters
Striated Heron	2	Mid June	Speers Point	C. Mann
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	200	7/06/12	Fordwitch	R. Smith
Superb Lyrebird	1	28/03/12	Polblue Area	T. Clarke
Topknot Pigeon	50+	4/07/12	Heuston Hill, Singleton	T. Clarke
Varied Sittella	42	6/06/12	Columby National Park	R. Jenkin
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	24/06/12	Minmi [Blue Gum Park]	R. Walker
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	14/06/12	Lemon Tree Passage	T. Clarke
Whiskered Tern	1	22/06/12	Morpeth STW	A. Lindsey
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	2	Mid June	Speers Point [over lake]	C. Mann
White-browed Scrubwren	several	1/07/12	Allyn River	L. Mee
White-faced Heron	2	Mid June	Speers Point	C. Mann
White-headed Pigeon	1	2/07/12	Brunkerville [Old Brush]	D. Williams
White-headed Pigeon	4	7/07/12	Medowie	F. Humphreys
White-headed Pigeon	4	1/07/12	Kotara	J. Nicholls
Willie Wagtail	7	18/04/12	Heuston Hill, Singleton	T. Clarke
Wonga Pigeon	1	2/07/12	Brunkerville [Old Brush]	D. Williams
Yellow Thornbill	10	10/07/12	Raymond Terrace	F. Humphreys
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1	1/07/12	Grahamstown Dam	D. Luck
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	20	11/07/12	Raymond Terrace	F. Humphreys
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	5	30/06/12	Kotara	J. Nicholls
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	4	3/07/12	Speers Point	R. Walker
Yellow-throated Scrubwren	several	1/07/12	Allyn River	L. Mee

HBOC Activities August - November 2012

DATE	EVENT	MEETING PLACE	CONTACT
Wednesday 8 August	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: Ken Conway – <i>The Wetlands Centre</i> Bird of the Evening: Pat Pountney
Sunday 12 August	Remove woody weeds Stockton Sandspit	1.00pm Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Saturday 18 August	Hunter Wader Survey	8.00 am Ash Island 8.30 am 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 Mick Roderick 0421761237 – Deep Pond Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay
Sunday 19 August	Field Outing to: Laguna	8.00am Park to the west of Wollombi Pub, Wollombi	Melva Fisher 4951 1223
Tuesday 21 August	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Sunday 26 August	Remove woody weeds Stockton Sandspit	9.00am Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
SEPTEMBER 2012			
Tuesday 4 September	Mid-Week Outing – Colongra Wetlands Budgewoi	8.00am Scenic Drive, Doyalson (also called Central Coast Hwy). Turn left at lights, corner of Pacific Hwy and Scenic Dr and park on Scenic Dr.	Don and Val Moon 4359 1670
Wednesday 5 September	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Saturday 8 September	Bird Watch near Bengalla Mine	TBA	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Sat/Sunday 8/9 September	BIGnet meeting	TBA	Liz Crawford 4959 3663
Sunday 9th September	Remove woody weeds Stockton Sandspit	1.00pm Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Wednesday 12 September	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: Robert McDonald – <i>Birding with Kids</i> Bird of the Evening: Alan Stuart – Rufous Scrub-bird
Saturday 15 September	Hunter Wader Survey	7.00 am Ash Island 7.30 am 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 Mick Roderick 0421761237 – Deep Pond Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay
Sunday 16th September	Remove woody weeds Stockton Sandspit	1.00pm Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Monday- Wednesday 17-19 September	Mid-Week Camp – see article in April Newsletter No. 2/12	Lake Glenbawn State Park	Max Blanch 4961 1655 or 0425 300 389
Tuesday 18 September	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Sunday 23 September	Field Outing: Munmorah SCA	7.00am Birdie Beach Drive, Lake Munmorah. See access details p.9	Greg Little 4955 6609
Saturday - Monday 29 September - 1 October	Woko National Park	National Park camping area about 30 km northwest of Gloucester. Accessed via Flood Detour Road off Curricabark Road. See access details p.9	Lorna Mee 4987 2913 National Park camping fees apply: \$10 per person per night

HBOC Activities August - November 2012 cont.

DATE	EVENT	MEETING PLACE	CONTACT
OCTOBER 2012			
Tuesday 2 October	Mid-Week Outing – Butterwick, Green Wattle Creek	7.30am Bird Hide, Seaham Wetlands	Robert Stewart 4963 2029
Wednesday 3 October	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Venue TBA	All members welcome
Wednesday 10 October	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: David Bain – <i>The Powerful Owl Project</i> Bird of the Evening: John Cockerell - <i>Eyre Bird Observatory</i>
Saturday 13 October	Hunter Wader Survey	7.00 am Ash Island 7.30 am 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 Mick Roderick 0421761237 – Deep Pond Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay
Tuesday 16 October	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Tuesday to Thursday 16–18 October	Rufous Scrub-bird Monitoring, Gloucester Tops IBA	Camp at Sharpes Creek on Tues 16 and Wed 17 October	Alan Stuart 4952 8569
Sunday 21 October	Field Outing: Jerusalem Creek	7.30am at park at southern end of Dungog	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Saturday - Sunday 27 - 28 October	TWITCHATHON Join a team & help raise money for Birds Australia	4.00pm Sat to 4.00pm Sun for a BBQ at Hunter Wetlands Centre (Entry Fee)	Mick Roderick 0421 761 237
Sunday 28 October	White Ibis Community Survey	Please record sightings of Australian White Ibis at the website	www.environment.nsw.gov.au/ surveys/WhitelbisSightingForm.htm
NOVEMBER 2012			
Tuesday 6 November	Midweek outing – Ash Island	7.30am Car Park over bridge onto Ash Island	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265
Wednesday 7 November	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Sunday 11 November	Welcome Shorebirds Community Day	9am – 12noon Stockton Sandspit	Organised by WetlandCare Australia, Kooragang Wetlands Rehabilitation Project and National Parks and Wildlife Service Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Wednesday 14 November	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: Joy Nicholls - <i>Banding Rehabilitated Birds</i> Bird of the Evening: Lois Wooding - <i>Red-backed Fairy-wren</i>
Saturday 17 November	Hunter Wader Survey	10.30 am Ash Island 11.00 am 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 Mick Roderick 0421761237 – Deep Pond Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay
Tuesday 20 November	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Sunday 25 November	Field Outing to: Myall Lakes – Johnsons Hill Track	7.30am The Plough Inn, Bulahdelah	Tom Clarke 0418411785 (Note: carry morning tea on this walk)