



NEWSLETTER

Issue 6/10 December 2010 - January 2011

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc

affiliated with Bird Observation and Conservation Australia

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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Newsletter articles are always welcome. Please send direct to the Editor at:
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President's Column ... December 2010

The quest for birds, whether it is for enjoyment, research or to fulfil the curiosity or the insatiable need to list, ultimately leads birdwatchers to a diversity of habitats amongst which they may find some that could be described as “special places”.

One such “special place”, comprising magnificent old growth wet sclerophyll forest merging with rainforest, was encountered by a group of HBOC members in a quest to verify the previously reported presence of Rufous Scrub-birds in the area. The requisite tools of trade (finely ground and coated optical glass and a technologically advanced electronic song meter), deemed as necessary to enhance the senses and satisfy the needs of the human mind, seem strangely out of place in this natural setting.

The towering specimens of mature Tallow Wood, Turpentine, Blue Gum and White Mahogany together with the underlying diversity of brush blanket the *steep* slopes which extend ever upwards to the rocky escarpment. The elders of the forest, their once extensive and resplendent crowns dethroned by the ravages of time, stand secure in their veils of senescence bearing testimony to their evolutionary success. They seem to exude the “Wisdom of the Elders” across the landscape and over the new growth of seedlings commencing their journey to the light. Prolifically flowering Corkwoods, their early season cream flowers gleaming in the morning sunlight, contrast with the vivid red of the King Parrot. The sporadic calls of the

Eastern Yellow Robin, Satin Bowerbird, Rose Robin, and Catbird together with the Pitta's invitation to “walk to work” punctuate the stillness of this richly diverse forest.

The hint of “roll your own” tobacco wafting on the breeze is a reminder of the historic ring of the axe amongst these forest giants and of the bushmen of the past who toiled in search for red gold and other treasured timbers. This foreign fragrance also betrays the presence of a present-day bushman, the committed steward of this special place, as he sits amongst the ferns. He appears contemplative, still, passive but acutely aware of the life forms that surround him. This human presence is somehow a part of this special place, he does belong - he is at home, at home here in this forest.

What a privilege to have been present during the quest for the Rufous Scrub-bird, which alas was unsuccessful on this occasion, but what a joy to have experienced that “special place”. So, as the Christmas season approaches may you all find a “special place” – a place in which to experience the stillness, the peace and aliveness that such places engender.

On behalf of the Committee I wish you all a happy and joyful Christmas and a prosperous 2011. Go birding, you may find a special place!

Great birding in 2011.

Paul Baird

Twitchathon 2010 Preliminary Results

The first three places in the Main Race were won by teams from HBOC: Menacing Monarchs on 237; Hunter Home Brewers and Dodgy Drongos tying for second place on 219. The Crested Shrike-tits from HBOC won the Champagne race with 168. Across NSW and ACT, 20 teams participated in the Main Race, 18 teams in the Champagne Race and 6 teams in the Children's race – a magnificent fundraising effort.

There are several accounts of the Twitchathon in this Newsletter – revealing dedicated, keen birdwatchers who have researched their routes, raised funds from their friends and workmates, and made some fantastic bird observations over the last weekend of October. Thanks go to all the participants and their supporters.

Banded Antipodean (Wandering) Albatross off Port Stephens

On Sunday 10th October an exciting pelagic was held off Port Stephens, visiting the continental shelf. “Exciting” not only because the weather was quite rough and we all got quite wet on the way out, but also because we encountered the migration of the Short-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna tenuirostris*. Thousands of these birds were seen flying south en-route to their breeding grounds off south-eastern Australia and Tasmania. Apart from the sheer spectacle of these birds, we also recorded plenty of other ocean birds, including uncommon species such as White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii*, Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica* and Black Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*.

We also had a good number (possibly up to 20) of “Wandering-type” albatross. I say “Wandering-type” because the taxonomy and identification of these birds is very confusing. Assigning birds to a particular species / sub-species (depending on which taxonomy you subscribe to!) is often very difficult and takes a lot of experience to learn.

We were fortunate enough to have a bird arrive at the boat that had a numeric band on its left leg. The number read “695” and the information were passed on to Lindsay Smith from the Southern Ocean Seabird Study Association (SOSSA), who wrote the following:

“The Wandering Albatross with the White Darvic band was indeed an Antipodean Albatross. It was banded as a chick on Antipodes Island on December 16th 2002 by the Kiwis.”

So, we know that this bird was an Antipodean Albatross *Diomedea antipodensis* or *D. exulans antipodensis*, again depending on which taxonomy you trust. This “Wandering-type” breeds on the Antipodes Island off New Zealand. Our bird is approaching its 8th birthday, so could be approaching breeding maturity.

The Antipodean Albatross is globally threatened. More information can be found at <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=30004>

It is great to be able to assist researchers by reporting banded birds, particularly ones that roam the oceans like the great albatrosses do.

Mick Roderick



“Wandering-type” albatross off Port Stephens – Allan Richardson



Antipodean Albatross with numeric leg band off Port Stephens – Mick Roderick

Latham’s Snipe Survey 12 Dec 2010

HBOC has surveyed Pambalong Nature Reserve for Latham’s Snipe each December since Mick Todd’s study of their feeding ecology at that location in 1997. On 20 December 1997, 475 snipe were present; water levels were low and large areas of mud suitable for foraging were exposed. Since then, variable numbers of snipe have been recorded, with very low numbers when water levels are high. This year, Alligator Weed, a noxious weed easily spread from small broken pieces, has infested the swamp. Our survey method involves walking through the swamp to flush any roosting snipe and this activity is likely to spread the Alligator Weed. Following a request from NPWS, HBOC has cancelled the Pambalong survey this year.

However, we are keen to collate any Latham’s Snipe observations from wetlands in the Lower Hunter and encourage you to survey any likely habitat on 12 December 2010. Please report your sightings to Liz Crawford by email: chrisliz@tpg.com.au or by phone: 4959 3663.

Trip Reports

Mid-Week Outing – Rathmines and Myuna Bay

5 October 2010

On a very foggy and overcast morning we started our outing at Rathmines by walking around the Styles Point Reserve where we saw Rainbow and Scaly-breasted Lorikeets, Eastern Rosellas, Little Corellas, Great Egret, White-faced Heron, Australian Pelicans, Silver Gulls, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and flying overhead, a White-bellied Sea-Eagle and a Whistling Kite. Then Garth took us along tracks in the nearby bush reserve where we were pleased to see four Sacred Kingfishers. Walking back to the cars, we saw two more kingfishers at the edge of the lake.

After morning tea we moved on to Myuna Bay where we saw a good variety of birds, including Olive-backed Oriole, Figbird, Eastern Whipbird, White-breasted Woodswallow (and nest), Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Eastern Spinebill, Satin Bowerbird, Eastern Yellow Robin, Crested Pigeon, Spotted and Bar-shouldered Doves, Dollarbird, Red-browed Finch, Silvereye, Tawny Frogmouth, Superb and Variegated Fairy-wrens. Along the outlet canal for Eraring power station were two Great Egrets, Australian Pelicans, Crested Tern, Darter and Little Pied, Little Black and Great Cormorants. A Whistling Kite was seen near its nest in a nearby pine tree.

Altogether we saw 57 species and heard 2 more.

Val Moon

Outing to Lochinvar

24 October 2010

On Sunday, five stalwart HBOC enthusiasts braved the pouring rain in Newcastle, to drive to a private property just outside Lochinvar. We were greeted by our hosts, and some of their lovely garden residents: White-Plumed Honeyeaters, Superb Fairy-wrens, Galahs and Willie Wagtails.

We donned coats and boots, and set off across the paddocks, past the dam, and up to the river banks.

Birds (and horses) everywhere (the property is used for agistment). The owners are making an enormous effort to restore native habitat, and have, so far, planted over 4000 trees, with help from Conservation Volunteers Australia. They've also constructed an island in the farm dam. Interesting to film buffs is the fact that the recent Aussie film "*Tomorrow when the War Began*" was filmed on this property.

Now- to the birds: we achieved a respectable list of 42 species, in spite of the weather, and had many delightful sightings, including two Golden Whistlers, two White-faced Heron dependent young in their nest, a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike on the nest, two gorgeous Black-fronted Dotterel chicks, one Golden-headed Cisticola, one Brown Quail, Rainbow Bee-eater and many others. It was great, although we were really disappointed to be unable to locate the Tawny Grassbird.

Normally at this location there are at least 116 species; the owners have established a photographic record during the past three years. Finally, cold and wet, we made our way back to the house where we were treated to dry towels for our feet, and home-made Anzac biscuits for a late morning tea.

Thank you, Trevor and Rae, we hope to come back in early spring next year.

Pam Durie

Trip Reports

Old Brush at Brunkerville

1 November 2010

Despite forecasts of rain, 13 people travelled to the Old Brush at Brunkerville on Melbourne Cup Day. There were five women in the group, four of whom were called Margaret. This included Margaret Samuel, the guest speaker at our November meeting, and her husband John.

The first part of the morning was spent walking around the open paddocks where we had good views of Black-faced Monarchs, Golden and Rufous Whistlers, White-headed Pigeons and Brown Cuckoo-Doves. A couple of Wonga Pigeons were spotted wandering around the grounds.

Many birds were spotted at the feeders near the house, where we also saw a Spotted Pardalote trying to coax her young out of their nest in a staghorn, and a two-metre long diamond python curled up in a tree.

After morning tea some of us took a walk through the rainforest, but unfortunately all we found there were leeches. Nevertheless we spent a very productive couple of hours, seeing 40 species and hearing 5 others.

Margaret Stewart

Ash Island Revisited

21 November 2010

How wonderful was it to have a full weekend without showers and to get out exploring some old bird-watching stamping grounds. Well that's how I felt as we walked along the mangrove boardwalk at Ash Island completely absorbed by the magic of a closed canopy filled with bird song.

In my mind I recalled those days (very much pre-boardwalk) of trudging through these mangroves, hearing these same calls and being excited by the prospects of new discoveries. The joyous expression of the Rufous Whistler calling from its hidden perch evoked a feeling of youthful unbounded energy and memories of my first-ever sighting of the performer. It was exactly here in this mangrove forest and I was reliving a wonderful moment.

Of course the whistler did have some accompaniment to fill in the gaps and provide some background colours of sound. Mangrove Gerygone countered by singing softly and sadly, Silvereye tried to be merry in short bursts, Yellow Thornbill likewise and Leaden Flycatcher was content with just the odd frog-like utterance. My favourite companion of the bush, Grey Shrike-thrush, who so often brings me joy and tried so hard to match the whistler, was not completely "on song". Unfortunately harmonica was relegated to second fiddle today.

Ash Island has become accessible once more and it was great to be able to wander over various sites again. And while there is a dearth of shorebirds, waterfowl and other wading types (something to do with amazing happenings in Central Australia) it is still well worth the time. Those areas associated with Teal Waters, Wader Pond and Swan Pond for instance are just stunning to look at and for patient bird watchers continue to offer up plenty of joy.

Those two White-fronted Chats that only gave us fleeting glimpses, the Black-fronted Dotterels at the margins of rain-filled swales, the lone Fairy Martin on the road and the immature Black-shouldered Kite sitting in a she-oak all presented moments of delight after working hard on our bird identification. This is really what bird watching is all about.

The raptors were possibly the highlight of the day and this does not come as any great surprise I suppose. Ash Island is famous for its raptors. The day started with some interesting interaction between two Whistling Kites that appeared to perform some sort of aerial display before parting company. Later on we witnessed more interaction with Whistling Kite being harassed by a falcon that could easily have been a Peregrine but never close enough to confirm. Several sightings of Brown Falcon at some height throughout the day kept us busy with raptor identification until a closer encounter revealed the diagnostic 'tear drop' under the eye.

In the end we had seen seven raptors in one day and our group of eight birdwatchers were more than happy to spend the entire outing on Ash Island.

Tom Clarke

Crested Shrike Twits' Twitchathon

Jim Twit decided to push the envelope by wanting to go to the annual concert of the Newcastle University Choir on Twitchathon day no less, enlisting most of the Twits to join him. So we sent off an email to Alan Morris to seek permission to start at 1200 on the day, instead of the usual 1600 start. We decided to remain in the Lower Hunter and reduce our carbon input and stress on the body.

We gathered at Lorna Twit's house and travelled on to Swan Bay for our start. Swan Bay was chosen as a buffer against the Stockton Sandspit failing us, as it has often done in previous years. In hindsight, the Sandspit was seething with birds and Swan Bay was a waste (mostly to do with arriving with the falling tide). We partook of a delicious lunch provided by the Paul Twit and Jim Twit spouses. Whilst waiting for the 1200 gong during lunch we watched the birds fly past to roost on places too far away to be twitched. Unwilling to go on the mud flats we found the birds from the beach. The first bird twitched was Eastern Osprey, AND we were racing.....

Then onward to Jenny Musika's Bush Haven. Her place is always wonderfully birdy. Starting at the quietest time for birding between 1200 and 1500 was a risk. However the birds mostly produced at Musika's but alas the Azure Kingfisher did not show. Onward to Pam Hill's which produced the expected suspects after a reconnaissance the week before, except for Cicadabird (dip) then afternoon tea at Lorna Twit's house. A chase in the garden for something Rufous by Paul Twit was rewarded with Rufous Fantail. This bird arrived that afternoon as it was not in my garden in the morning prior to our start. A short stop at Seaham had Scaly-breasted Lorikeet and Red-rumped Parrot. At Seaham Swamp a hard search for the White-breasted Woodswallow and Nankeen Night-Heron went begging. No spoonbills were seen, normally a regular for this swamp.

Raymond Terrace gave us the Night-Heron and Mallard. Stockton Sandspit gave us at least 15 species and a greeting from the Cycling Twitchers unrecognised in their helmets and with their fresh appearance. The Newcastle Baths had its usual delightful Ruddy Turnstones, terns and shearwaters. Leneghans Swamp was dead and Pambalong was deserted, except for an amazing display of 14 Whistling Kites perched on posts in the swamps. However we could always find something new at every place we stopped. Dinner was had at Minmi Pub and on we went home to our respective beds for an early start.

At 0400 on Sunday the alarm called. Sorry Ann Twit, no coffee (the suggestion of any earlier went on deaf ears). We met Jim Twit at Wallalong turnoff for our foray up to

Allyn River. On arrival at the Allyn we found some very long-faced Brewers who were on 102. We were on 128 and we had started 4 hours earlier. "Good going boys!" I say to the Brewers. At the Allyn we had our espresso coffee, muesli and mango for breakfast in our mandatory morning-tea break according to the spirit of the Champagne race. Allyn River was the usual delightful place and we collected 19 species plus a few more on the way back; Torresian Crow, Pheasant Coucal and White-winged Chough on nest. Green Wattle Creek produced its usual suspects with some very intense good oiling by a helpful ex-twitcher; we still dipped on the Speckled Warbler. Sorry Jim Twit for the team missing it but we found the Variegated Fairy-wren, Fuscous Honeyeater and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike. Onward to Walka Water Works; the predictable birds appeared, the others being out west breeding. We fled as we were running out of time and, shock horror, missed the only Latham's Snipe in the Hunter, found by the expert Brewers in our home patch. Maitland yielded the introduced species: House Sparrow, Common Starling and Common Myna. Common Blackbird caused some difficulty due to the demise of the resident at Jim Twit's house on a window (Jim why aren't you leaving your windows open for any such eventuality?) and dipped on the Banded Lapwing. Brewers where are they?

Onward to Hexham Swamp and some amazing driving by Ann Twit had us find a few more here which we had missed elsewhere. The highlight here was Buff-banded Rail with a little cute black chick which we had to check twice in case it was a Spotless Crake. The Wetlands had the Whistling Ducks, Magpie Geese and White-cheeked Honeyeater. Here we called it a day at 1155. Our score totalled 168, one less than 2009. All up our biggest dip was Swamp Harrier; we also missed Intermediate Egret and Little Egret. We had 12 parrot species, 17 honeyeater species and 6 raptor species.

We adjourned for a shower at Ann Twit's house. After a very nice lunch by Jim Twit's spouse we headed off to hear the spectacular "Carmina Burana" performed by Newcastle University Choir. Despite our lack of sleep the Choir and Orchestra kept us riveted on the music. The concert ended at 1600 and we were able to greet our fellow Twitchathoners at the Wetlands Centre in our fresh attire and with wonderful song in our ears.

Our fund-raising totalled \$617.80. This is really the most important part of the big weekend. I love being called the "Bird Lady" and all my friends expect an annual request for a donation for the birds. What for next year? I suspect The Crested Shrike Twits need to be in the big race; the Murrumbidgee teams are sick of us "winning" to quote Nella Smith (my twin sister).

Lorna Mee

Twitchathon Reports continued

Dodgy Drongos' Twitchathon

The lead up to the big race was nothing but stress with many species vacating their usual haunts for greener pastures out west. We had talked ourselves down to the point where a 190 species count sounded the most likely outcome, one of our worst results ever. But we kept our chins relatively high as we made our way up to Manilla a day before the race to get some last minute oiling in and to do a proper dummy run that afternoon.

Our team was considerably younger than last year's with Max Breckenridge (15) and Rob Kil Kelly (21) joining the Drongos. The co-pilot (Nick) was still on board and was stressing as much as I. We booked into the Manilla caravan park, stopped for supplies and then headed west towards our starting spot. On route as we stopped to show Max his first ever White-winged Fairy-wrens, several Stubble Quail could be heard calling in the paddocks, a much sought-after race bird. We couldn't afford to add the extra km to the Saturday leg so we prayed for closer birds. Luckily, further on we found more birds calling in a field on our route....hazzah! What's more there was a male Brown Songlark displaying overhead! Another cracking bird.

We rocked up at Borah and slowly wandered around until we got to our Hooded Robin spot. This is where we had decided to start the race and at 4pm we ticked the robin - our dummy run was under way. I won't go through all the species we saw but some highlights included Spotted Harrier, Plum-headed Finch, Little Raven, Southern Whiteface, Singing Honeyeater and Blue Bonnet. As the sun sank behind the hills Rob did the count and we had seen 93 species. Not a bad effort we thought, hoping we'd get the same the next day.

A great sleep was had before leaving the caravan park at 9:30am and making our way west to Boggabri. The Plum-heads were still at the dam where we had seen them the day before. We located a great spot for Yellow-throated Miner and beyond our Leard State Forest turnoff we found Yellow-billed Spoonbills loafing in the River Gums. We refueled the car and grabbed some food in town, listening to Musk Lorikeets, Blackbird and Brown Honeyeaters.

We headed back to Borah TSR where we had lunch and readied ourselves for the race. Clouds started rolling in and the wind was quite gusty.....my stress levels had now entered the red zone. Rob, Max and I headed off to the starting point as Nick continued to rest. A Black-eared Cuckoo was heard but couldn't be found but seeing a female Turquoise Parrot fly into her hollow was nearly as good. At the starting point the Hooded Robins were still there but constantly moving around so I followed them for a good 20min until at 4pm we had ticked off the robin as our first bird again.

Max yells out "White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike!" and that was our second bird for the race. White-throated Gerygone, Brown Treecreeper, Dusky Woodswallow and Diamond Firetail fell quickly and down by the creek we bagged 3 common ducks, Black-fronted Dotterel and Dollarbird. Fuscous, White-plumed and Black-chinned Honeyeaters called from the canopy as a Painted Button-quail was flushed from underfoot. High above the eucalypts Tree Martin and White-backed Swallow danced, but where were the Bee-eaters!!! Little Frailbird called, Little Lorikeets zoomed past, and Red-winged Parrots could be heard in the distance. What couldn't be heard was the Rufous Songlark quietly sitting on an old stump, our last bird for Borah. We sped off towards Leard SF ticking Apostlebird, Little Corella, Wedge-tailed Eagle and Pipit on the way. There was silence at our songlark/quail spot...stress!!! A Brown Falcon, Little Raven and Horsfield's Bushlark were seen and just as we were giving up.....a Stubble Quail called.....HAZZAH again. Back on the road and finally ticking off Rainbow Bee-eater. At the Plum-headed Finch spot we totally dipped on Plum-heads (Grrrr) but did get two Southern Whiteface for our troubles. Singing Honeyeater, Double-barred Finch, Weebill, Western Gerygone and White-throated Treecreeper were recorded in the bushier areas. Fairy Martins flushed from a road culvert. Our Yellow-throated Miner spot was true, bagging us a much needed western bird. White-winged Fairy-wren called nearby but the Brown Quail were silent. Large flocks of Cockatiel greeted us as we turned off towards Leard but the flock of 20-odd Plumed Whistling-ducks standing at our farm dam was a true highlight as we'd never seen this species here before. Grey-crowned Babbler crossed the road as we entered Leard which was alive with bird calls. Striped Honeyeater, Leaden Flycatcher, Speckled Warbler, Inland Thornbill, Channel-billed Cuckoo and Varied Sittella were ticked in quick succession. A little further on we finally got White-browed Babbler onto our Twitchathon list. As we passed out the other side of Leard our options for new birds were slim and we still had so much daylight. Blue Bonnets were feeding in the same spot as the previous day and Bar-shouldered Doves were heard but the Spotted Bowerbirds failed to show so we turned the car around and headed towards Boggabri. What a great move that turned out to be. As we were talking about how good it would be if a Mallee Ringneck was to be seen a Mallee Ringneck flew across the road in front of us. In unison 3 of our members called the bird and commenced a very loud 'UP THE DRONGOS!'. As we passed through some flooded paddocks we bagged our Yellow-billed Spoonbill and in a roadside ditch Max spotted a brilliant White-necked Heron. These two species had deserted the east so we were glad to tick them up. In Boggs we drove the streets hearing Musk Lorikeets, Blackbird, Sparrows and Brown Honeyeater. I glimpsed a Hobby zoom past out of the

corner of my eye so 10min was spent patrolling the streets until Nick spotted him (her?) plucking its freshly caught prey in a roadside tree. As Rob counted up our Saturday score we looked for Blue-faced Honeyeater to no avail. Itching for a score we huddled around him to hear the news that we had scored the same as our dummy run, 93 species. We were quietly pleased until Rob cracked a smile and told us we had actually scored 110 species! our highest-ever western-run score, and all in 3.5hrs. A lot of cheering and laughter followed as we left Boggabri and made our way to Gunnedah for tea.

We made good time as we headed across the Liverpool Plain and into the Hunter, swinging north as we hit Singleton. At this stage we still hadn't recorded a single night bird except for a very early Owlet-nightjar calling in Leard. It wasn't until a few kilometres south of Gresford that we saw our only Barn Owl for the night flying beside the road. At my usual pit stop in Gresford we heard a distant Boobook calling and a bit further up the road we saw our first Frogmouth. Our final night bird was a real hoot, a Powerful Owl calling from the hills. What a successful night run!

The next day we awoke to a somewhat subdued dawn chorus in the rainforest. Black-faced and Spectacled Monarch started early with Golden Whistler, Brush Cuckoo, Rose Robin, Superb Lyrebird and Yellow Robin soon kicking in. Russet-tailed Thrush and Noisy Pitta called close to where we slept. Trudging along the now very overgrown track, with leeches marching up our legs like battalions on the warpath, we ticked White-browed Scrubwren, Topknot Pigeon, Brown Cuckoo-dove, Satin Bowerbird and Crested Shrike-tit.

Heading towards Barrington we flushed Bassian Thrushes off the road and at our 'hill top' spot we bagged our only Brown Thornbill and Eastern Spinebill for the race! We also found one of our highlights, a single Red-browed Treecreeper. Brush Turkey, Bell Miner and Yellow-faced Honeyeater made the list as we hit the old guest house. Yellow-throated Scrubwren and Grey Goshawk were added as we avoided two other twitching teams; busy spot!

Leaving the rainforest we were a little disappointed to miss so many pigeons and doves but still pleased overall. The stretch of road to Dungog is generally pretty slow bird wise but Torresian Crow, Pheasant Coucal and Tawny Grassbird kept spirits high. Dungog revealed Red Wattlebird and Rainbow Lorikeet...where have those bloody White-headed Pigeons gone!!! Our Clarence Town spot was alive with bird noise. White-naped and Scarlet Honeyeaters in the canopy and a distant Shining Bronze were great finds. Seaham was next and besides the initial rush of Blue-faced Honeyeater, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet and Spotted Turtle-Dove not much was happening; no night herons or snipe.

Things were really starting to slow up now with no new species being added at Green Wattle Creek. Banded

Lapwing and Cisticola were on the flood plains and Goldfinches called on the Maitland back roads. Walka was deadsville for us. A few Great-crested Grebe, the common waterfowl and Reed Warbler....hmmm probably should have oiled that a bit better.

We added Yellow-tufted and White-cheeked Honeyeater, Buff-rumped Thornbill and Variegated Fairy-wren at Kurri. It was at this stage our race fell to bits a little. A complete lack of oiling in the lower wetlands saw us heading east. In hindsight a trip to more bush/rainforest would have been more productive. Live and learn I guess.

From our vantage point on Lenaghan's Drive we could see Straw-necked Ibis, Great Egret, Whistling Kite and two Chestnut-breasted Mannikins as they whizzed past us. Little Grassbird and Brown Goshawk at Pambalong. We dipped on Brahminy Kite at Raymond Terrace but did see Caspian Tern, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Mallard, White-breasted Woodswallow, Nankeen Night-Heron and Little Wattlebird. Hexham Swamp was a complete waste of time with no birds added, although Rob did get his best looks of Sea-Eagle and Great Egret. Ash Island was a one bird wonder with Mangrove Gerygone calling from the.....mangroves.

Newcastle was next and what a wonderful 15min we had. Short-tailed, Wedge-tailed and Fluttering Shearwater were all very close to shore. Crested, Common and Little Terns patrolled and roosted on the rockshelf. Turnstones and a Whimbrel camouflaged themselves beautifully in amongst the rocks, unlike the 'I don't give a toss' Sooty Oystercatchers.

Off to Stocko with team morale very high. Unlike last year we actually had something to look at on the spit despite the constant disturbance from fishermen. Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits dominated with Red Knot and Curlew Sandpiper in lesser numbers. Eastern Curlew, Red-capped Plover, a Golden Plover and Pied Oystercatchers all sat in the lagoon. Two non-breeding Gull-billed Terns gave a wonderful flyby. Tereks and Tattlers in Fern Bay.

Now this is really where we fell to pieces. Off we went to Awabakal (why!) where our only tick was New Holland Honeyeater *slaps forehead*. With 45min to spare we arrived at the Wetlands Centre, ticked off Wandering Whistling-duck and Magpie Goose, and commenced looking for any number of unlikely last minute species to add to our list. Unfortunately the Little Bitterns and Garganey didn't show.

Our final tally was a good one, 219. Little did we think it would bag us 2nd place, tied with the Brewers! (who did 300km less than us mere mortals!). So after 24hrs (really 3 days), 800+km and very little sleep, 4 Drongos were very tired, satisfied and fired up for next year.

Grant Brosie

Twitchathon Reports continued

The Dry-throated Buzzards' Twitchathon

The BASNA Twitchathon 2009 saw the maiden voyage of the Dry-throated Buzzards team. Full of enthusiasm in the build-up to the event and hopeful of a score exceeding 160, they finished the race nine short of their target and feeling somewhat deflated. Having driven several hundred kilometres in pursuit of their goal, it was hard to swallow knowing that "we could have got that many staying much closer to home". Once the dust had settled, a refreshing plan was conceived to attempt something a little different next time around. Having earlier that year enjoyed participating in the "Loop-the-Lake" cycling event, the work colleagues decided to have a crack at cycling the Twitchathon. They could travel a much shorter distance, clock up just as many birds and have much more fun in the process too. The main goal was to beat last year's score.

With the plan now hatched, the year leading up to the 2010 Twitchathon was spent thinking about the logistics of competing on bike and possible routes that could be taken. The constraints of traveling by means of your own propulsion mean that any potential route must be fairly compact to ensure successful completion of the event. Once committed to a route you are also fairly inflexible – you cannot halfway round think "let's go to this site instead". The route was therefore carefully planned over several iterations to achieve an optimum solution: It would be around 100km in length, with no more than 30km on the Saturday or 80km on the Sunday; Stockton Sandspit should be visited between two to three hours after high tide (in this case on the Saturday afternoon); The woodland sites should be visited before 10am on Sunday. With these key criteria in mind a final route was decided upon and excursions were made to test its validity and for pre-Twitch oiling.

As it turned out, 2010 was not the best year to be attempting a high-scoring Twitchathon within the Hunter Valley, particularly so close to the coast. The rains out west had seriously diminished the chance of the cycling route reaching its full potential. Of even more concern in the week leading up to the event was the threat of a stormy weekend! Wind and rain are not the friends of birds or cyclists – and for a good few days in advance it was looking like being a complete washout. This couldn't be happening – not after a year of meticulous planning and high hopes! Thankfully, come Saturday morning the prospects were looking much brighter – we might only get wet on the final leg of our journey.

The Buzzards converged on their pre-Twitch mustering point (The Brewery at Queens Wharf) at around 12:30 for a hearty lunch of beer-battered fish and chips, washed down appreciatively by a few schooners of Cooper's Vintage Ale. Fuelled up and raring to go they cruised along the foreshore checking for roosting birds on the

rock platforms. It became clear that the Baths were the place to be when the clock ticked over. We only had a small window of opportunity, having to catch the ferry to Stockton at 16:15, so collecting all available ticks within a few minutes added some serious pressure to the proceedings. We sat on a nice collection of Sooty Oystercatcher, Ruddy Turnstone, Common Tern and Little Tern, which behaved well by staying until the whistle blew for kick-off. A frantic seawatch yielded Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Gannet and Fluttering Shearwater. The latter had been seen before the race began and it seemed like forever waiting for more birds to make an appearance once we were racing. Thankfully Baggers picked one up just as we were about to leave. Phew!

After a leisurely cruise across the river it was back to the pedals as we charged up Fullerton Street towards the Sandspit. Common birds were falling left, right and centre, with list-keeping proving quite a challenge. We'd timed our arrival to perfection, picking up both Grey-tailed Tattler and Terek Sandpiper on their high-tide roost site. Next we swung around to the beach, hailing a flock of Shrike-Twits en route. With only one telescope between us, it proved a difficult task getting the required number of team members on to the peeps for successful identification. However, after a fairly tense hour of ticking, we left the site with a swag of goodies, including Whimbrel, Gull-billed Tern and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

The site of choice to finish the day had been Ash Island, but pre-Twitch oiling had concluded that it was currently a barren, bird-less wasteland. So soul-destroying a place was this once-hallowed ground, we gave it a wide berth opting for something different. However, sites within striking distance were in short supply. The best option was Blackbutt NR, largely because of its proximity to our place of rest that night at Cliffy's joint in New Lambton Heights. We arrived at Richley Reserve shortly before dusk, having snagged Red-rumped Parrot en route near the stadium. Our primary target was the Australian Brush-Scrounger, who happily scavenges around the picnic areas of Blackbutt. With the picnickers and sausage-sizzlers all departed though, its main food supply had been cut off and finding one was proving difficult. With no sign of our quarry here it was on to Black Duck picnic area, which after a quick, fruitless search was also looking like a dip. The decision by Miyagi to have one last check in the far corner of the site proved to be a good one, with a single bird in amongst Wood Ducks at the poolside.

The hope had been that Blackbutt would yield a few bonus birds such as Scaly-breasted Lorikeet returning to roost. We'd arrived a little late for that unfortunately. In fact, the forest was very quiet indeed, except for the raucous Cockatoos. Very few bush birds were added to the list as we waited for nightfall and a chance at some nocturnal species. Boobook fell very quickly, calling just

after dusk and proving much more straightforward than envisaged. Our attempts to locate a Frogmouth in the lower carpark off Lookout Road were less fortunate. We knew if we cycled back down to Richley Reserve they'd be a shoe, but we were far too tired to even contemplate such madness! The bird of the day was still to come though. After probably a full ten minutes of Miyagi woo-hoo-ing at full volume, a muffled response was heard behind us. As we turned, the silhouette of a Powerful Owl was spotted on a nearby tree. The bird obliged us with some great viewing and it was a truly magical experience, being a lifer for two of the Buzzards. Much rejoicing was had before retiring to Cliffy's, for some hard-earned glasses of his exceptional home-brew. Not before Baggers spent an hour fixing up our bikes though, getting them all in tip-top condition for the day ahead. We finished the day just shy of 80 birds – not bad we thought.

An early start found us hurtling down the hills of Rankin Park, out to the Link Road and the start of our climb over Sugarloaf Range. The weakest link in our planned route was the lack of any real rainforest birding. Wet Sclerophyll was our only option and with Blackbutt proving so quiet the previous evening, the pressure was firmly on the Sugarloaves to deliver. Our arrival in Seahampton was heralded by a male Satin Bowerbird – our first “wet forest” target had fallen. Sugarloaf Road proved fruitful, with both Shining Bronze-Cuckoo and Brush Cuckoo heard and a close encounter with some wonderful Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos. Just before the start of the steep climb up the mountain, we deviated from the road and into the bush. This was our only section of off-road cycling – a six kilometre northward stretch, linking back up with George Booth Drive. We had taken a wrong turn along here on an oiling mission two weeks ago and were determined to get it right this time.

The track runs roughly along the 200m contour line, with wet gullies plunging away to the east. It delivered our targets, but only just, as single occurrences of Superb Lyrebird, Black-faced Monarch, King-Parrot, Crimson Rosella and Wonga Pigeon were had along the way. Cicadabirds and Leaden Flycatchers were much more obliging however and were frequently encountered – a great location for these species and Brush Cuckoos too. As we descended the ridge into the woodier country “out back” it dawned on us that we had missed Rufous Fantail, Brown Thornbill and Variegated Fairy-Wren. We could still get these species but we had already left our key site for them. Miyagi was fretting about them, and rightly so, as all three turned out to be dips. We were going so well picking up our goodies, that we took our eye off the ball and missed three easier species.

Our main woodland site along George Booth Drive was quick to deliver, with WBCS, Dusky Woodswallow, Little Lorikeet and Yellow-tufted Honeyeater quick to fall. The gimmee Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, that had been the subject of much oiling, was true to form and appeared moments after a quick burst of pishing. A

distant Peaceful Dove heard calling on our way out was the icing on the cake. Buff-rumped Thornbill and Torresian Crow were added along Richmond Vale Road before stopping at John Browns Lagoon. The search for the comb-crested one was in full swing when the owner of the site pulled over to see what we were up to. Cue Miyagi spotting a Jacana and desperately trying to get the rest of the Buzzards on to the bird without appearing too rude – they were now all conversing with the recent arrival. Eventually the rest of the team clocked it, two of them ticking up a lifer in the process.

Mulbring was the next site – our farthest west and also the designated lunch stop. Crested Shrike-Tit (lifer for most) was ticked up en route before a welcome half hour or so lounging around by the park in town. Wedge-tailed Eagle, Hobby, Blue-faced Honeyeater and Long-billed Corella were all collected with minimal effort. After exhausting the post office of their entire stock of liquid refreshments we decided it was time to be on the move, the start of our homeward leg. A speculative stop to check for Yellow-rumped Thornbill 1km north of Mulbring proved to be the defining moment of the race. After an unproductive scanning of the paddocks, Miyagi turned to look behind him and near exploded in excitement. “Black Falcon, Black Falcon, Black Falcon!” went the call and the Buzzards were quickly locked on to and grilling their prey. This majestic bird was observed for some time as it made several rapid swoops over the fields, darting this way and that. Perhaps it was trying to flush some quail? Alas, it was unsuccessful, but that didn't matter. It was a Hunter tick for Miyagi and a lifer for the rest. The prolonged views enabled us to observe all of the key identification features and a breathtaking aerial display was also provided. It resembled a Hobby on steroids and scared the life out of the local avian population!

With the excitement over and done with it was back to the task at hand – making it back to the Wetlands Centre before the end of the race! Legs were growing weary and we had to keep moving at a reasonable pace to ensure we kept ahead of schedule. The last thing we needed was to be making up time during the final stages! Jacky Winter, Aussie Pipit and Grey-crowned Babbler were added to the list along Richmond Vale Road and George Booth Drive, before we swung east on to John Renshaw Drive. Only the wetland sites remained, but there was still some ground to cover, and hilly ground at that! Black Hill Road proved particularly challenging with several steep undulations. It was becoming increasingly clear that the Buzzards were flagging as each hill was now accompanied by an obligatory rest at the top. Chicken George was finding it especially tough as he was now riding with one brake pad permanently pressed against his wheel!

Lenaghans Flats produced Straw-necked Ibis, Royal Spoonbill, the Grassbirds and several Intermediate Egrets. A rest stop in Minmi followed, with much fluid guzzling and a repair job by Baggers on Chicken George's brakes. Another gruelling ride awaited us on

the final stretch along Minmi Road and Sandgate Road, with only Grey Goshawk rewarding us for our troubles. A fine spot by Cliff bringing up the rear, who assumed we'd all seen it. Nope. So back we went to tick it off. A great sense of relief was felt upon arriving at the Wetlands Centre. Now all we had to do was summon the energy to walk round birding! After the bikes were safely locked up we mopped up our remaining wetland birds, with Wandering Whistling-Duck and Buff-banded Rail being welcome additions too. As the final whistle approached we grabbed a last-minute (actually with only a few seconds to spare!) tick in the form of Yellow Thornbill. Good to tick him up, but we dipped on Brown Thornbill and it proved to be our biggest dip for the second year running! Not dipping on this species is now my number one priority for next year!

We finished the race with a respectable score of 150 on the nose – agonizingly one short of last year's total. Oh well, we would have easily beaten 151 had it not been so wet out west. We were not disheartened though, on the contrary, we were ecstatic. We had completed around 100km of cycling and clocked up pretty much the same number of birds we did travelling hundreds of kilometres last year. On top of that we had some excellent birds of real quality, which far outweighed the total score for us. We received much admiration from our fellow competitors at the competition wrap-up and with it some additional sponsorship pledges – so a big thank-you to all. We had an immensely enjoyable time and are looking forward to competing on bikes again next year, without the constraints of an unfortunate tide-time and heaps of inland rain (maybe).

Miyagi Buzzard

Hunter Home Brewers Twitchathon – Sticking to One's Routes

After a very successful Twitchathon done solely in the Hunter Valley in 2009, the temptation was there for the Hunter Home Brewers to again “stick to their routes” by spending the entire 24 hours in the Hunter catchment. There was however, a major spanner thrown into the works – the effects of the inland rain.

Mick Brew was already 10 months into his 'Hunter Big Year' and was as aware as anyone of the mass exodus of waterbirds, shorebirds and some passerines from the Hunter that had occurred during 2010. A key event in the decision to stay in the Hunter once again was receiving news (via Grant Drongo) that things on the Liverpool Plains close to Gunnedah weren't that crash-hot (even the Painted Honeyeaters hadn't shown). The Brewers decided to concentrate on the exceptional woodland birding in the west of the Hunter and to try and gain the advantage there. Mick Brew had also researched a more efficient rainforest run for the Sunday morning, so the Brewers had adopted a heavy emphasis on 'bush birds' for the 2010 event.

For the first time, the lads set off for a Hunter run on a Friday, enabling them to garner good oil on their Dummy Run. It also saw them sleeping right at the top of the Hunter Valley, in the far reaches of the Goulburn River. The lodgings were right on the edge of the Hunter Region (literally 15m south of it) so when a pair of Little Friarbirds arrived not only was it good oil for the Twitch, but gave Mick a well sought-after species for his big year. Following a promising Dummy Run, a feed at the Chinese corner of the Merriwa razzle-dazzle, a good 'squelch' (equivalent to 'twitch' but for frogs), the brewers settled in for Cracker's Disco in truly luxurious settings.

After a vain attempt to find Geordies at their 2009 starting point, they moved north to a new, but well-oiled

starting site. This was the new promised land of the Hunter – Durrigere Road. Two species that they always thought only possible on a Gunnedah run live a couple of hundred metres apart here – Singing Honeyeater and Southern Whiteface. Needless to say, as 4pm rolled over these were the two key targets, along with one of their traditional nemesis birds – the Pallid Cuckoo – which was to go down as numero uno as 4pm ticked over.



Steve Brewer counting down the seconds to 4pm at Durrigere Road – Mick Brewer

Durrigere Road produced the goods with these western niceties, as well as some other very handy birds such as Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, Rufous Songlark and Red-capped Robin. A quick detour into the Little Friarbird site found these birds easily along with Rock Warbler, Western Gerygone and Brush Cuckoo.

After ticking Emus at 80-clicks (always satisfying to tick without stopping) and moving along quite nicely, they turned onto their gun woodland stretch – Ringwood Road. A quick scout for the Plum-heads at O'Briens Crossing had them dipping, but a very worthy replacement came in the form of White-backed Swallow. There are generally four key sites along Ringwood Road and I can guarantee you that the mood became extremely sombre after the first two failed to produce anything more Tree Martins and Choughs. It was a tense time as they approached the better of the two remaining sites,

but fortune was on their side as a flurry of mops were had – White-browed Babbler, Turquoise Parrot, Red-winged Parrot, Diamond Firetail and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater all fell in succession. A calling pair of Eastern Whipbirds had them thinking that there wouldn't be too many places in NSW where Red-wings and Whipbirds live together.

Leaving the wooded habitat behind, they picked up calling Brown and Stubble Quails in the crops before moving on to Merriwa to catch the late-calling Blackbird and roosting Musk Lori's. The nightshift kicked in at the start of Yarrawa Rd and it wasn't long before Barn Owl and Tawny Frogmouth were seen. Nightjars were heard at virtually every stop they made to listen for Boobooks, but none of the latter could be heard. After yet another vain attempt at spotlighting the Plumed Whistling-Ducks at Doughboy Hollow, they pushed on to see if their old friend was loitering around near Gresford. The Masked Owl is a difficult bird to imitate, and it was obviously out of pure curiosity (or 'pity' perhaps?) that their old friend did indeed come in to investigate Mick and Steve's attempts at the maniacal screech. It was a fitting bird to be their 100th bird and a calling Boobook and Koel were the icings on the cake. They now had 102 birds on the board but significantly, the only waterbirds or waders within that 102 were Wood Ducks and Masked Lapwings.

The Masked Owl lifted their brewing spirits and as they approached their night camp they noticed a vehicle pulled over on the side of the road. Upon closer inspection the vehicle was that of the Dodgy Drongos and after the initial pause for confirmation of who was inside, the Brewers exploded into a raucous chorus of "BREWING!!" and various other snorts and sounds before leaving the stunned Drongos in the wake of Larry Landcruiser. They just shook their heads.

The dawn chorus was somewhat more 'pleasing to the ear', particularly ears that are listening for new birds for a Twitchathon list. Russet-tailed Thrush, Noisy Pitta and Green Catbird were all part of this chorus and after a Wompoo flew in to the tree above their heads, they moved off to their Riflebird site, which obliged by calling after only a brief wait. Alas the Logrunner wouldn't come to the party but this was to be one of only two rainforest dips (the other being Bassian Thrush). Satisfied, they moved on to Dungog and made the mistake of sampling the local bakery, which cost them precious time and taste-buds.

Not needing to be at the estuary until around midday, the lads had time to visit some of their favourite haunts such as Green Wattle Creek, Walka Water Works, Seaham and Raymond Terrace. Although Geoff was present at the latter there was no sign of the Night Herons at all and 2010 was to be the first year that they would dip on this species (amongst 4 others). Still, they had over 180 species as they approached the estuary. A large bird circling over the beach caught their eye and it was a

Gannet. They decided to do a quick seawatch from Stockton Beach and easily picked up Wedge- and Short-tailed Shearwaters.

Stockton Sandspit was reasonably kind, considering the unfavourable tides. Both Godwits, Curlew Sands, Red Knot, Red-necked Stint and a pair of Little Terns were amongst the highlights here and 200 clicked over around a quarter past midday – about 90 minutes later than it did in 2009. This was to be expected given the dearth of waterbirds in the region. A trawl of the mangroves gained them a bonus bird in the form of two Common Sandpipers and Brush Wattlebird was gleefully accepted following last year's unbelievable dip.

Next it was over to Newcastle Baths to pick up the usual suspects there. Common Tern, Ruddy Turnstone and Sooty Oycs all presented themselves nicely, and a few "Fluttering-types" came close enough in to be confirmed as Fluttering Shearwaters. With 213 under their belt the Brewers were brimming with confidence. They knew that scores would be generally down this year due to the inland rain and after seeing Magpie Geese en-route to their "mop sites" they moved to 214 with two and a half hours to go. It boded well for a score well into the 220's...but this is where the wheels fell off.

From hereon in, it was a dipfest for the Brewers, starting with a time-costly and almost mind-boggling miss on both New Holland and White-cheeked Honeyeaters at their "reliable" site near Kurri. They swallowed the New Holland as a dip, but remained confident that they would pick up White-cheeked at the Wetlands Centre. Next they moved on to "Poor Man's Kakadu" to dip on the Jacana and Little Egret (the latter being one of the five first-time misses) and only gaining Grey-crowned Babbler and Black-winged Stilts as they went. Then they scanned Hexham Swamp to dip on numerous possibilities, but did pick up Straw-necked Ibis and Intermediate Egret.

They had only added four species since the Maggie Goose nearly two hours earlier, and had dipped on about ten birds. A Collared Sparrowhawk was the only addition to the list as they travelled back to the Wetlands Centre. And it was there that they faced a monumental dip for the second year running. Last year it was the Brush Wattlebird, this year it was the White-cheeked Honeyeater. And so they had to settle with 219 as the final whistle blew.

This was still a very good score from a coastal catchment in a year where zillions of birds had departed for western territories, but they knew it wasn't going to be competitive. It was enough for equal second, which they shared with the Dodgy Drongos. The Menacing Monarchs had scored 237, due largely to the fact that they had started at the Macquarie Marshes where many of the absent friends were breeding or at least present. Nonetheless, the Hunter Home Brewers had again stayed true to their name and stuck to their routes.

Jacqueline Winter

News Items

Outback bird boom a boon for traditional owners

by Anna Henderson, ABC News online, 24 November 2010

Birdwatchers will be able to go on sanctioned tours to see birds such as the Princess Parrot in the wild. Traditional owners are trialing a tourism venture to capitalise on a bird boom on Aboriginal land in Central Australia.

A deluge of inland rain this year has seen the population of some birds explode, giving twitchers and birders the chance to tick some of the rarest species off their lists. In August, the coordinates for a sighting of Princess Parrots west of Alice Springs were posted on a birdwatching blog, provoking a sudden rush of interest.

The site was on Aboriginal land and could only be accessed with a permit from the Central Land Council, which represents traditional owners. The land council froze permits for the area due to concerns about illegal access, environmental damage and protection of sacred sites. But the land council has now sanctioned a trial of birdwatching tours with traditional owners as guides. The trips cost \$450 per person per day.

Bird numbers soar as farmers regenerate land

by environment reporter Sarah Clarke, ABC News online, 23 November 2010

A decade-long survey has found key species of birds that were in trouble because of land clearing and grazing are on the way back. The study showed species like the Diamond Firetail becoming more common on regenerated farmland. The key to this biodiversity comeback is the landholder. Graziers and farmers are helping regenerate the land, replant the vegetation and grasslands, and over 10 years that has paid off. For the past decade, David Lindenmayer and a team of scientists from the Australian National University have been keeping a close watch on woodland birds, studying 300 sites across 150 farms over a 10-year period. Over that time, many species that were considered to be in trouble have reappeared, including the Speckled Warbler, the Diamond Firetail and the Rufous Whistler.

"In some cases we've seen the reporting rate, which is the number of times we record the birds on our sites, double, triple, even quadruple on some of these farms where there's been these kinds of interventions," Professor Lindenmayer said while visiting a property near Boorowa in southern New South Wales. "The fantastic thing is it is telling us now about the kinds of things that we might need to alter slightly on farms to actually have really good environmental outcomes." And it is not just birds that are reappearing. Reptiles are also being monitored and are also making a comeback. "It's been a really buoyant year as far as the rainfall and things have been going," scientist Geoffrey Kay said. "So we're picking up blind snakes and pink-tailed worm lizards. These are species that very rarely come up. They're subterranean and the moisture is really pulling them to the surface."

Grazier Neil Stuart signed up to the Federal Government's Environmental Stewardship Program and he is now taking great pleasure in watching the dramatic turnaround. "It gets you more involved because the more they find the more excited they get about the birds, reptiles, grasses and whatever," he said. "You go to some of these sites and you see these incredible wildflowers, that are endangered, growing. "I reckon it's great, and I just like talking to other people who are involved with this and they get a bit excited, because it's the first time they're seeing something happening."

Observations from Club Nights October – November 2010

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
Australian Brush Turkey	1	4/10/2010	Blackbutt Reserve	C. & R. Goodenough
Australasian Figbird	40+	10/11/2010	Carrington	D. Allen
Australasian Pipit	1	1/10/2010	Newcastle Rock Shelf	J. Thomas
Black-necked Stork	1	1/11/2010	Buchanan Road	J. Goswell
Black-necked Stork	1	16/11/2010	Raymond Terrace	L. Rayward
Black-necked Stork	1	15/11/2010	Raymond Terrace	M. Maddock
Brown Falcon	Pr	7/09/2010	Thornton	H. Tarrant
Brown Honeyeater	2	Aug-Oct	Telarah [car park]	H. Tarrant
Buff-banded Rail	1	7/11/2010	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Bush Stone-Curlew	1	1/11/2010	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Bush Stone-Curlew	1	10/10/2010	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Channel-billed Cuckoo	2	6/07/2010	Newcastle University	H. Boyce
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin	19	24/09/2010	Hexham Swamp	T. Clarke
Cicadabird	?	13/10/2010	Sharpes Creek	L. Mee
Collared Sparrowhawk	2	11/10/2010	Boat Harbour	T. Clarke
Dollarbird	2	27/09/2010	Bagnalls Beach	T. Clarke
European Goldfinch	20	19/09/2010	Bolwarra	H. Tarrant
European Goldfinch	10	23/09/2010	Maitland	H. Tarrant
Glossy Black-Cockatoo	10	12/09/2010	Wollombi	H. Tarrant
Glossy Black-Cockatoo	2+1dy	30/9/10 - 3/10/10	Wye Point	V. Moon
Grey Butcherbird	2+2dy	9/11/2010	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Grey-tailed Tattler	2	29/10/2010	Stockton Channel	J. Thomas
Latham's Snipe	10	9/11/2010	Pacific Dunes [Medowie]	D. Hatfield
Leaden Flycatcher	1	29/09/2010	Mambo Wetlands	T. Clarke
Masked Lapwing	Pr+4dy	Nov	Warners Bay	R. Walker
Musk Duck	1	14/11/2010	Myall Lakes	L. Rayward
Northern Mallard	1+9dy	16/10/2010	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Pacific Golden Plover	9	29/10/2010	Stockton Channel	J. Thomas
Paradise Riflebird	1m	13/10/2010	Sharpes Creek	A. Lindsey/R. McLean
Pied Oystercatcher	2pr+2dy each	8/10/2010	Stockton Bight*	W. Mayers [NPWS]
Pied Oystercatcher	1dy	17/11/2010	Newcastle Bight*	A. Lindsey <i>et al.</i>
Powerful Owl	1	13/10/2010	Gloucester Tops Road	L. Mee
Powerful Owl	1	27/10/2010	Floraville rainforest	W. Lambkin
Regent Bowerbird	2m	12/10/2010	Glenrock SRA	D. Allen
Rose Robin	1	18/09/2010	Ash Island [Nev's nook]	N. McNaughton
Ruddy Turnstone	6	1/10/2010	Newcastle Rock Shelf	J. Thomas
Rufous Fantail	1	26/10/2010	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Satin Flycatcher	3	10/10/2010	Vacy	H. Tarrant
Scarlet Honeyeater	3m,1f	26/10/2010	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Short-tailed Shearwater (beach-washed)	87	25/10/2010	Redhead Beach	per A. Lindsey
Sooty Oystercatcher	4	18/09/2010	Newcastle Beach	C. & R. Goodenough
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	3	30/09/2010	Doyles Creek	H. Tarrant
Striated Heron	1	28/09/2010	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Swamp Harrier	3	7/11/2010	Floraville ridge	W. Lambkin
Tawny Frogmouth	Pr on	Nov	Warners Bay	R. Walker
Tawny Frogmouth	4	3/11/2010	Waratah	D. Allen
Whimbrel	1	1/10/2010	Newcastle Rock Shelf	J. Thomas
White-browed Babbler	4+	30/09/2010	Doyles Creek	H. Tarrant
White-fronted Chat	11	24/09/2010	Hexham Swamp	T. Clarke
Wompoo Pigeon	1	14/11/2010	Coal Point	W. Baguley

Note: * Newcastle Bight and Stockton Bight are the same place.

HBOC Activities – December 2010 – February 2011

DATE	EVENT	MEETING PLACE & TIME	CONTACT
DECEMBER 2010			
Wednesday 8 December	Xmas Club Night	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Topic: Members' Night - bring your slides, anecdotes, videos and a plate to share the festive spirit
Sunday 12 December	Latham's Snipe survey at any wetland in the Hunter Region	Your choice of wetland	Liz Crawford 4959 3663 NB:Pambalong NR survey cancelled due to Alligator Weed
Sunday 12 December	Volunteer Day at Stockton Sandspit – vegetation control & birdwatching	8.00am – 12noon Stockton Sandspit car park	Tom Clarke 4951 3872 or 0418 411 785
Monday 3 December	Volunteer Day at Ash Island – mangrove seedling removal	7.00am Swan & Wader Ponds, Ash Island	Tom Clarke 4951 3872 or 0418 411 785
Saturday 18 December	Hunter Wader Survey	6.30 am Ash Island 7.00 am Other locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 4959 3663 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Grant Brosie 4934 7383 - Tomago
Tuesday 21 December	Tomago Wetland Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
JANUARY 2011			
Friday 14 January	Volunteer Day at Ash Island – mangrove seedling removal	7.00am Swan & Wader Ponds, Ash Island	Tom Clarke 4951 3872 or 0418 411 785
Saturday 15 January	Painted Snipe Survey (Australia-wide, but many sightings are in NSW)	Any wetland you would like to survey	Please report your survey results to Birds Australia: http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/our-projects/australian-painted-snipe.html
Tuesday 18 January	Tomago Wetland Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Saturday 22 January	Hunter Wader Survey	10.00 am Ash Island 10.30 am Other locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 4959 3663 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Grant Brosie 4934 7383 - Tomago
Sunday 23 January	Field Outing - Tank Paddock/Stockrington	8.00am Minmi Hotel	Tom Clarke 4951 3872 or 0418 411 785
FEBRUARY 2011			
Tuesday 1 February	Mid-week Outing - Woods Point, Morisset	Cnr Macquarie and Fishing Point Roads, Morisset	Don Moon 4359 1670
Wednesday 2 February	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Wednesday 9 February	AGM & Club Night	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre, Shortland	Guest Speaker: Adam Fawcett – Feral animal control in National Parks
Friday 11 February	Volunteer Day at Ash Island – mangrove seedling removal	7.00am Swan & Wader Ponds, Ash Island	Tom Clarke 4951 3872 or 0418 411 785
Tuesday 15 February	Tomago Wetland Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Saturday 19 February	Hunter Wader Survey	9.00 am Ash Island 9.30 am Other locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 4959 3663 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Grant Brosie 4934 7383 - Tomago