



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with Bird Observation and Conservation Australia

NEWSLETTER

Issue 6/11
December 2011 - January 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

Seasons Greetings

CONTENTS

President's Column	2
Controlled Burning at Green Wattle Creek	2
Club Activity Reports:	
Bengalla Birdwatching Event	3
Baerami Camp	3
Welcome Shorebirds	3
Main Creek	4
Twitchathon Reports	
Hunter Home Brewers - Mallee Melee	4
Notes from a New Menacing Monarch	7
Dodgy Drongos Twitchathon	8
Features	
Sharp-tailed Sandpipers on Ash Island	10
Hunterbirding	10
Common Koel Behaviour	10
Banded Birds	
Banded Wandering Albatross	11
Banded Bar-tailed Godwit	11
Featured Birdwatching Site:	
Awabakal Nature Reserve	12
Advertisements	13
Events	
February 2012 Guest Speaker	14
Eisenmann Medal - Clive Minton	14
Birds Australia News	
Galahs	15
Birds Australia Conservation News	15
Club Night Observations	16-17
Club Activities	18



Australian Painted Snipe at Hexham Swamp - Ann Lindsey

The movements of the Australian Painted Snipe are poorly understood. The species is possibly dispersive in response to the flooding and drying out of wetlands, and they are capable of travelling great distances. Following the last couple of years of good inland rains, Australian Painted Snipe have been recorded at several locations in the Hunter Region. Birds Australia is conducting a survey for Australian Painted Snipe on 28 January 2012, and your sightings of this threatened species can be reported on line at: <http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/our-projects/australian-painted-snipe.html>

Please send Newsletter articles direct to the Editor,
Liz Crawford at: chrisliz@internode.on.net
Deadline for the next edition - 31 Jan 2012

HBOC postal address:
PO Box 24 New Lambton NSW 2305
Website: www.hboc.org.au

President's Column

It has been said that variety is the spice of life. A cursory look through some of the items that have passed across this computer monitor in the last couple of months reveals the extensive variety of issues and events that are dealt with by members within the Club. For example, members have been involved in:

- participating in club activities, especially the mid-week outings
- conducting both HBOC team surveys and individual member surveys
- volunteering for habitat rehabilitation projects
- responding to website and telephone enquiries from the general public
- writing letters to decision makers involving issues impacting on the welfare of birds and their habitats
- learning about fox scats
- attending meetings to nurture relationships and develop partnerships with local industry and environmentally based organisations
- catering for the interests of visiting birdwatchers
- providing data from the HBOC records database to external agencies to help further the conservation of birds
- raising funds for the Powerful Owl Project, and having fun, through the Twitchathon
- producing the latest well-respected editions of the *Hunter Region Annual Bird Report* and *The Whistler* in addition to the club's regular Newsletter
- finding endangered Painted Snipe
- negotiating better outcomes for local bird life
- actively raising community awareness about local birds and promoting the Club through the local press and through participation in environmental displays and by providing guest speakers
- running birdwatching courses for U3A
- investigating banded birds including the locally photographed Wandering Albatross which is now thought to be about 42 years old
- simply enjoying the delights of birdwatching.

There may not have been much "spice" in that small sample but it is certainly indicative of the "variety" that makes life in the bird club very interesting, challenging, fulfilling, rewarding and at times frustrating. The rewards cover a broad spectrum, from recently learning that HBOC submissions regarding the effects of mining in the Hunter Region are having a positive impact; that land managers are prepared to change plans to accommodate the breeding needs of local woodland birds; and the potential success of the Club's long-term

habitat rehabilitation projects; to the sheer delight of the reticent youngster who, on watching shorebirds through binoculars for the first time, declared, "these birds are pretty interesting aren't they!"

I suppose one point of this article is to remind members that there are plenty of opportunities to become involved and enjoy the rewards of volunteering to assist your Club, the community and most of all the birds and their habitats. Your attention is also drawn to the notices associated with this Newsletter regarding the AGM in February, a Notice of Motion for Life Membership and the forms and process for elected positions in 2012.

On behalf of the Committee I wish you all a safe, happy and peaceful Christmas followed by a wonderful year of birding in 2012.

Paul Baird

Controlled Burning at Green Wattle Creek

Last spring the Crown Lands Department and Rural Fires Service changed the area to be burnt at Green Wattle Creek Crown Lands Reserve to avoid impact on birds like the White-throated Nightjar during the breeding season. The area originally scheduled was burnt this autumn and I am monitoring its recovery and noting what birds are using the area. On Sunday 4 December 2011, I flushed a pair of White-throated Nightjars from a spot close to where they have bred previously. I suspect they have young. Congratulations to all concerned in taking this thoughtful and proactive approach to managing bird habitat. It is very encouraging to know that the area is suitable for nightjars within six months of the burn.

I have previously pondered why newly hatched nightjars have a gingery appearance; it matches perfectly the colour of recently shed spotted gum bark, which is shed at the height of the nightjar breeding season. The previous young I have seen have been later in the year and the colour match was less obvious.

Following the burn at Green Wattle Creek Speckled Warblers are again numerous and appear to be breeding profusely. Painted Button-quail numbers have also been restored to the numbers regularly observed more than a decade ago.

Mike Newman

Club Activity Reports

Bengalla Birdwatching Event

14 September 2011

Would you be able to tell the difference between a Rufous Whistler and a Grey-crowned Babbler, or know a Yellow-rumped Thornbill if you saw one?

Close to 40 birdwatchers were able to identify these species after flocking to Bengalla Mine for its annual birdwatching event, celebrating the diversity of birds in the Upper Hunter Valley. The event, held in the open woodland west of the Bengalla Mine, attracted Bengalla employees, representatives from the Hunter Bird Observers Club and members of the wider community to sight and record local species of birds seen in the woodlands. HBOC members helped other attendees to find and identify nearly 30 different bird species, including White-throated Tree Creeper and White-winged Chough. It was a great opportunity to introduce the community to bird diversity and conservation issues in the Upper Hunter.

The Bengalla bird watching event is part of a global Rio Tinto initiative, which has run in partnership with BirdLife International since 1999.

Rowley Smith

Baerami Camp

1-3 October 2011

The weather forecast for the October long weekend camp was not promising, but a few intrepid HBOC members set out for the Baerami site anyway. Robert McDonald and family arrived on the Thursday before and Rowley, Leone and John and ourselves arrived in glorious sunshine on the Friday. Late in the afternoon Liz and Chris arrived and stayed overnight on their way to Munghorn Gap for some IBA monitoring. The variety of habitat (dense forest, open grassy areas, dry woodland and farm paddocks) resulted in some good birding. Luckily Rowley had brought his own Thunderbox latrine and collapsible brazier so we had a dunny and a fireplace.

There was a brilliant moon and stars on Friday night, which meant a cold start on Saturday morning. There were blue skies and some high cloud, but these quickly changed into general overcast conditions with cloud thickening and getting darker. Light rain started mid-morning but some interesting species were observed between showers. After Liz and Chris left the others made sporadic excursions until the rain set in late in the afternoon.

On Sunday morning the rain had cleared but thick fog overnight made everything very damp. Alan and Margaret Stuart turned up during the morning with the HBOC dunny which had gone from Lorna to Paul Baird to Alan on the Saturday. Apparently Lorna had come to some water over Baerami Creek Road on the way and had turned round and gone home. Alan and Margaret had likewise made it to Baerami Creek Road on Saturday but it was raining heavily by that stage so they went to Merriwa instead. Stuck in the pub on a Saturday night with the footy on – bugger!

There were some late showers on Sunday but the atmosphere around the fire was upbeat and lots of stories were told over a glass of cheer. After more overnight fog, Monday dawned fine and sunny with a little wind, giving everyone a chance to dry off and get tents down. Not wanting to chance further wet weather, the last of us left at 1 pm.

And the result? A total of over 120 species seen and heard, including Southern Boobook, Owlet-nightjar, Tawny Frogmouth, Red-browed Treecreeper, Speckled Warbler, Bassian Thrush, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Grey Goshawk, Olive-backed Orioles, White-throated Gerygones, Fan-tailed Cuckoos, a flock of Double-barred Finches, a flock of 10+ Peaceful Doves, Striped Honeyeaters, Variegated Fairy-wrens, Brown Treecreepers feeding young, King Parrots, Red-rumps, Crimson Rosellas, Choughs, Tree Martins, Brush Turkey and so on – a whole range of wonderful birds.

Janeen and Bob Greig

Welcome Shorebirds

13 November 2011

Two events to celebrate the return of migratory shorebirds to the Hunter Estuary were organized by a committee with representatives from WetlandCare Australia, Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project, Catchment Management Authority, HBOC, NPWS, Hunter Wetlands Centre and Newcastle City Council – a Family Day at Stockton Sandspit and a Cruise up the North Arm of the Hunter River aboard the catamaran *N'Joy*. About 140 people attended the event at Stockton Sandspit where each organization had set up displays. A group of HBOC members helped participants to identify the shorebirds roosting in the lagoon and learn about their amazing migrations. A large banner on the roadside featuring a Pacific Golden Plover drew attention to the event. It was terrific to have a bird-focused event with people coming to find out more about the birds.

Club Activity Reports cont.

Most of the participants on the cruise were already birdwatchers, but one family of five had come along for a special wedding celebration and were happy just to cruise. However, with a couple of pairs of binoculars and a constant commentary on the shorebirds, even these non-birdwatchers were intrigued by the marvelous migration story and the spectacle of hundreds of birds on the Kooragang Dykes! Numerous raptors circling above the wetlands upstream of the Dykes provided further interest.

We hope to hold a similar event again next year.

Liz Crawford

Main Creek

20 November 2011

It was a humid and very hot day which might have deterred some people from coming on the Sunday outing in November. There was also a pelagic trip the same day, which some people opted for instead. However our small group of 5 people had a very pleasant day and it was shady in the rainforest where we spent most of our time.

Our hosts were David and Marion Stuart who have a marvelous property on Main Creek Road, north of Dungog (NB with a cottage available for hire). Three species – Tawny Frogmouth, Noisy Friarbird, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike – were nesting in their front yard. Not a bad way to start an outing! Dave guided us on a walk around the property. Alas we didn't find the Noisy Pitta, seen in the rainforest not long before. But there was plenty of other action, including good views of some Varied Sittellas which Dave had not recorded before on the property.

We enjoyed a late morning tea in the shade of the Stuarts' back patio, and Dave showed us the wide-angle photo of 58 Australian Painted Snipe which he and some others had been fortunate enough to have found at the Macquarie Marshes the week before. Then, we headed off to another rainforest area in nearby Cabbage Tree Road. There we spent a couple of pleasant hours, highlighted by a great view of a Spectacled Monarch on its dainty little nest, two Russet-tailed Thrush sightings, a pair of Green Catbirds (seen by some) and an enchanting 15-20 minutes with a pair of Rose Robins. 54 species recorded overall.

Alan Stuart

Twitchathon 2011 Reports

Hunter Home Brewers – Mallee Melee

In their 13th year of competing in the NSW Twitchathon, the Hunter Home Brewers decided it was time to 'stretch out'. Each of their past Twitches had been either entirely within the Hunter Valley (4 times) or having started on the Liverpool Plains (8 times). It was time for something new; something remote; something a tad crazy – it had to be the mallee!

Once again, Mick Brew had been absent (*with leave*) since June, but in the lead-up to the Twitch (read: since about late June) it had become apparent to him that the Brewers needed to think outside of the squares this year. Whilst busily seeking out the endemics of Borneo he had corresponded with Steve Brew about what the lads would do in 2011. A guiding commitment saw Steve out in the Round Hill area in early October and he commented that if there was ever a year to start in the mallee, it was going to be this year. The Brewers had toyed with the idea of starting in the mallee in the past, but the (serious) tyranny of distance had dissuaded them from taking the plunge, almost solely due to the fact that they wouldn't be able to make it even close to a rainforest for a dawn chorus. By not being at a rainforest at this time, or moreover by not making it to quality rainforest at all, does you out of at least a dozen key species – potentially more if your "back-up" rainforest site doesn't produce.

Some quick maths were done and it appeared that they could still make it into good rainforest habitat...just a few hours later than normal. The quality and quantity of birds in the mallee, particularly at this time, was the clincher and soon all four of the Brew Crew were firing up for a mallee run.

But some serious oil was required.

Hence the lads departed Newcastle early on Thursday morning to fine tune the itinerary and build on the knowledge that Steve had garnered in his time out there. Larry Landcruiser, on his 7th and final Twitch, was abuzz as the boys neared Lake Cargelligo in the late afternoon. This buzz turned into pure pandemonium as a large figure appeared on the red dusty road as they headed north-west through the mallee country. Larry came to a sudden halt and sure enough a Malleefowl was there, completing what looked like a very relaxed road crossing. A new bird for three of the Brewers, it was the perfect start to a couple of days checking out the mallee action. With the adrenalin of the Malleefowl subsiding, they made a unanimous decision to head to the pub.

After a good night's rest and warming the concrete bar at the Royal Hotel in Mount Hope, it was time for the serious oil-drilling to commence. En route back to Cargelligo a stop was made to check out some Crimson Chats that were flushed off the Euabalong-Mt Hope roadside. This was a fortuitous thing, as this spot was alive with quality birds, including Gilbert's Whistler, Grey-fronted, Black and Pied Honeyeaters, but most impressively a pair of Little Woodswallows, which are a scarce bird in these parts. They looked quite settled on a dead tree, whilst dozens of their White-browed and Masked counterparts soared and chirped above them. Having spent

Twitchathon 2011 Reports cont.



Hunter Home Brewers supporting local business - Craig Anderson

the next few hours combing the Cargelligo area it was decided that the “Dummy Run” should start at this spot.

As always, the Dummy Run produces some great birds – birds that make Brewers sweat during the main event. The final 2 birds in their total of 110 for the Dummy Run were amongst the best, with a lone Wood Sand picked up by Mick Brew in the scope before scanning through and finding a “shoulder” of an Aussie Painted Snipe amongst the densely vegetated part of the open pond. The bird briefly showed its face as the other Brewers caught a peak, before it sidled away out view. Would it be there the next day?

Quite satisfied that 110 was a decent tally, the team adjourned... well, to the pub. Over the obligatory western NSW Chinese fare, the Brewers decided that if the Little Woods were still at their perch, that it was worth starting the main event at that spot again. This was indeed what transpired, but not without complication.



The Brewers, Mick, Lucas and Steve waiting for the clock - Craig Anderson

The Brewers got into position at 1530 having been charged by some contraband Red Bull that Mick Brew had smuggled in from Malaysia. The Little Woods contentedly, almost Bee-eater like, stood on their perch occasionally sallying up into the air and returning to the same point.



Little Woodswallows on the Euabalong-Mt Hope roadside - Mick Roderick

Every team has the standard “fly-by” bird in the lead-up minutes to the Twitchathon kick-off time and for the Brewers it was a flock of seven Budgies that scooted through at lightning speed at about 1545. But then at 1556 both of the Little Woods took to the air... “This couldn’t be happening!” the Brewers thought. Mick Brew trained his eyes onto one of the birds and watched it like a hawk. With under a minute to go he put Steve and Grena Brew got onto the bird as Ando Brew counted down from about 30 seconds out before announcing Twitch-time. Incredulous at how close it was that their star bird nearly escaped, they straightened their craned necks and after the standard 4 or 5 minutes at their starting point the lads set-off on the remainder of their 2011 campaign.

Straight to the Wheat Paddock where some of the ‘reason-for-coming-this-far’ mallee birds such as Shy Heathwren, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater and Southern Scrub-robin were added. Two, then three Gilbert’s Whistlers made an appearance but there was no sign of their rarer cousin. A long and time-consuming search was then made for the Chestnut Quail-thrush found easily the day before, but yielded little more than Splendid Fairy-wrens and a Red-capped Robin. One can imagine the excitement when a “long-tailed Quail-thrush-sized bird” then flushed up – alas a Bar-shouldered Dove – the QT was to be a dip.

Whooley Tank had been quiet in general over the past 48 hours, and it was no different on the Twitch. However, it did provide the target bird – Black Honeyeater – as well as a bonus in the form of a Red-backed Kingfisher nicely spotted by Ando Brew on a low perch. With 44 on the board they set off south along the mallee highway, hoping for a repeat of the Malleefowl pedestrian effort, but it wasn’t to be. Then in the distance they noticed a suspiciously familiar vehicle hurtling towards them with a cloud of red dust in its wake. The Brewers soon identified the car as the Dodgidrongomobile and each person in both vehicles leapt forth with arms, legs and other appendages combined with various expletive-ridden greetings at each other. Nothing like healthy competition.

Twitchathon Reports cont.

With that formality out of the way, the Brewers continued onto one of the “gun spots” they had found the day before. White-browed and Masked Woods had been in droves for the 2 days they’d been working the area and they were still there – hundreds of birds moving en-masse between flowering *Eremophila* trees. Spotted Bowerbird, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill and Little Friarbird were all handy additions, but there was no sign of the Crimson Chats or Singing Honeyeaters that had been regular in that area [sic], the latter of which was a particularly cruel miss.

It was then a case of mopping up roadside birds such as Emu, Cockatiel, Brown Songlark, Blue Bonnet and Little Raven before someone commented that we hadn’t had Apostlebirds. Literally 300m down the road a group of 3 Apostles were huddled under a lone, dwarf Wilga tree on a fenceline – a rather strange but very welcome sight.

Next stop – Chat Alley. Zebra Finches showed instantly, as did White-winged Fairy-wrens, but none of the location’s namesakes were obvious to the eye. Steve Brew then picked a male Orange Chat at a distance that then dropped off its salty perch, and it was a long, agonising wait while the other Brewers waited for it to return, which it eventually did.

With a well-oiled Painted Honeyeater and a jinking Spotted Harrier next to fall on their way to Cargelligo, an air of anticipation filled the car. Despite some of this air being a by-product of the night-before’s Chinese, things were looking reasonably positive, with some inevitable dips but generally good birds under their belt. A Black Kite was a welcome sight as they entered the city limits of Lake Cargelligo. After a quick peek down at the lakefront for not-much-really, it was on to the Promised Land – the Faeces Farm.

The scribes went into overdrive as a flurry of town, lake, swamp and wading birds fell like flies. Their 100th bird was Spotted Crake, seen feeding with Spotless and Baillon’s Crakes, the latter swimming like miniature moorhens. Mick Brew got into position for the wading birds and soon had the Wood Sands, along with Marshies and Sharpies and a few birds not seen on the Dummy Run; Greenshanks, Avocets and a patrolling Gull-billed Tern getting his what-for from some feisty Whiskered. Quite a bit (in hindsight apparently *too much*) time was spent scanning for missing birds like Freckled Duck, Shelduck and almost obsessively the Painted Snipe. Nothing new was added during their final 20 minutes at the ponds and so in Larry they set forth for the long night-drive.

After only picking up Barn Owls on the drive to Dubbo, some quality Farmboy oil saw them adding Barking Owl to their list in Dubbo itself – the final of 18 maiden birds for the Brewers in 2011. Alas the 3-hour rule loomed large as they crossed the big hill and into the Hunter Valley. The Brewers rested but barely slept at their night-roost at Cassilis Rest Area where Owlet Nightjars and Tawny Frogmouths were heard calling. Pallid Cuckoos also called frenetically, almost Koel-like for the entire time the Brewers rested, their bodies strewn out on the various picnic tables.

At 0445 it was a weary, but tentless packing of Larry before off they went to try and reach the rainforest in respectable time. It was a very foreign sensation for the Brewers to be driving during the dawn-chorus and a time when their list is normally ticking over at a bird a minute. A suggestion was made to make the detour to Medhurst Bridge and as they were missing a few woodland birds it was decided to head down the Martindale Valley. The Brewers must have only just missed the CCCC’s team who had been there for the dawn chorus. As it turned out, the decision to make this detour was a bad one, for two reasons. Firstly, they only added a single bird that wasn’t seen elsewhere yet dipped on some reasonably-expected-birds such as Diamond Firetail and White-backed Swallow. Moreover, it was the expense of time spent getting there and back that may have cost them dearly.

The long drive towards the south-facing rainforested gullies of the Barrington Tops from this point seemed to go on forever and eventually it became apparent that they would not have time to visit their key rainforest sites. Instead they had to make do with some rainforest remnants that have normally just been mopping sites in years gone by. Some great birds such as Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Topknot, Regent Bowerbird, Black-faced Monarch, Cicadabird and Pheasant Coucal (amongst 5 cuckoos calling in the area) were added to the list, but there was a host of birds they forewent by not venturing into the rainforest proper.

Notwithstanding, there were 187 birds on their list as they commenced the great meander back down the valley, visiting a number of “old haunts” on their way to the woodlands around Kurri Kurri. It would be bordering on blasphemy for a Twitch team working the Lower Hunter not to visit Green Wattle Creek Road and so in the Brewers went, but adding only Crested Shrike-tit in terms of quality birds. Banded Lapwings were found amongst the turf farms at Lorn, en-route to that other pet Twitch site, Walka Water Works where the usual suspects were found, including their 200th bird in Musk Duck.

After a time-burning stake-out for New Holland Honeyeaters, the boys ventured into the Kurri Woodlands. As expected, the place was going bananas, even in the heat of the day. Little Lorikeets flew over, Black-chinned Honeyeaters called on-cue and eventually a pair of Dusky Woodswallows were found, amongst the hordes of nest-prospecting White-broweds. Mick Brew had a Painted Button-quail calling at his feet but it was too low-pitched for the others to hear clearly and by the time they’d scurried over it stopped completely. More bad luck followed with the rear right tyre noticed hissing away around an old rusty railway nail. The Larry Pit Crew sprang into action and despite spending the next quarter-hour there, no new birds were heard whilst the repairs were made.

Onto Poor Man’s Kakadu and it didn’t fail to produce, with Jacanas found easily and a pair of Sea-Eagles perched on a dead tree – the only ones they were to see on the Twitch. A quick visit to Leneghan’s Drive provided Latham’s Snipe and Brown Goshawk before it was time to head into Newcastle for the high-risk (traffic vs rewards) seawatch and rock platform

Twitchathon Reports cont.

scope-session. It was a very lean year, with only a single bird added off the ocean (Wedge-tailed Shearwater) and three from the rock platforms (Crested and Common Terns and Ruddy Turnstone). Sooty Oystercatchers were particularly conspicuous by their absence (as many teams could attest to it seems).

Now perched on 225 species at 1430 and growing in confidence of at least breaking their own record, they set off for the crucial visit to the Stockton shorebird roosts. The Brewers had deliberately left this as their final region before heading to the finish line due to the very favourable tide times. And they timed it to perfection with a large flock of birds gathering on the shoreline. With the water line still a tad high though, they decided to go for the foreshore birds first and easily found Grey-tailed Tattler and Terek Sandpipers. A slow crawl alongside the mangroves for Whimbrels and Common Sands failed to produce either, but did provide one of the most fluke-filled ticks of 2011, as a voice came from the back seat "hang on, what's that?" While all other eyes were trained on the shoreline, a keen eye had picked up a pair of virtually motionless Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos gnawing away at the mid-branches of a mangrove tree! A quality mop indeed and bird #230.

Over to the Sandspit where the water had dropped just enough so that more birds were in attendance than had been as the Brewers crossed the bridge. The decision to leave the Sandspit as their final stop paid off, as it was a who's who of Hunter shorebirds set out in front of them, yet not another Twitch team was in sight. Whimbrel was the final bird picked up here, but they'd managed to see virtually all of the migratory shorebirds they could have reasonably expected, including one of the scarcer ones in Great Knot. In the process they'd also surpassed their previous best of 238 species, which now grew to 243 with the Wetlands Centre still to come and a guaranteed double awaiting there.

At the Wetlands Centre it was the usual final-Sunday-in-October-afternoon, with somewhat bedraggled binocular and list-toting folk gadding about. The Brewers added Maggie Goose and Wandering Whistling-Duck soon after arriving, and so had about ten minutes before the final whistle to locate a 'bonus bird'. Shoveler was the main thing they had in mind, but they happily took the Buff-banded Rail that was walking around the edge of a nearby swamp.

246 was their final tally and all four agreed it was a fine brewing effort on their first twitch-foray into the mallee. They had recorded 18 birds that they had not on any previous Twitch, bringing their total tally to 309 species (on their 3rd route). But, it wasn't enough to take the cake, with the Menacing Monarchs coming home with a new record of 250 from their Macquarie Marshes starting point. Still, to be so close on an ambitious, yet relatively untried run has the Brewers looking forward eagerly to next year.

Jacqueline Winter

Notes from a new Menacing Monarch

In order to maximize the number of birds, the Menacing Monarchs started out at Willie Retreat to enable us to see the birds from western NSW. After many years of drought the Macquarie Marshes have enjoyed a few good years. Many birds have had successful breeding seasons and can be found in large numbers this year.

We arrived at Willie Retreat a few days before the Twitchathon to have a scout around to work out where the birds were hiding. I had been there once before for a few days but Rob was much more familiar with the area and the birds. In a few days I managed to see more than 134 species of birds, eight of them new for me. Highlights for me were a Black Falcon, Crimson Chats and a Painted Honeyeater.

Saturday morning of the Twitchathon started hot and humid, followed by a great thunderstorm that dumped 18 mm of rain and left us wondering how the roads would be. But by 10 am the rain had cleared and the day was looking good. The rain may have even helped to stimulate a few birds to come out and start feeding.

We started the Twitchathon with a delicious country size hamburger for lunch from the general store in Carinda to give us plenty of fuel for the trip. The next meal would be a sausage roll from the service station in Tamworth at midnight.

Half an hour before the start of the race I stumbled across the only Diamond Dove that we had seen in 3 days. The poor bird probably thought its time was up as we stalked it for half an hour. At 4pm the buzzer went off, we ticked it and then promptly ignored it, letting it make good its escape. The next half hour revealed some good bush birds, about 20 species in total. We jumped back in the car and headed back to the spot where we had seen Crimson Chats a few times before. Luck was with us and we found them in about 5 seconds, and picked up Brown and Rufous Songlarks at the same time.

Heading south we stopped at a wetland. Here we were greeted by 50 or more Nankeen Night-Herons and a flock of at least 80 Black-tailed Native-hens. Lots of Plumed and a few Wandering Whistling-Ducks were also around. A few more kilometres down the road we saw some raptors spiralling up. A quick stop revealed a lot of Whistling Kites, but with them was a Black Falcon.

The left turn to Willie Retreat provided Painted Honeyeaters, still calling where we had seen them the day before. The reed beds at Monkeygar Creek are the big attraction for me at the marshes. On sunset they are just alive with birds, and are comparable to the wetlands of Kakadu for sheer bird numbers at the moment. Here we saw Spotless and Spotted Crakes and at least 6 Buff-banded Rails. There was no sign of the Brolga we had seen the day before nor the Banded Lapwings. The Ground Cuckoo-shrikes were still there as well as all the cormorants, egrets and both spoonbills. A Pheasant Coucal revealed itself once again in the tree it had roosted in for the last few evenings.

Twitchathon 2011 Reports cont.

East of Monkeygar Creek we stumbled across a great bonus bird, the Diamond Firetail, a stunning looking bird up close.

With darkness falling we headed east, stopping to listen for night birds. We picked up only the usual suspects, an Owlet-nightjar, Barn Owls and Tawny Frogmouths. The end of the first day had us on 133 species, a very good start.

The long drive to Tamworth revealed nothing of interest other than a service station sausage roll. Driving down Thunderbolt's Way we came around a corner at 2 am to find a motor home stopped and a torch being waved at us. They had run out of fuel about 30 km short of Barrington and there was no mobile service. We squeezed him into the car and dropped him at Barrington near the phone box. I am sure the local NRMA bloke was really pleased to get out of bed in the middle of the night to bring him fuel and bleed a diesel fuel system!

The next stop was at Copeland near Gloucester to try to call up a Sooty Owl without success before catching a few hours sleep. The alarm went off at 5 am so we could wake and listen to the dawn chorus of the rainforest birds. It took about a minute to regain consciousness after such a short sleep. Copeland revealed some great birds, with a White-throated Nightjar, Noisy Pitta, and Bassian and Russet-tailed Thrushes amongst the highlights. As we were leaving we heard the call of a Lewin's Rail. Pity there wasn't time to go and find it as it would have been a first for me.

By 7:30 we were back on the road heading to Old Bar to see some shorebirds. A Painted Button-quail wandered out across the road. A quick stop and it flushed again, revealing a better look.

At Old Bar we found Sanderling, Red-capped Plovers, Bar-tailed Godwits, Eastern Curlews, Whimbrel and a few terns. Seabirds were in remarkably short supply, as was the case later at Newcastle Baths. We then returned to Newcastle, stopping at Walka Waterworks, where we got Musk Duck but not the Blue Bill we had seen earlier in the week. It was raining now, and I found out how hard it is to see with wet glasses and wet binoculars, but at least we missed the hail that hit other parts of the Hunter.

Ash Island revealed White-fronted Chats, and some Chestnut Teal that we had missed at the marshes. Stockton Sandspit was good for Grey-tailed Tattler, Terek Sandpipers and Black-tailed Godwits. Newcastle Baths revealed only a lone Ruddy Turnstone and no seabirds or Caspian Terns. A diversion down to Awabakal Reserve added New Holland Honeyeaters. We were on 249 birds with only half an hour to go. Last desperate effort was to go to Blackbutt Reserve in the pouring rain, where we found a Brush Turkey, not the most glamorous bird to finish on!

We then headed back to the designated finish point at the Hunter Wetlands Centre. The Menacing Monarchs were the winners with a record 250 species and we raised \$1000. Thanks to my wife Toni for chasing up lots of sponsors for me. It was a great opportunity for a relatively inexperienced birder like myself to learn a heap and have a lot of fun. It was also a great way to see a few birds Toni hasn't seen yet!

Peter Struik

Dodgy Drongos Twitchathon

We Drongos are a stubborn lot. Over the years we've tended to stick to the same old route, with the same old time restrictions and even the same old petrol station stops. But 2011 saw a new era in Drongo thinking. After a bombed oiling trip on the Liverpool Plains, the captain and co-pilot jokingly played with the idea of starting further west. Of course this joke quickly turned into reality (after a quick session on Google maps) and after consulting with our team mates it was quickly decided to start in the bird rich mallee and sewage works of Lake Cargelligo (LC).

Twitching isn't easy. We mere mortals require many hours of oiling before the race to ease our worries and maximise our chances of competing with the big boys. I must say that each year I step back and see this massive hurdle of 230 in front of us. We start sweating on the most common of species and praying to the birding gods for a few rarities to turn up. Luckily, with only a few days before the race we could see the common stuff and even had a few toughies tucked under our belts. Previous oiling trips had resulted in some staggering birds, including Spotless Crake, Red-backed Kingfisher, Painted Honeyeater, Spotted Bowerbird, Little Bittern, Wood Sandpiper, Black-eared Cuckoo, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Noisy Pitta and Orange Chat.

Whilst we rested on the shores of Lake Cargelligo, a slight glimpse of confidence entered my thoughts. With two hours until kick off we headed off to do our last bits of oiling. Firstly to our roadside spot where all the regulars were waiting for us, including masses of Brown Quail that seemed to be everywhere. We then headed to the sewage works in search of something special to start our race on. We walked right round the ponds and found some goodies but it was the one Freckled Duck in amongst the hundreds of waterfowl that won out. We set the scope up so we wouldn't lose her and after 45min of watching that damn bird paddle happily around the pond she was ticked as our first species. The list shot up quickly with Glossy Ibis, Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterel, Pink-eared Duck, Black-tailed Native-hen and Little Grassbird all being seen within seconds of each other. Baillon's and Spotted Crake were great additions and bagging three 'inland' species of wader, Wood, Sharpie and Marsh Sandpiper, was a highlight. We left the works after 20min with roughly 30-40 species on the list, but dipping on Shoveler, Shelduck, Cockatiel and Buff-banded Rail was a real blow.

Our road-side spot resulted in few ticks with the Spotless Crake and Brown Quail nowhere to be seen! Luckily Maxie spotted some Whiskered Tern on the other side of the levy bank which we thought we'd dipped on. Heading back towards town a Red-backed Kingfisher was spotted on the wires with an Apostlebird feeding below. Blackbird, Feral Pigeon and Sparrow were the highlights as we drove through suburban LC.

Twitchathon 2011 Reports cont.

Mallee Ringneck, Blue Bonnet and Brown Songlark had us stop/starting on the highway north but to our disappointment we dipped on Spotted Harrier and Yellow-billed Spoonie. At chat alley we had Orange Chat, White-winged Fairy-wren and Zebra Finch. Emu were spotted in the paddocks and Black-shouldered Kites were everywhere. As we entered the first patches of woodland woodswallows could be heard calling from high above, and when I say high I mean HIGH! We could only make out White-brows but there would have certainly been Masks in amongst them. Little Friarbird and Striped Honeyeater were vocal.

We pulled up at the famous Wheat Field a little behind schedule but not before ticking Gilbert's Whistler roadside. The mallee was dead. Every previous reccy had resulted in numerous species calling but of course it didn't happen on race day. We paced and strained to hear anything and eventually we added Inland and Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Splendid Fairy-wren, White-winged Triller and White-fronted Honeyeater. We then continued further down the road a little but this only resulted in Red-capped Robin and Crested Bellbird. It was time to move on and to say the Drongos were a little shattered would have been an understatement.

We left the Wheat Field and headed towards Whoey Tank. A shout from the co-pilot had Bel the Subaru screaming to a halt in time to watch a male Chestnut Quail-thrush walk slowly off the road. A cracking bird that saw our spirits rise a little and Robbie Drongo's life list creep ever higher. As we drove into Whoey, a pair of Shy Heathwren shot across the track but were missed by the two youngins in the back, our first proper miss for the race. Black, Spiny-cheeked and Singing Honeyeater and Southern Whiteface were the only notable species so we decided to spice things up a little by heading back to the Wheat Field. What a move! The male Quail-thrush was still on the road where we left him, allowing all of us fantastic views, and as we walked through the mallee Robbie Drongo found a Southern Scrub-robin quietly sitting nearby. Yellow-plumed Honeyeater were feeding in the taller Eucalypts but we still couldn't hear any Western Gerygones. It was then decided that we should use the last remaining light driving back to LC in the hope of seeing Cockatiel and Spotted Harrier. As we hooned along, the co-pilot let out an almighty 'FOWL! FOWL! FOWL!' and there on the side of the road was a magnificent Malleefowl, a tick for three of us. Robbie Drongo went diving into the boot to retrieve the co-pilot's camera and several shots were taken before the bird calmly walked back into the mallee. We were so excited that eventually dipping on the Harrier and Cockatiel didn't really matter and we sped off into the night with 109 species under our belts.

The night drive was long and tedious. The only night birds spotted were Barn Owls and these were few and far between. It wasn't until we got to our rest stop some 6 hours later that we finally added our second and last night bird to the list, an Australian Owlet-nightjar. Pallid Cuckoo called all through the night but in my groggy state I failed to notify the team when the Channel-bills started a rave in the wee small hours, a costly mistake.

We awoke to a pathetic dawn chorus in Goulburn River NP but the birds started trickling in slowly. Oriole and Grey Fantail were heard and a female Hooded Robin flew in for a closer look. As we headed south towards the river we started picking up some desired species like Superb Lyrebird, Glossy Black-Cockatoo, Dusky Woodswallow, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Double-barred Finch, Speckled Warbler, White-browed Babbler, Painted Button-quail and a whole swag of Honeyeaters (White-naped, Yellow-tufted, White-eared etc). We dipped on Plum-headed Finch, Black-eared Cuckoo, Diamond Firetail and Turquoise Parrot which were all seen two weeks before. Luckily however the Black-chinned Honeyeaters hadn't moved and we quickly ticked them up.

We left Goulburn River NP with a good total but now had a long stretch of almost birdless driving ahead of us. Horsfield's Bushlark and Stubble Quail were calling along Ringwood Road, and we saw our first White-necked Heron nearby. It wasn't until after Jerrys Plains that we saw our first and only Wedge-tailed Eagles for the race.

A quick discussion about high tide times saw us changing our route and heading straight for the coast, which as it turned out was our biggest mistake of the race. Bypassing all our planned stops we headed for Stockton Sandspit only to find it very waderless. Red-necked Stint, Red-capped Plover, Eastern Curlew, Little Egret and Pied Oystercatcher were all in the lagoon. Brown Honeyeater and Mangrove Gerygone called from the mangroves whilst Tattlers and Whimbrel were ticked in Fern Bay, but besides that we scored little else. Not even the sight of a partially coloured Pacific Golden Plover could brighten our spirits and with very dark storm clouds rolling in we held little hope of scoring big this year.

The storm hit us as we travelled down the freeway towards the Toronto exit. The rain was howling in from all directions and the decision was made to pull over and ride it out. After 10min we pushed on, crawling through the traffic until we eventually reached our rainforest spot at Brunkerville where the rain finally stopped and we starting ticking the limited rainforest species on offer. Brown Gerygone, Lewin's Honeyeater and Black-faced Monarch were calling loudly and a Rufous Fantail spotted but the Pitta, Catbird and Bassian Thrush of the week before failed to show. Maxie Drongo not wanting to get his shoes wet in the rapidly rising creek decided on the barefooted birder approach which failed miserably and resulted in his team mates plucking the leeches from between his toes! We're a more bonded team now.....

We pushed on towards Maitland getting a Yellow-billed Spoonbill along the way and hearing a Koel as we drove through Kurri. Walka Water Works was dead and we only added Great-crested Grebe and Red Wattlebird there. Goldfinch and Banded Lapwing were major dips on the floodplains but finally bagging Fuscous Honeyeater, Little Lorikeet and Shining Bronze-cuckoo at Green Wattle Creek slightly made up for that. Seaham produced Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Nankeen Night-Heron, Tawny Grassbird and Chestnut Teal, but the Channel-billed Cuckoo was only seen by two in the group. Our last ticks before hitting the Wetlands Centre

Twitchathon 2011 Reports cont.

were Mallard and Little Wattlebird at Raymond Terrace and a single Grey-crowned Babbler feeding in someone's front yard just north of town.

Rolling into the Wetlands with 30min still on the clock we ticked the obligatory Goose and Whistling-duck and finally managed to put White-browed Scrubie on the list!!! We then made our way back to the centre where we settled in to go over the list. Sadly Robbie had not under counted and our end total was a very pitiful 215 species. We were shattered and it was quite a relief to hear we had snuck into third place.

Well done to all teams involved especially the Brewers who started the race near us and to the Dry-throated Buzzards for their Herculean effort. The Drongos thank all those who sponsored us. We managed to raise over \$600 which we're pretty chuffed about. Also a huge thanks to Huxtable Drongo for supplying the camping gear and to Lloyd Drongo for supplying his son.

Until next year,
Head Drongo

Sharp-tailed Sandpipers on Ash Island

On Saturday 12 November 2011 shorebird surveyors counted about 1,600 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers out on the main pond systems in "Area E" on Ash Island. About 95% of them were feeding/roosting in Swan Pond (the wetland closest to the railway line), with some others in Wader Pond. At one point a White-bellied Sea-Eagle came through and put the entire flock up, and it was an awesome sight to see 1,600 sharpies wheeling around in a single flock.

The East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF) population of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers is 160,000 birds, which means that 1% of the population was present in just a few hectares of the Ash Island ponds. On that basis, Ash Island would qualify as a site of international importance for Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

In the Bamford *et al.* (2006) review of migratory shorebirds in the EAAF, the Hunter Estuary was not identified as a site of international importance for Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and so the big count of them on Ash Island on 12 November 2011 is a very significant record. In some previous years we have had 1,000+ birds in the Hunter Estuary (mainly on Ash Island) so we have always known that it is an important local site for them. Now we can recognise it as being of international importance. Which really highlights just how essential it is that the Ash Island shorebird habitats be maintained.

Alan Stuart

Hunterbirding

Two more **Twitchathon reports** will be published in the February 2012 Newsletter. Most Twitchathon reports were circulated on Hunterbirding - if you would like to join the group, read on.

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?!

Dan Williams

Common Koel Behaviour - as reported on Hunterbirding in November 2011

I recently had an interesting observation of Koels in my backyard. My neighbour has a Jacaranda which has a canopy that overhangs my fence, it's a common tree for Koels to land in. I heard a male and female calling from the tree; upon investigation another male flew in and then a female. The two pairs perched opposite each other carrying on like they were on red bull! The males were pointing their heads skywards calling while opposing each other and the females were facing each other calling while lifting their wings in unison with their calls. A short time later two more males flew in and then a third, the last going through a moult. In total I had 7 Koels in the tree wooing and keeing. Eventually it died down and the second pair flew off as did the 3 males. The original pair then flew off with the male chasing the female around the neighbourhood for a short time until they went out of sight.

I find Koels amazing birds, calling during the day and night. We have a male and sometimes female roosting in our Liquidamber in the front yard, who call at around 3am about every second night. They also always call when a siren goes past. Koels seem to regularly call to each other across the neighbourhood from quite large distances.

There's never a dull moment when the Koels are in town!

Steve Roderick

Banded Birds

Banded Wandering Albatross

On the pelagic birdwatching trip organised by Steve Roderick on 22 October 2011, I photographed a Wandering Albatross about 50km south east of Port Stephens. It was a banded bird and, serendipitously, the number on the band, J26, was readable in the photo.



The photo was forwarded to the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme in Canberra. They passed it on to the groups that band Albatrosses.



The French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (= our CSIRO) had banded this bird at the Crozet Islands in the southern Indian Ocean in 1975. The bird, a female, was then at least six years old, i.e. had fully adult plumage. This now makes the bird, J26, at least 42 years old.

The Wandering Albatross with its three metre wingspan is a magnificent animal at any time. To have survived the fishing hooks and other hazards of the Southern Ocean for at least 42 years is something to marvel at. It more than makes up for the sea-sickness, discomfort and plain boredom sometimes experienced on pelagics.

Jim Smart

Banded Bar-tailed Godwit

Among the many flagged shorebirds recorded in the Hunter Estuary this season is a Bar-tailed Godwit with an orange flag on the upper left leg with a small notch in the top edge of the flag. This season, the bird was first recorded on 29 September 2011 and has been observed on numerous occasions since that time, and as recently as 8 December 2011. Unlike many of the flagged birds that have passed through the estuary for destinations further south such as Victoria or New Zealand, this bird appears to be staying for the summer.



On 27 November 2011, Darryl Luck took a beautiful photograph of this bird (see above), which clearly showed the last four numbers on the band. The photo was sent to Clive Minton of the Australasian Wader Studies Group for identification. Clive replied:

"It was marvellous to see such a clear photograph of the numbers on the metal band of the orange-flagged Godwit. Fortunately there is only one combination on a Bar-tailed Godwit which would fit the figures which were photographed. This is 072-29361. This was banded on the 18th January 1996 in Corner Inlet as an Adult (2+) bird. So it's a pretty old individual - at least 17 1/2 years old. The leg flag is probably getting a bit brittle by now and somehow it has got chipped."

It is wonderful to be able to get individual information about this bird without having to catch it – thanks to digital photography and keen photographers!

Liz Crawford

New Members

The Club extends a warm welcome to: Barry and Vicki Embleton of Garden Suburb; Wendy James of Carrington; and Katherine Ross and Trevor Dunn of Speers Point. We hope to meet you at Club outings and meetings

Featured Birdwatching Site: Awabakal Nature Reserve

Awabakal Nature Reserve is fantastic. If you are short on time, you can spend as little as half an hour there or you can happily fill in half a day. Awabakal extends from Dudley in the north to Redhead in the south, with Redhead Road as its western boundary and the coastal cliffs to the east. The vegetation is really quite varied, and as a result it supports a wide range of flora and fauna.

If you only have a short time available, drive to the end of Ocean Street, Dudley, then follow the relatively small road leading off to the left for about 200 metres until it dead ends in the car park for the reserve. From here you head south into the reserve following a wide track through some tall trees, mainly gums, casuarina, where Red Wattlebird, Little Wattlebird, Pied Butcherbird, Grey Butcherbird, Olive-backed Oriole and maybe a Common Koel are likely to be heard. A little further the vegetation opens out into lower scrub, where pure white sand was quarried. This area always seems to be alive with birds such as Eastern Spinebill, Brown Thornbill, New Holland Honeyeater and White-cheeked Honeyeater, Eastern Yellow Robin and White-browed Scrubwren.



Common Koel and Olive-backed Oriole - photos Chris Herbert



Next you pass through heath and low scrub on your way out to the Bluff. No matter what the season, something is flowering. Of course spring is best, which is why there is normally an organised wildflower walk in September, but you will find flowers any time of the year. Recently, black-eyed Susan, flannel flowers and various yellow flowers, including egg-and-bacon, Hibbertia and Isopogon, were still flowering. The month before the bush was awash with pinks (Eriostemum), blues

(gorgeous but the name is not in my repertoire), whites (wedding bush and Pimelia) and the spiky Lambertia, as well as masses of yellow flowers.

Even if you are not into flowers, this is a great place to visit. It is a common site for New Holland Honeyeater, White-cheeked Honeyeater, Little Wattlebird, Eastern Spinebill and Welcome Swallow.



Eastern Spinebill - photo Chris Herbert

At this time of year, scores of White-throated Needle-tails are racing overhead. Then there are the surprises. On a wander earlier this month, we spotted a Tawny-crowned Honeyeater sitting on top of a Xantherea at the Bluff. On another visit, Tim said what's that? There obligingly in the middle of the track was a male Brush Bronzewing, unperturbed and gleaming in the sunlight – what a magnificent sight. Then there is the view from the Bluff, which on a clear day can stretch as far as Stockton Bight to the north and down past Moon Island to the south. Amazingly it only takes about 10-15 minutes from the car park to the Bluff.

But if you have time to spare, you can spend half a day or more in Awabakal Nature Reserve. You can walk to Redhead. The track is fairly overgrown but you might see Southern Emu-wren. An easier track takes you down to the lagoon if you turn left at the picnic table on the way back from the Bluff. At the bottom the track goes both left and right around the lagoon. To the right, we recently found immature Nankeen Night-Heron, Buff-banded Rail and a young Tawny Frogmouth, and occasionally you might flush Latham's Snipe. Further around this track, near Ivy Street, a Landcare Group has started working in Awabakal (phone Landcare on 49210392 if you would like to help). To the left, the track runs past the lagoon and then on through taller trees up the hill to the back of the ovals. The lagoon is home to a wide range of waterbirds (White-faced Heron, White-necked Heron, Darter, Cormorant, Ducks, Grebe, etc) as well as a variety of raptors. Also in this area you can catch sight of Sacred Kingfisher, Black-faced Monarch, Rufous Fantail, Golden Whistler and Rufous Whistler. Visit Awabakal and enjoy the bird-watching!

Jenny Powers

Advertisements



Nankeen Kestrel



Eastern Rosellas



Turquoise Parrot

FIONA LUMSDEN

BLUE MOUNTAINS WILDLIFE ARTIST

Specialising in Australian Bird Portraits, Regional Bird Posters & other Flora and Fauna Subjects

- Original Works in Various Mediums
- Limited Edition Archival Prints
- Budget Priced A4 Prints
- Blue Mts & Capertee Valley Regional Bird Posters

View some of Fiona's works at her website:

www.fionalumdsen.com

email: lumfio@yahoo.com

Ph & Fax: (02) 4782-6577

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 | ✔ Non-smoking | ✔ Sleeps 6-10 |
| ✔ Great birding | ✔ Open Fireplace | ✔ Stereo |
| ✔ High Chair | ✔ Outdoor fire pit | ✔ TV Reception |
| ✔ Iron | ✔ Pets allowed | ✔ Video Player |
| ✔ Large fenced yard | ✔ Refrigerator | ✔ WMachine/Dryer |

For more information and photos visit
<http://www.stayz.com.au/80698>

**For booking details with discount contact
Kate Brown direct on 0448 213 712**

FOR SALE - SPOTTING SCOPE

LEICA TELEVID 62
with cover and tripod
Excellent condition

\$2,000 ono

Contact Pam Durie 4950 4897
or 0427 504 897 or email
pamdur@gotalk.net.au

FOR SALE - CAMERA LENS

SIGMA 50 - 500mm , F4 - 6.3 Auto
Focus zoom lens to suit Canon DSLR
camera, ultra sonic motor, also
comes with UV filter. Very little use,
excellent condition.

You can have it for Xmas.

\$900

Contact Graeme O'Connor 49531304
or email gboc@bigpond.com

Ash Island Bridge Update

The bridge over Dead Mangrove Creek on Ramsar Road on
Ash Island is once again trafficable - as from 17 November
2011, access to the ponds on Ash Island has been restored!

Events

February 2012 Guest Speaker

After the AGM at the February 2012 Club Night, guest speaker, Harry Battam, will be talking about “**Petrel Flight Morphometrics - adaptations for a pelagic existence**”. Harry, from the Institute for Conservation and Environmental Management, University of Wollongong, has provided the following information about his talk:

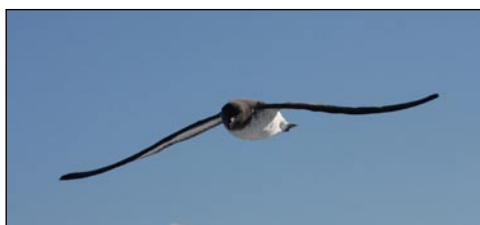
Morphometrics are measurements associated with shape and form. In this study, some wing and flight muscle characteristics of petrels and their differences to other birds are explored, demonstrating some of the adaptations of petrels to a pelagic marine life.

This study was a component of my PhD work, and details are currently unavailable outside of my thesis. I have always been intrigued as to why the pelagic ocean, spanning over two-thirds of the Earth's surface, is populated by just one small order (about 120 species) of birds. As life is all about extracting sufficient energy from nature to successfully support your lifestyle, this is where the answer lies. My research has targeted the poorly studied topic of albatross energetics and petrel morphology, delving into albatross physiology and how it is reflected in their ecology.

I was introduced to albatrosses and seabirds by Bill Lane in 1958. I've spent many hours at sea and on a lot of islands banding many birds, in the company of Bill and other now extinct banders, and some still alive such as Lindsay Smith and Pete Milburn.

I do also have an interest in honeyeaters and Silvereyes, which I will be continuing for some years.

Harry has the ability to explain this complex topic in simple terms. This promises to be an informative and entertaining talk.



Cape Petrels in flight - photos Jim Smart

Eisenmann Medal – Clive Minton

Clive Minton, the driving force behind the banding and tracking of shorebirds in Victoria, has been awarded the 2012 Eisenmann Medal by the Linnean Society of New York. The Eisenmann Medal is given to people who have achieved in Ornithology as evidenced by publications, but who, in addition, have helped and worked with amateurs or students to interest them in Ornithology. Gene Eisenmann was by profession a lawyer, but retired early to work on birds – he really had two careers, one in the law and one in ornithology, both very successful. Clive Minton is the first Eisenmann medalist whose career parallels Gene Eisenmann's closely! Clive would like to pass on the following thoughts regarding his nomination:

I'm particularly pleased that this award relates to the activities of volunteers/amateurs and especially in organising and involving them in ornithological fieldwork. This is the way I have operated throughout my life and it's only through the enormous effort and dedicated support of huge numbers of people that I've been able to achieve so much over the years.

The Victorian Wader Studies Group and the Australasian Wader Studies Group (especially the north-west Australia expeditions) are two long-standing tangible examples. I think they have consistently been the largest wader banding operations in the world over many years. This award is therefore very much to all who have been involved with me in fieldwork during the last 33 years in Australia, before that for 25 years in the UK, and during the whole period at various other locations around the world.



Bar-tailed Godwits in the Hunter Estuary banded in Victoria under Clive Minton's leadership - photos Chris Herbert

Birds Australia News

Galahs

“The Rose-breasted Cockatoo ... frequently passes in flocks over the plains with a long sweeping flight, at one minute displaying their beautiful silvery grey backs, at the next by a simultaneous change of position bringing their rich rosy breasts into view, the effect of which is so beautiful that it is a source of regret to me that my readers cannot participate in the pleasure I have derived from the sight...” — John Gould

The humble Galah is so common, widespread and familiar in the heavily populated areas of coastal and sub-coastal Australia that it is difficult to believe that the species was once a denizen only of the arid and semi-arid inland. Galahs were formerly confined to the open shrublands and plains that occur beyond the inland slopes of the Great Divide in eastern Australia, north of the Flinders Ranges in South Australia, and north of the Mulga–Eucalypt Line in Western Australia. South Australia was the first area to witness an expansion of the range of the Galah. In the 1920s, following the conversion of woodlands to agricultural land, Galahs began to flood from the arid north-east onto the plains in the south of the state, taking advantage of the new, abundant supply of food. Twenty years later, a similar story unfolded in Western Australia, where Galahs moved from their inland homes to colonise the area that would become known as the Wheatbelt.



Similarly, in eastern Australia, Galahs were on the move in the 1950s, heading from the inland plains towards sub-coastal and coastal areas. They apparently liked what they saw, and they stayed, though in Melbourne and Sydney, they did not become common until the 1970s. These days, Galahs have become a familiar sight in most of our coastal cities, from Perth east to Sydney, and from Melbourne and Adelaide north to Brisbane. They're increasing around Hobart, too.

And now other inland species — Little Corellas and Crested Pigeons — are expanding their ranges in the same way. What next? Keep submitting your Atlas records so we can track these changes.

From Birds Australia Atlas News August 2011

Birds Australia Conservation News

Caring for our Country (Part 1)

In a ringing endorsement of the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of our conservation program, Birds Australia was successful in all three of our major funding bids in the latest round of Federal Government's 'Caring for our Country' grants. This means that some of our most effective projects — Woodland Birds for Biodiversity, Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery and Shorebirds 2020 — will receive much-needed funding for at least another year.

This decision affirms our standing as a peak conservation body highly regarded by the environment and conservation sector. Thank you to everyone involved in managing and supporting these projects, especially our staff who work so hard at the coalface of bird conservation, and the many volunteers, without whom the projects could not succeed. These successes are testimony to the great work you do, which reflects so well on our organisation.

Caring for our Country (Part 2)

The Cowra Woodland Birds group has also been successful in getting funding from the Caring for our Country – Community Action Grants 2011–2012.

With the title of “Restoring woodland and riparian refuges and their linkages for threatened birds”, the project aims to rehabilitate a large paddock adjoining Morongla Creek to improve connectivity between the creek and the nearby woodlands to enable birds and other animals to move more easily between habitats. This will increase the likelihood that the decline in bird diversity and abundance can be reversed.

Improving the condition and resilience of the riparian zone and the extent of the woodland will increase the habitat for the 20 endangered woodland species (including the Regent Honeyeater, recently observed in the area), and another 22 declining species.

The outcome will be measured through quarterly bird surveys. We have already established a bird survey site in the riparian zone and look forward to seeing the changes over time.

There will be lots of work for keen planters, as there is one kilometre of the Morongla Creek to plant out with tubestock!

Club Night Observations October - November 2011

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 Bittern	1	30/06/11	Stoney Creek	P. Durie
Australasian Bittern	1	23/10/11	Hands Lagoon	H. & J. Tarrant
Australasian Bittern	1	26/10/11	Rutherford [overhead]	H. Tarrant
Australasian Bittern	1	15/11/11	H.W.C. [Ironbark Ck]	P. Davidson
Australasian Darter	1	27/09/11	Ellalong Lagoon	R. Greig
Australasian Darter	8	12/10/11	Walka Water Works	J. Smart et al
Australasian Darter	1	16/10/11	Kilaben Bay	R. Walker
Australasian Darter	1	16/10/11	Wangi Point	R. Walker
Australasian Figbird	3	13/11/11	Muswellbrook	G. Newling
Australasian Figbird	6	12/11/11	Singleton	G. Newling
Australasian Grebe	11 br	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Australian Owlet-nightjar	1	8/10/11	Buttaba	L. Crawford
Australian Painted Snipe	1	2/11/11	Ash Island [Milham Pond]	N. McNaughton
Australian White Ibis	~300 br	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Australian White Ibis	>300 br	20/11/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Australian Wood Duck	2+7dy	3/10/11	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Australian Wood Duck	23 ducklings	12/11/11	Wingen	G. Newling
Baillon's Crake	1	12/10/11	Walka Water Works	J. Smart et al
Banded Lapwing	3-4 prs	early Nov	Kooragang Island	W. Mayers
Black-faced Monarch	1	18/09/11	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke
Black-faced Monarch	1	6/11/11	Floraville Ridge	K. & R. Howie
Black-fronted Dotterel	2	12/10/11	Glenrock Lagoon	T. Clarke
Black-fronted Dotterel	2	12/10/11	Walka Water Works	J. Smart et al
Black-winged Stilt	2	27/09/11	Ellalong Lagoon	R. Greig
Black-winged Stilt	2	23/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Blue-billed Duck	1f	12/10/11	Walka Water Works	J. Smart et al
Brahminy Kite	1	6/09/11	Lemon Tree Passage	T. Clarke
Brown Goshawk	2	7/09/11	Flaggy Creek	T. Clarke
Brown Goshawk	1	9/11/11	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke
Brown Honeyeater	4	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Brown Quail	2	3/10/11	Stockton Sandspit	T. Clarke
Brown Quail	1	6/10/11	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke
Buff-banded Rail	1	10/10/11	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Buff-banded Rail	2	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Buff-banded Rail	dy	17/11/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Bush Stone-curlew	1	11/08/11	Tilligherry Creek	L. Wooding
Bush Stone-curlew	1	Sep/Oct	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Cattle Egret	10	27/09/11	Ellalong Lagoon	R. Greig
Cattle Egret	~120	Oct	Bolwarra Lagoon	H. Tarrant
Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	6/09/11	Mayfield East	T. Clarke
Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	1/10/11	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin	12	28/08/11	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke
Crested Pigeon	n 2dy	28/09/11	New Lambton Heights	P. Lightfoot
Crested Tern	6	16/10/11	Kilaben Bay	R. Walker
Dollarbird	1	5/10/11	Soldiers Point	T. Clarke
Dollarbird	1	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Eastern Barn Owl	1	26/08/11	Newcastle West	T. Clarke
Eastern Barn Owl	1	6/09/11	Newcastle West	T. Clarke
Eastern Grass Owl	1	4/11/11	Tomago Wetlands	N. McNaughton
Eastern Great Egret	3	27/09/11	Ellalong Lagoon	R. Greig
Eastern Osprey	1	12/09/11	Lemon Tree Passage	T. Clarke
Emerald Dove	1	23/10/11	H.W.C. [Rainforest]	P. Lightfoot
Emerald Dove	1m	14/11/11	H.W.C.	P. Davidson
Godwit [spp] albino	1	8/11/11	Oyster Cove	L. Wooding
Great Crested Grebe	10	12/10/11	Walka Water Works	J. Smart et al
Grey Butcherbird	1 fdy	21/09/11	New Lambton Heights	P. Lightfoot
Grey Teal	~300	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Grey Teal	70	20/11/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot

Club Night Observations October - November 2011 cont.

Hardhead	8	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Hardhead	17	20/11/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Intermediate Egret	4	27/09/11	Ellalong Lagoon	R. Greig
Latham's Snipe	6	16/10/11	Hands Lagoon	H. Tarrant
Latham's Snipe	5	23/10/11	Hands Lagoon	H. Tarrant
Latham's Snipe	6	6/11/11	Ash Is. [Melaleuca Swale]	N. McNaughton
Latham's Snipe	2	15/11/11	H.W.C. [Water Ribbon]	K. Conway
Little Corella	80	29/09/11	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Little Corella	~40	10/10/11	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Little Egret	3	27/09/11	Ellalong Lagoon	R. Greig
Magpie Goose	5+15dy	23/10/11	H.W.C. [Ironbark Marsh]	P. Lightfoot
Magpie Goose	18+6dy	6/11/11	Ash Island [Rainforest]	N. McNaughton
Magpie Goose	many dy	17/11/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Musk Duck	1	12/10/11	Walka Water Works	J. Smart et al
Nankeen Kestrel	1	3/09/11	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke
Nankeen Night-Heron	12+imm	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Nankeen Night-Heron	19	23/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Nankeen Night-Heron	14+many imm	20/11/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Northern Mallard	5	3-12/10/11	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Olive-backed Oriole	1	resident	Warners Bay	R. Walker
Pacific Baza	2	Aug.	Kotara	B. Fraser
Pacific Black Duck	43	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Pacific Black Duck	19+dy	20/11/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Pied Currawong	2+2dy	12/11/11	Wingen	G. Newling
Pied Oystercatcher	2	16/10/11	Kilaben Bay	R. Walker
Pied Oystercatcher	1	16/10/11	Wangi Point	R. Walker
Powerful Owl	1	24/08/11	Taylor's Beach	T. Clarke
Powerful Owl	1	28/09/11	Eraring	C. Eckersley
Purple Swamphen	dy	17/11/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Red Knot	~1,000	9/10/11	Ash Island [Milham Pond]	N. McNaughton
Red-backed Fairy-wren	1	3/11/11	Bucca Wauka [32 06 2.63/152 09 42.79]	L. Wooding
Red-browed Finch	1	16/09/11	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke
Red-kneed Dotterel	12	1/11/11	Ash Island [Milham Pond]	N. McNaughton
Red-rumped Parrot	4	27/09/11	Ellalong Lagoon	R. Greig
Red-rumped Parrot	2+2dy	12/11/11	Singleton	G. Newling
Regent Bowerbird	4	12/10/11	Flaggy Creek	T. Clarke
Royal Spoonbill	8	20/11/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Rufous Fantail	1	12/10/11	Flaggy Creek	T. Clarke
Rufous Fantail	1	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Sacred Kingfisher	1	30/10/11	Toronto [Ron Hill Oval]	P. Durie
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1,600	12/11/11	Ash Island	A. Stuart
Spangled Drongo	1	1/10/11	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke
Spangled Drongo	1	9/11/11	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke
Square-tailed Kite	1	12/11/11	North Rothbury	G. Newling
Striated Heron	1	10/10/11	Throsby Creek	T. Clarke
Striated Heron	2	2/11/11	Ash Island [Milham Pond]	N. McNaughton
Striated Heron	1	9/11/11	Toronto Baths	P. Durie
Superb Fairy-wren	1	9/10/11	Mt Tomaree	B. Fraser
Superb Fairy-wren	32	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Swift Parrot	2	15/09/11	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Tawny Frogmouth	Nest+2dy	24/10/11	Whitebridge	J. Powers
Tawny Frogmouth	3	27/10/11	Floraville Quarry	K. & R. Howie
Tawny Grassbird	2	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Wandering Whistling-Duck	69	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Wandering Whistling-Duck	14	20/11/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Whistling Kite	1	1/10/11	Maryville / Wickham	T. Clarke
Whistling Kite	4	20/11/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
White-naped Honeyeater	5-10	8/10/11	Morisset	L. Crawford
White-necked Heron	2	13/11/11	Parkville	G. Newling
Wompoo Fruit-Dove	1	1&8/10/11	Cardiff	G. Cooksey
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	3	11/09/11	Whitebridge	E. McKane
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	5	11/09/11	Belmont South	J. Cockerell
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	5	21/10/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	2	31/10/11	Toronto [Ron Hill Oval]	P. Durie

HBOC Activities December 2011 to March 2012

DATE	EVENT	MEETING PLACE & TIME	CONTACT
DECEMBER 2011			
Sunday 18 December	Latham's Snipe survey at Ash Island and other locations	8.00am Ash Island carpark just over the bridge	Liz Crawford 4959 3663
Tuesday 20 December	Tomago Wetland Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
JANUARY 2012			
Tuesday 17 January	Tomago Wetland Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Saturday 21 January	Hunter Wader Survey	7.00 am Ash Island 7.30 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 Mick Roderick 0421761237 – Deep Pond
Sunday 22 January	Field Outing – Ash Island / Stockton Sandspit	8.00am Ash Island carpark just over the bridge	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Saturday 28 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
FEBRUARY 2012			
Wednesday 1 February	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	Paul Baird 4938 5039 All members welcome
Tuesday 7 February	Mid-week Outing - Tilligerry Habitat/Lemon Tree Passage	7.30am Tilligerry Habitat, King Albert Ave, Tanilba Bay	Pam Hill 4984 5270
Wednesday 8 February	AGM & Club Night	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre, Shortland	Guest Speaker: Harry Battam – Petrel Flight Morphometrics - adaptations for a pelagic existence
Saturday 11 February	Hunter Wader Survey	10.30 am Ash Island 11.00 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 Mick Roderick 0421761237 – Deep Pond
Sunday 19 February	Field Outing – Old Brush, Brunkerville	7.30am Entry to Liebert's Lane, Brunkerville \$2 entry fee	Robert McDonald 4023 1204
Tuesday 21 February	Tomago Wetland Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
MARCH 2012			
Sunday 4 March	Clean Up Australia Day	8am -12noon Stockton Sandspit 9am – 12noon Kooragang Dykes Boat Ramp	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785 for Stockton Sandspit Liz Crawford 0412 722 644 for Kooragang Dykes
Tuesday 6 March	Mid-week Outing - Tocal College	7.30am Tocal College Visitor Centre (not homestead) off Tocal Road	Ray McLean 4987 4512
Wednesday 7 March	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Sunday 11 March	Hunter Wader Survey	9.30am Ash Island 10.00am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 4959 3663 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Mick Roderick 0421761237 – Deep Pond
Wednesday 14 March	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre, Shortland	Guest Speaker: Mike Richardson – Tristan da Cunha