



Newsletter

Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with Bird Observation and Conservation Australia

Issue 6/12
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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

CONTENTS

President's Column	2
Meeting Highlights:	
Banding Rehabilitated Birds	3
Banding and Flagging	
Caspian Terns with Leg Flags	4
Vale Heather Gibbs	4
Tracking Greater Sand Plovers	4
Club Activity Reports:	
Lake Glenbawn Camp photos	6
Green Wattle Creek Road	6
Ash Island	6
Myall Lakes	7
Jerusalem Creek	7
Welcome Shorebirds	8
Book Review	
Lyrebird! A True Story	8
Featured Birdwatching Site:	
Max Maddock's Frontyard	9
Bird Snippets from Media	
Casualties of Toronto's Urban Skies	11
Citizen Scientists Aid Birds	11
Hunterbirding	12
Snippets	13
Twitchathon Reports	
Dry-throated Buzzards	14
Hunter Home Brewers	16
Club Night Observations	18
Club Activities December-February	20



Spot the flag! Keep an eye out for engraved coloured leg flags whenever you watch shorebirds. See pages 3 & 4 for details of where to send your sightings. Pied Oystercatcher (P1 flagged on north coast of NSW) and Red-necked Avocet (ACB flagged in Victoria) photographed in the Hunter Estuary by Chris Herbert.



President's Column

I'd like to start my final President's Column for this year by thanking all of the people who make this such a great club. It is such a dynamic group of people that combine to simply "make it happen" and as President I am indebted to all of those people that make my job a lot easier by contributing so much.

I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of our Membership Secretary, Rob Kyte. Apart from spending a considerable amount of time creating our new professional-looking logo and letterhead, Rob has recently introduced some exciting initiatives to add even more to one's membership - as if it wasn't great enough already!

Check out the 2013 Membership Form with its details of benefits for members on our website - www.hboc.org.au. The website's Membership page also has bank details so you can pay your membership by internet transfer. Please also email your answers to the questions on the Membership Form to info@hboc.org.au or mail a copy

of the Membership Form to the Secretary so that your contact details are kept up to date.

From next year we will receive very attractive club membership cards, being about the size of a credit card so it can be carried around and each with its own distinct member identification number. Furthermore, members will receive discounts at various local businesses (just present your card!) and discounts will also be granted for entry to venues such as the Hunter Wetlands Centre. There may even be scope for members who run local businesses to be a part of this initiative as well. Watch this space in the New Year.

From the committee I would like to wish everyone a safe and enjoyable summer break (when it finally comes!) with plenty of enjoyable birding and all the best for the New Year.

Mick Roderick

Membership Fees for 2013

Owing to rising costs for public liability insurance and other items, membership fees for 2013 will increase from the current fee structure as follows:

Single membership currently \$30 in 2012 will increase to \$35 in 2013;

Family membership currently \$30 in 2012 will increase to \$40 in 2013;

Junior membership currently \$5 in 2012 will remain at \$5 in 2013.

However, if fees are paid by 28 February 2013, an Earlybird Discount applies:

Single Membership will be \$30 and Family Membership will be \$30.

So get your membership for 2013 paid promptly and benefit from the Earlybird Discount!

New Members

The Club extends a warm welcome to:

Gavin Ayre of Charlestown

Stephen Bence of Kahibah

Antony von Chrismar of Merewether

Shaun Corry of Teralba

Sandy Dixon of Bolton Point

Peter Hirst & Jung Ah Lee of Wallsend

Daniel O'Brien of Newcastle

Greg Pearson of Whitebridge

Dorothy Raine of Charlestown

Mark Simpson of Holmesville

We hope to see you at Club outings and meetings.

HBOC's "300 Club"

Details of those participating in the "300 Club" can be found on HBOC's website. During the year the two Roderick brothers have moved steadily up the 300 Club list so that Steve with 384 Hunter species is now second only to and just nine species short of Ann Lindsey.

Ian Martin

Banding Rehabilitated Birds

Some 18 months ago, listening to bird carer Jill Deane from the Native Animal Trust Fund speak to HBOC about the wide range of birds that came into her care here in the Hunter, I realised that many of the species she mentioned had rarely been banded. Subsequently, after a lot of negotiation, the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS) approved my proposal to band wild birds that come into care. The project lurched off to a slow start in February 2012 under strict criteria.

Only species of which less than 2000 individuals have been banded over the past 55 years since Australian banding records began can be included in the project. Furthermore, birds cannot be banded until ready for release back to the wild to eliminate those birds that may die in care or never be released due to their injuries.

The following is a list of species taken at random which show the differences in banding rates through species. Some rates are higher because a particular species has been targeted. Other species are simply rarely caught unless injured.

Species	Number Banded	Retraps	Sightings
Flesh-footed Shearwater	16,000	1,250	400
Wedge-tailed Shearwater	90,000	17,700	13,600
Short-tailed Shearwater	121,000	3,350	1,530
Bar-tailed Godwit	20,000	3,000	1,150
Black-tailed Godwit	1,200	75	30
Common Greenshank	1,200	125	30
Silvereye	116,000	17,300	8,650
Common Koel	209	14	5
Dollarbird	200	4	4
Channel-billed Cuckoo	27	6	2

Three species which I am particularly targeting in this project are Channel-billed Cuckoo, Common Koel and Dollarbird. These migratory species have not been banded much in the past as they are difficult to capture in the field. Many of them however come into care, particularly nestlings and juveniles; either injured, blown out of nests during storms or otherwise just found in back yards. Banding at such an age gives accurate records of the age of a bird.

The problem of course comes in re-trapping them, which on the whole is unlikely to occur and if it does is often years later. So I am appealing to the camera carrying dedicated bird watchers out there who often photograph these birds. The practice of swearing with annoyance to discover your perfect shot is marred by the bird being banded then airbrushing the offending

band out of the picture is fine; but first.... attempt to read the band number, even if it is just part of the number and send it to the ABBBS in Canberra, along with the name of the species on which it was photographed, the date and location of the sighting. Emailing the photo itself would be a bonus.

As more information on the movements of these birds is collected, we are increasing our knowledge of them. Are they site faithful, returning each year to the same location? Where do they go to from their breeding grounds? How far do they go? How long can they live? How are they being affected by climate change, loss of habitat and many more questions which are largely unanswered.

Much of the information we have on our birds has come from bird watching, banding, museum species and aviarists. Banding is the only area that can supply information on movements and records of aging. While solar and satellite transmitters are now in use their use is limited due to cost, a very finite life and the need to have a bird large enough to support the weight. There is also the risk that they will fall off.

You would probably be as amazed as I was at the range of species of birds that come into care. Many are vagrants swept far from their normal territories by cyclones and storms. One Albatross was rescued exhausted from the backyard of a Nursing Home miles from the sea. Many of the species are rarely banded and my interest is not restricted only to the migratory birds. Carers and Vets put a lot of rarely-acknowledged work into saving injured wild life, mostly at their own expense and a huge amount of time. More carers are needed to alleviate the pressures on a few. Training is available through the NATF. It is hoped this project will prove the success of their dedicated care.

Please take an interest in any banded birds you may encounter in your travels and always pass on the information either to your local Bird Club committee or direct to the ABBBS Tel 02 6274 2407 or email: abbbs@environment.gov.au Alternatively my email is joynicholls@optusnet.com.au

Sightings of flagged shorebirds can be reported at: <http://www.awsg.org.au/reportform.php>

I would be very grateful for any sightings of banded birds that any of you can supply.

Joy Nicholls

Caspian Terns with Leg Flags

This note is to advise that the Victorian Wader Study Group (VWSG) has recently extended their use of Individually Engraved Leg Flags (ELFs) to additional wader species and commenced deploying them on Caspian Terns. Anyone looking at these birds in the field is encouraged to try and read or photograph the engraved flag and to report the details to: mintons@ozemail.com.au

Since plain plastic leg flags were introduced on waders in Australia 20 years ago the reporting rate of waders which have moved from one location to another (within Australia or overseas) has increased by a factor of 30x. Engraved leg flags were first introduced on Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers in Victoria in 2004 and on many species of waders at Broome in North West Australia in 2005. These have facilitated the individual identification of many flagged birds and detailed movement histories of many individuals, including sightings of some waders overseas and/or then back in Australia in several successive years. The data generated from an engraved leg flag is therefore even more valuable than that from a plain leg flag sighting.

Use of engraved flags in South East Australia was extended to Bar-tailed Godwits and Red Knot three years ago. It has resulted in a huge surge in movements data

generated on Bar-tailed Godwits, including revealing major overseas northward movements of some birds when only two years old and juveniles crossing the Tasman Sea to New Zealand even in mid-summer.

Recently (since November 2011) the use of orange engraved leg flags in Victoria has been extended to Caspian Tern chicks, Red-Necked Avocets and Banded Stilts. Previous data suggests that most of these Caspian Terns will move along the Australian coast into Northern NSW and Southern Queensland outside the breeding season. Would observers there please look out for these new engraved leg flags (at present two figures ranging from 00 to 99)? The Red-necked Avocets are likely to roam widely around inland wetlands with previous plain-orange-flagged birds from Victoria being seen in places like Moulamein, in western NSW, and even as far as Sydney. The codes used are three letters starting with AAA.

Any reports of engraved leg flag sightings will of course be acknowledged and details will be provided of the previous sighting history of each bird.

I look forward to receiving your records.

Clive Minton

Vale Heather Gibbs 10 May 1973 - 9 November 2012

The death of Heather Gibbs on 9th November marked a sad occasion in the history of the Australasian Wader Studies Group of BirdLife Australia.

Heather's involvement in the flag sighting database over many years is well known to many people throughout the East Asian - Australasian Flyway for the rapid response to flag sightings sent to her from observers and researchers, as well as banding (ringing) offices from throughout the Asia Pacific. Her passing has left

a large hole that will be difficult to fill due to the huge amount of work she did, well beyond resource funding obligations provided by the AWSG.

Heather was farewelled on 19 November 2012 during an emotional celebration of her life and funeral by many of her close friends and relatives. Those present included many from the birding world, in particular from the AWSG, who have been associated with her for much of the past 20 years.

Tracking Greater Sand Plovers



**Adapted from
an article by
Flip Prior, The
West Australian
7 November
2012**

Yawuru Ranger
Domanic Matsumoto
looks on as a Greater
Sand Plover is about to
be weighed.
Photo: Flip Prior/The
West Australian

Members of the Victorian Wader Study Group have been visiting Roebuck Bay at least twice a year since 1981; the stunning 15km slice of coastline along Broome is a vital resting and feeding ground for an estimated 150,000 migratory shorebirds undertaking an extraordinary round trip to the Arctic every year.

In 2008, a Bar-tailed Godwit fitted with a satellite tracker by the Global Flyway Network was discovered to have flown non-stop from Broome to South Korea's Yellow Sea in April – a 5870km journey. After refuelling, it flew 4800km to Siberia and then on to its remote islands – an additional 1100km – before stopping to breed in the Arctic. Weeks later, it flew back to the Yellow Sea (4400km), Flores in Indonesia (4200km) and

Tracking Greater Sand Plovers cont.

on to Broome (1500km) in September – a staggering 21,870km round trip.

With recent advances in technology, the group and Australasian Waders Study Group have now turned their attention to other migratory birds too tiny to be fitted with satellite trackers.

Since 2010, 60 Greater Sand Plovers, six Great Knot and 44 Red Knots have instead been fitted with “geolocators” – tiny, light-sensitive devices weighing less than a gram. By recording changes in light intensity every 10 minutes, they reveal an extraordinary amount: where the birds go, how fast they get there and what they do when they arrive. Collecting months of data, they build a map of the bird’s journey. Data can even show when the bird is incubating eggs in the Arctic; it goes dark for days on end when it sits on the nest.

During September and October, when the birds arrive back in Broome to gorge on mudflats teeming with protein-rich food to almost double their weight ready for their next journey – the volunteers are lying in wait.

Roz Jessop, Victoria’s Phillip Island Nature Park environment manager, says the birds are fascinating in their own right, but there is a serious aspect to the work. In the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, infilling of vast tidal flats fringing the Yellow Sea to make way for industrial development has destroyed critical feeding grounds, threatening the survival of species. About 40 per cent of the inter-tidal mudflats have disappeared in the past 30 years, and conservationists are finding a corresponding decrease in bird numbers.

“Most of these birds from Broome go through the Yellow Sea, where reclamation is just progressing really, really quickly,” Dr Jessop says. “If the spot where they have to stop off and refuel is not there, people think they can go somewhere else – but of course all the other birds are there already... most places are carrying the maximum number they can.”

With other worldwide habitat disappearing, Roebuck Bay – one of 64 Ramsar wetland sites in Australia protected under the Federal EPBC Act – is considered to be among the most important migratory shorebird sites left in the world. For now, the coastline is relatively pristine; Broome’s Yawuru Aboriginal rangers play an active role in cleaning the beach, conduct water quality testing and mud sampling to measure the effects of nutrient run-off into the bay. For now, food is plentiful and visiting birds feed for hours each day, retreating at high tides onto sandy beaches and rocky outcrops – perfect for bird-spotting.

Already, the group has re-sighted 18 Red Knot tagged with geolocators, along with all six tagged Great Knot and 50 tagged Greater Sand Plovers – but catching them is another matter. Surveying the coast, statesman-like, is a man widely regarded as one of the world’s migratory bird experts – Dr Clive Minton, a former metallurgist based in Melbourne who has visited Broome up to three times a year since 1981. Cheery and loud – he’s almost stone deaf – Dr Minton says he’s been fascinated by the birds “since I was hatched” and has conducted scientific surveys since he was 12.

“There’s still a lot more we don’t know, but by developing techniques for catching them, marking them with bands and coloured leg flags and more recently geolocators, we’re gradually unravelling the details of their migration strategies,” he says. When geolocators were developed to a size tiny enough to fit to the birds three years ago, knowledge about them suddenly surged; they discovered, for example, that Greater Sand Plovers breed in the Gobi Desert in Mongolia, north of China. The big disadvantage is that birds fitted with the device have to be recaptured to download the data.

“Previously, before putting geolocators on, we had no information about where they bred at all, no information about where they went once they reached the Vietnam coast – there was nobody inland there to find flags or metal bands on birds.”

After spending hours trying to catch the birds, they release them very quickly; within minutes, old geolocators are removed and new ones fitted and within four hours after high tide, all birds are released to feed on the mudflats; untroubled by their ordeal.

Dr Minton said systematic counting had shown a visible decline in bird numbers in recent years and it was becoming a real worry: “About half the migratory species in Australia have declined by anything between 30 and 80 per cent,” he says. “In all cases, those are species using the tidal shores of the Yellow Sea in China and Korea as the key stopover site to fatten up on their northward migration to their breeding grounds in the Arctic and southward migration back to Australia.” He says getting hard data on the birds’ migratory patterns is the best way to convincing governments in Australia and overseas to preserve key areas of land. “That loss of feeding habitat is the cause of the decline of those species – that’s the facts,” he says. “Shorebirds in this flyway are in more of a predicament than they are in any other flyway anywhere else around the world. Things like that need to be understood and then rectified – that’s what we’re about.”

Flip Prior, The West Australian

Activity Reports

HBOC Midweekers revisit Lake Glenbawn

Monday-Wednesday, 17-19 September 2012

A report on this camp appeared in the October Newsletter without the accompanying pictures, which are presented here with apologies from the Editor.



Clockwise from top left: White-bellied Sea-Eagle carrying red carp; White-bellied Sea-Eagle on nest on private property; Birdwatchers at Broads Crossing; and Restless Flycatcher on powerline - Photos by Diane Hatfield

Green Wattle Creek Rd, Butterwick

Tuesday 2 October 2012

We met at the Seaham bird hide where we were rewarded with the sighting of two Yellow-billed Spoonbills as well as the usual variety of wetland birds. On the drive to Butterwick our convoy stopped for what was, for most of us, our first sighting of a Dollarbird for the season.

When we arrived at the Equestrian Centre on Green Wattle Creek Road, it was clear that spring had well and truly arrived. The White-throated Gerygones were calling in great numbers. There were Brown, Brown-headed and an abundance of Fuscous Honeyeaters. Some of our other sightings included Pallid Cuckoo and Little Lorikeets. We even found one koala down near the creek in the Crown Land Reserve. A few of us returned via Phoenix Park Road east of Largs to pick up 4 Banded Lapwings to top off a very successful day.

Robert Stewart

Ash Island

Tuesday 6 November 2012

Twenty-two mid-weekers set out along the track to Scotts Point and very soon came across a Black-faced Monarch and a Rufous Fantail. This great start was soon followed up by a great photo opportunity – two baby Striped Honeyeaters being fed by their parents up in a casuarina. Other land birds encountered along the way were Rufous Whistlers, Golden-headed Cisticolas and Australian Reed-Warblers. As we walked along the river we encountered the usual waterbird suspects – Australian White Ibis, Pied Cormorants and, with the help of a scope, a Striated Heron well-camouflaged on a rocky island in the river. As we walked across the boardwalk we had great views of two White-necked Herons.

After morning tea we explored Nev's Nook where 40 White-faced Herons and two Eastern Curlews were spotted. In total 62 species were seen on the day. Our thanks to Neville McNaughton for organising this outing and ensuring that the facilities were unlocked for us.

Margaret Stewart

Activity Reports cont.

Myall Lakes

Sunday 25 November 2012

Our visit to Myall Lakes was blessed with fine weather, lots of bird song and a magnificent display of blossom from herb layer to canopy. Just driving down the road to the Bombah Point Ferry the air was full of the pleasant calls of Scarlet Honeyeaters (those calls always lift my spirit), the cheerful 'chips' of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and the more lively renditions of Rufous Whistler. So when we found the Rajah Shelduck sitting in the stream just out of sight of the ferry it was confirmed that a terrific day's bird watching was in store.

Our walk basically started at the small camping area near the southern end of Old Gibber Road and headed north to the Johnsons Hill turn-off. This section takes you through some awesome swampy heath bordered by melaleuca forest grading into the typical coastal forest dominated by banksia and angophora. The walk from the turn-off across to Johnsons Hill features a Cabbage Palm forest not unlike that found around Mungo Brush. Two separate encounters with lace monitors just added to the fun.

Our first birds for the walk temporarily took our gaze from all this wonderful vegetation as we looked to the skies for swifts. At every second glance the number of White-throated Needletails seemed to double and soon we were aware of well over fifty of these amazing creatures. At first it seemed that these birds were confined to some incredible height but in the space of half an hour it was evident that many birds were hunting much lower and several just above the tallest trees.

Returning now to things more terrestrial we enjoyed many bird calls and delighted in chasing down each of the singers. The place was alive with the sounds of summer: Mistletoebird, Scarlet Honeyeater, Sacred Kingfisher, White-throated Gerygone, Olive-backed Oriole and Rufous Whistler. All the birds seemed to be very active feeding and not prepared to sit still for any length of time so for some it was a case of cumulating many split-second views to positively identify and enjoy.

Yellow-faced and White-cheeked Honeyeaters were more easily found than the Scarlets but you just have to admire the sight of an Eastern Spinebill hanging from a grass-tree flower spike in classic pose. Anything that had blossom was being looked at by the honeyeaters which included quite a lot of White-naped and occasional Brown Honeyeater. Mistletoebird "hot spots" offered many stunning views of these birds while they fed amongst mistletoe and occasionally on the ripe berries of the Monotoca.

Invisible birds calling from the heath included Bar-shouldered Dove, Eastern Whipbird, Horsfield's

Bronze-cuckoo and Pheasant Coucal as we continued to delight in the bush birds close to the track. A pair of Varied Sittella, Red-browed Finch, Variegated Fairy-wren, Little Wattlebird and Silvereyes made occasional appearances before an Eastern Yellow Robin turned up and put on the charm. These birds do it to me every time; they're beautiful.

Not very far past the Christmas Bells we left the swampy heath and before you knew it we were walking in a rainforest. What an amazing transformation in vegetation and the birds. Here we enjoyed encounters with Brown Cuckoo-dove, Golden Whistler, Lewin's Honeyeater and Figbird. Best discovery here was a pair of Leaden Flycatcher busy putting the final touches on a nest situated on a thin dead branch high over the track.

By now the day had become reasonably hot and the walk home was more about getting back than enjoying any birds but a shady lunch spot next to the lake was a pleasant way to end our visit. Here we enjoyed the clamour of Australian Reed-Warbler and a slightly cool breeze off the water.

Tom Clarke

Jerusalem Creek

Sunday 21 October 2012

Jerusalem Creek is one of my all time favourite places to be in and a bird-watching outing is all the excuse you need to go there. The creek falls rapidly down a gorge bordered by wet forests and flows ultimately into the Chichester River a few kilometres below the Chichester Dam. The section we visited lies within the Barrington Tops National Park and just off the Wangat Road which pretty much defines the border between the national park and Chichester State Forest. So the whole place is forest! And a wonderful camping experience at the nearby Telegherry Camping Area the previous evening made for a fabulous weekend overall.



Jerusalem Creek by Tom Clarke

Report continued next page

Activity Reports cont.

The outing started and finished at the Jerusalem Creek Picnic Area and we chose to walk the forest trail outward followed by the Wangat Road home. The forest wasn't actually alive with birds, however we had plenty to identify at the start with Wonga Pigeon, Brown Cuckoo-Dove and Fan-tailed Cuckoo producing distant calls while an invisible Dollarbird 'cacked' away down over the creek somewhere and a Green Catbird was finally tracked down after some effort.

Off on the walk and one by one our group of six HBOC members enjoyed encounters with resident forest types such as Noisy Pitta, Superb Lyrebird, Satin Bowerbird, Yellow-throated Scrubwren and Pale-yellow Robin. Mostly each view was short-lived but most of the group managed a peek at these birds. On the other hand the Paradise Riflebird remained completely elusive despite several attempts to find it. There were occasions when we heard the familiar rasping call and always it seemed to be "just out there on the left" as we made our way around the trail. The last time this bird was heard occurred as we walked back home along Wangat Road, still just out there on the left! In any case we know that this amazing creature continues to reside here.

The forest was also occupied by summer visitors such as Leaden Flycatcher and Black-faced Monarch but the pick of them was watching a pair of Sacred Kingfishers excavating a burrow in an arboreal termite nest. This activity kept at least two birdwatchers enthralled while waiting for a lift back to the picnic spot.

Tom Clarke

Right: Lorna Mee and Paul Baird manning the HBOC display at the Welcome Shorebirds Community Day, just before the addition of the bird migration poster! Photo - Ann Lindsey

Welcome Shorebirds

18 November 2012

Organised by Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project and National Parks and Wildlife Service, this Community Day was held at Stockton Sandspit in fine weather with a sizeable contingent of Red-necked Avocet in the lagoon and a scattering of Eastern Curlew in the saltmarsh. HBOC members provided a display and handouts from BirdLife Australia as well as guiding small groups in the identification of shorebirds and discussing their amazing migration feats. As the tide fell, more birds flew over from the Kooragang Dykes roost, providing a delightful variety of birds to view. A lone Grey Plover provided an extra fillip when people realised it was a rare visitor to the Hunter Estuary.

It is great to have an opportunity to promote the importance of the Sandspit and display the shorebirds, both resident and migratory. There are plans to improve cycle access to the area, with a side route off the recently completed cycleway to Stockton. Thanks to the many HBOC members who helped make this Community Day a success.



Book Review

Lyrebird! A True Story

In a digital world increasingly divorced from the natural environment, it is refreshing to read a book about long-term positive interaction between a wild bird and a human being. When wild birds invite us into their space and share their lives with us, it is a gift beyond measure. This true story recounts such a gift from a Lyrebird, named James, to Edith, a flower-market gardener in the Dandenongs of Victoria. Lyrebirds have an annual cycle of moult, dance and song, focussed around attracting a mate and passing on their genetic inheritance. As an immature male, James appeared in Edith's garden and, having "sized her up", continued to appear over several years, allowing Edith to record changes in his appearance as he moulted his tail feathers and became a mature adult. His song repertoire was remarkable for his excellent mimicry of a variety of bird calls. As development encroached on the surrounding

countryside James added the sounds of car horns, rock crushers, cats and dogs to his performance, which he would demonstrate to Edith at her bedroom window. His fame and accessibility spread so that he became known as 'the miracle of the Dandenongs'.

Although this friendship happened in the 1930s, it could still happen today - that is the beauty of the natural world.

Written by Jackie Kerin, illustrated by Peter Gouldthorpe and published by Museum Victoria, this children's book is delightfully illustrated and informative as well as being an invitation to engage with the natural world. Highly recommended for grandparents to share with their grandchildren - of any age, but particularly ~7 - 10 years. Available in the HBOC library and from Macleans booksellers at \$16.95.

Liz Crawford

Featured Birdwatching Site - Max Maddock's Frontyard

Silvereyes: Frontyard and Backyard Birding in Urban Ashtonfield

From 1984 to 2006 Heather and I worked hard to develop part of our 15-hectare rural property at Glen Oak into a year-round native bushland garden. As the bushland garden matured, combined with our existing flood-plain pasture, wetland and open area of eucalypts, more than 100 native bird species had been recorded. By 2006, we had found the property too difficult to manage at our age and in October 2006 we purchased and retreated to a house in the urban housing estate of Ashtonfield. It had no garden, apart from a feral *Frangipani* at the back and a few *Murraya* in the front. Our total native bird population consisted of five typical urban species and a few feral species.

We missed our life being part of the lives of native birds and embarked on a campaign to remove the *Frangipani* and *Murraya*, develop three suitable small levels in the front of the house into native-plant bushlands, rather than formal gardens, and to use hanging baskets and pots for native species along the edge of the covered patio at the back. The smallest area along the front of the block was planted with *Grevillea* and Kangaroo Paws by Christmas and they very quickly started to attract honeyeaters. By July 2007, after problems with eliminating existing feral *Kikuyu*, *Couch* and continued wet weather, we had planted a range of tall *Grevillea*, *Callistemon* and *Banksia*, prostrate winter-flowering *Hakea crassinervia* and Kangaroo Paws, chosen to provide progressive flowering throughout the year. Within 6 months, more native bird species were being recorded. The third front garden was finished in 2009 with smaller *Grevillea* and *Callistemon* species, including another *Hakea crassinervia*, *Correa* and native violets as ground cover.

Since then, the whole system has matured to provide covering deep vegetation, exposed branches and food, attracting more than 40 species. Apart from the visitation by species seeking food, it has become a centre for collecting nesting materials, a place to perform an amazing range of courting behaviours during the nesting period, bringing in newly-fledged chicks, contesting for priority to feed on nectar-rich flowers and community bathing in the birdbaths. Some of the species are residents using our place and nearby sites, others are seasonal migrants.

One migratory species recorded, which had a particular nostalgic place in our life, was Silvereye in June 2010. We had not seen any since we first came to NSW in 1974, but they had played an important role in shaping our interest in having native bird species as part of our lives while growing up in Tasmania. As a teenager in the 1940s, living in a house with an extensive back garden, I was fascinated watching large flocks of them when they spent a week or more in our garden. Heather, simultaneously growing up on a farm at Christmas Hills, near Smithton in the far-north west, experienced

the problems the birds created on the farm's garden of raspberries, loganberries, and black and red currants. The *Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds* has since described their diet as fruits, seeds, nectar and insects, with a liking for berries that makes them unpopular with vignerons and orchardists, and spreaders of Privet and Lantana!!! Fate brought us together in 1948, when our first jobs saw us as boarders in the same boarding house in Smithton. We had weekend visits to her family farm, sharing observations of Silvereyes creating havoc in the farm's berry crop.



Photo 1 (above) and 2 (below): Silvereyes feeding on *Callistemon Taree Pink* on 7 March 2012 - Max Maddock

After marriage in 1951, a further 12 years in Tasmania and another 11 overseas, we came to Newcastle in 1974 but did not encounter the Silvereye until they appeared in our Ashtonfield garden in 2010. The five birds observed were very elusive and impossible to photograph as they flitted from flower to flower and it was not until March 2012 that the concept of a migratory species began to emerge in my mind. A substantial flock invaded *Callistemon Taree Pink* (unlike the 2010 lot, not photo-shy, see photos 1 and 2), stayed a couple of days and then disappeared. From early October until late November frequent visitations were recorded on 17 days, starting with three birds on 3 October, almost daily 6–17 October, with a peak of at least 10 birds on 12 October (see photos 3-5), then dwindled to a single bird on 24 October, two on 10 November and a lone bird on 21 November.



Featured Birdwatching Site - Max Maddock's Frontyard cont.



Photo 3
Grevillea
Honeybird
12 October



Photo 4
Grevillea
Moonlight
6 October



Photo 5
Callistemon
Packers
Choice
21 October
- all photos
by Max
Maddock

The *Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds* (1982, p. 523) claimed that thousands (perhaps millions) of Silvereye migrate from Tasmania to south Queensland. It also reported two Silvereye banded in a Sydney garden and recaptured in the same Sydney garden in two of the next three winters, suggesting that the birds use the same migration destination each season.

Chan and Sutton (*Corella* 17(2), 1993, p.41) on the migratory behaviour of Silvereye returning to Tasmania from southern Victoria, stated that the Tasmanian Silvereye migrates each autumn, seen flying in from Bass Strait through Wilsons Promontory in early March to mid-June, remaining on the mainland through winter until return migration in spring. They also reported that Silvereye begin returning from the same area as early as late June and may complete their spring migration as late as January. A north-bound flock from Tasmania passing through Ashtonfield in March would have to have made a Tasmania departure much earlier than March and members of the same group returning southward in late October would be expected to make their home nesting area well before January.

The *Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds* also states that birds from Victoria and Tasmania mostly move along the coastal plain. This raises the question as to whether the Silvereye flocks which migrate through NSW nested in Tasmania or in Victoria, or are a mixture of both. In either case, it would seem that the March 2012 birds that were recorded in my front garden were heading to a northern NSW or even Queensland destination and the October–November birds were the same birds returning to either Tasmania, Victoria or a mixture of both for the 2012-13 nesting season.

Parallel with the observations in our garden during 2012, from June onwards Heather and I, Michele Keith and David Atkinson started regular walking at Walka Waterworks, along the 3-km circuit of the lake for our health and well being, as well as getting as many photos as possible of both waterbirds and bushbirds. Between us we lodged 10 visits up to August, with another in October. We observed Silvereye in July, particularly in the area where the feral fruit shrubs flourish next to the railway, walking track and lake shore (Photo 6). Shortly after, when Heather and I walked the circuit by ourselves, we encountered a substantial flock cross-ing from one patch of dense vegetation to another near the railway junction



Photo 6 - Silvereye on Tobacco Bush *Solanum mauritianum* at Walka Waterworks on 26 July - David Atkinson

and shelter on the way back to the entrance. They were moving far too fast to catch them with a photo. No more were observed at Walka until 27 October when David was again successful in capturing a couple of shots of a single bird.

Do the winter sightings at Walka Waterworks mean that it is an over-wintering destination for northward migrants or were they just briefly passing northwards or southwards? Being present with these handsome little birds and watching their behaviour at Walka and in our front garden has done wonders in stirring happy nostalgic memories, but also raises some intriguing questions about their behaviour and local and long-distance movements. Have other HBOC members had encounters with them? There are challenging studies waiting for some budding ornithologist to tackle. With the sad progressive decay of avian populations and biodiversity, and the “powers that be” continuing to blissfully ignore the serious situation which is now the norm, I very much doubt that such large numbers of migratory Silvereye, as reported by the *Readers Digest (1982) Complete Book of Australian Birds*, would be found today.

Max Maddock

Casualties of Toronto's Urban Skies



Adapted from an article by Ian Willms for The New York Times

So many birds hit the glass towers of Canada's most populous city that volunteers scour the ground of the financial district for them in the predawn darkness each morning. They carry paper bags and butterfly nets to rescue injured birds from the impending stampede of pedestrian feet or, all too often, to pick up the bodies of dead ones. The group behind the bird patrol, the [Fatal Light Awareness Program](#), known as FLAP, estimates that one million to nine million birds die every year from impact with buildings in the Toronto area. The group's founder once single-handedly recovered about 500 dead birds in one morning.

Toronto's modern skyline began to rise in the 1960s, giving it a high proportion of modern, glass-clad structures, forming a long wall along the northwestern shore of Lake Ontario. That barrier crosses several major migratory flight paths, the first large structures birds would encounter coming south from the northern wilderness. One particularly troublesome building has a glass facade that disorients birds by reflecting the surrounding trees. Perceiving the reflection as habitat, birds zoom at it full throttle without regard for the danger. The victims are largely songbirds.

One especially effective, if unpopular, method of reducing the threat to birds is simply to cover the outside of windows up to the height of adjacent trees with the finely perforated plastic film often used to turn transit buses into rolling billboards. The film can be printed with advertising or decorative patterns, although FLAP has found that [a repetitive pattern of small circles](#) made from the same adhesive plastic is both effective and less likely to prompt aesthetic objections. For new buildings, the solution can be as simple as etching patterns into its glass. [A German glass company](#) is also developing windows that it hopes can take advantage of the ability of birds to see ultraviolet light, by including warning patterns that are invisible to humans.

The complete article can be read on: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/28/world/americas/casualties-of-torontos-urban-skies.html>

Citizen Scientists Aid Birds

Amateur naturalists and other unpaid "citizen scientists" are playing a huge and vital role in the ongoing 'discovery' of Australia and all that it contains. "Citizen scientists are unrecompensed, unsung and rarely officially acknowledged – yet they are making a genuinely profound contribution to our understanding of Australian wildlife, and the state of our environment," says Professor Hugh Possingham, of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions (CEED) and The University of Queensland. CEED's research tackles key gaps in environmental decision making, monitoring and adaptive management.

Professional science, especially field-based data collection, is expensive – but tens of thousands of amateur researchers and naturalists are helping to fill the gaps in our knowledge of our own country – and often make discoveries of scientific significance, including new species.

"There are over 10,000 members of BirdLife Australia, many of whom take part in regular survey work that helps us to understand the state of our bird life," he says. "For example, the Atlas of Australian Birds is based on around 10 million reports, 420,000 surveys and the work of 7000 dedicated individuals. It's an absolute monument to the love Australians have for their country and its species."

"In Britain the Royal Society for Protection of Birds has over a million members. One Briton in every 60 is involved, in some way, in monitoring Britain's bird life, and there are similar levels of engagement by naturalists in other fields of study.

"Given the vast size of our continent, the many species that remain unknown or undocumented by science, the vast pressures of climate change and development, it is essential we build up in Australia an equal or greater enthusiasm among our citizens for recording our native wildlife."

Prof. Possingham says that citizen scientists not only gain a good education about Australia and its biota – but can also make an important contribution to science and hence to more effective national conservation policy.

"Citizen scientists can often spot a disturbing trend – say, species vanishing from a particular area – long before the conservation experts arrive. With all the new smart phones and hand-held devices, amateurs can make a major contribution by collecting images, sound and videos using GPS, which could revolutionise this form of study."

Professor Hugh Possingham

www.ceed.edu.au or <http://www.decision-point.com.au/>
24 October 2012

Hunterbirding

Hunterbirding is an email group set up by HBOC that is run through the Yahoo Groups. It is a great way to keep in touch with the latest goings-on in Hunter Region birding. Members are able to report sightings, post questions to the group and get involved with group discussions on bird-related issues. If you are interested in joining the group then please visit the HBOC website for details on how to sign up: <http://www.hboc.org.au/index.cfm?menukey=27>. You can choose either to receive individual emails or a single daily digest. Alternatively, email me at scythrops@yahoo.com.au and I'll sort it out for you – what could be easier?! The following article highlights some of the reports and discussions that have happened on hunterbirding within the last two months.

After a bit of a lull on the twitching front the Hunter found a bit of a purple patch this October, with rarities a-plenty. News of each of the four newsworthy twitcher sightings made their way onto hunterbirding in one shape or form. These included a Banded Stilt frequenting Stockton Sandspit with the Avocets; a Common Diving-Petrel observed from the Port Stephens pelagic; an Arctic Tern present at the Newcastle Ocean Baths rock platform; and up to 19 Painted Snipe at a site on the edge of Hexham Swamp at Maryland.

Twitchathon time was again upon us, but this yielded a disappointing number of Twitch Reports to sink our teeth into when compared to last year's feast. It's not too late to write one and post it on hunterbirding if you're keen, Twitchers! Many of us were kept busy by the raptor identification challenge that was posed. It was eventually sorted out by the Eagle-eyed amongst us and the obligatory Mars Bar prize giveaway promptly accompanied the correct guesses.

The focus this month is on keeping backyard bird lists. An observation of Blue-faced Honeyeater nearby one member's backyard opened up a wider discussion on backyard bird listing. The question was asked as to what constitutes a backyard list? There were some good replies, one of which was excellent and summed up the ethics of backyard birding perfectly – read Allan Richardson's contribution below and if you don't already keep a yard list then why not think about starting one?

“As far as I know the rules have always been that anything within (including above) 100 m of your yard is fair game, whether it is seen or heard, by naked eye or through mechanical means.

“Deciding rules about what is a fair way of determining what should be included or not within an area for a list can be very subjective. I guess a backyard list is just that - things you observe in your backyard, but it could also be defined by what you can observe from your backyard - in a way, your neighbourhood list.

“Nevertheless, I think the spirit of the 100m rule should come into play here. If you're not in your yard at the time of the observation, then I think the 100m rule is

more important, you shouldn't be using the 100m rule to allow you to see further afield so to speak. I have Black-necked Stork for instance on my home list, which I observed flying over my house, although I was some 200m from my boundary when I saw it do so. The bird was still over my yard even though I wasn't in it.

“Even though I observe the rules as stated above for my own list, I've always really thought that anything observed, no matter how far away, should be fair game. Why? For one, because I think it generally works in an ecological sense. In general anything that you can observe from your yard (unless you live on a hill and can see a wetland 1km away with a scope) will generally be tied to habitats in and around the vicinity of your backyard. Small passerines that are less mobile and maintain only small territories aren't going to be easy to hear or see beyond the 100m mark, so their ecological constraints will naturally limit their detectability from your yard. Therefore your observation is more likely to be a true indication of potential habitat in the vicinity of your yard.

“More mobile high-flying species, such as raptors or waterbirds, take in much larger home ranges or flyway spaces of which your home patch may represent a part. Few of us have habitat for a Wedge-tailed Eagle, an Osprey, Fork-tailed Swift or a Black-necked Stork in their yard, so it's the air space above and juxtaposition of local habitats that is the key to their local presence. Furthermore, they generally occur in far less densities than small birds in a given area, because of their large home ranges, so an observation from your yard is still likely to remain faithful to their potential to occur in the vicinity of your place, despite being outside the 100m buffer when you observed them.

“For instance I've seen Chestnut-breasted Mannikins just 200m from my yard but there is no habitat within the 100m boundary, so I've never been able to get them from home, but I've seen Sea-Eagles and Wedgies at long distances from and over my yard, because my patch is only a small part of their range.

“The other way to look at it perhaps is this - really, if you can observe it from your yard, while you're at home (not 'could I have seen it from my yard if I was at home'), isn't it fair game?? After all, if you think about it, your yard list could run along the rules of an armchair twitch, which has no limitations on area, just what habitats you can oversee from your designated spot. In that light, if you bought a property that had a view of that wetland 1km away it's still another manifestation of what a backyard list could be, and for those that feel disadvantaged because you don't have a room with a view, you might just have to be limited by the view you bought - after all, aren't the 3 rules of Real Estate Location Location Location????”

Dan Williams

Snippets

Mid-Week Camp at Gloucester

16 to 18 September 2013

The Mid-week Camp for 2013 will be at Gloucester Caravan Park. There are 16 cabins available, nine with en suite facilities. Please make your own booking: 6558 1702.

BirdLife Photography

BirdLife Australia is offering a new special interest group focussed on photography - become a member of BirdLife Australia and for an extra \$10 you can join the photography group. The group aims to provide online educational activities with an emphasis on photography and bird identification. There are regular photography competitions, identification challenges, a bi-monthly newsletter and the opportunity to upload images to an online photo gallery. Contact: photography @birdlife.org.au

Pied Oystercatchers caught

Foraging for pippies on Stockton Beach or on oyster-banks in the Hunter River North Arm may seem like peaceful pursuits but there are hidden dangers in discarded fishing line which can easily get tangled around the legs of Pied Oystercatchers. Unfortunately the entanglement may result in the leg becoming infected and dropping off, or the bird dying. One recent case on Stockton Beach has resulted in a one-legged bird that is still surviving. In the last four years there have been at least three cases in the Hunter Estuary - one was seen after its leg dropped off but two others have not been seen subsequently.

Even fishermen with the best intentions may be forced to discard line that is snagged below water level and is inaccessible. However, please encourage anyone in the fishing fraternity to retrieve their tangled line and not throw it overboard.



Pied Oystercatcher in the Hunter Estuary with foot tangled in fishing line and hook (left) resulted in loss of the foot (above) in February 2011 - Chris Herbert

Ruddy Turnstone - Newcastle Baths



Ruddy Turnstone at Newcastle Baths, 19 November 2012 - Richard Nicholas

Danny Rogers (Australasian Wader Study Group) has advised that the foreground bird is a juvenile - still wearing the plumage it fledged in about late July 2012. The plumage is pretty worn, but the retained juvenile coverts (smaller than those of adults, and all the same age) are a good ageing character.

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Twitchathon 2012 Reports

Boys on Bikes - The Dry-throated Buzzards

The BASNA Twitchathon 2011 provided the Buzzards' highest score in the event so far. Their ambitious route of 138km saw them collect a total of 170 bird species and raise around \$1,200 in sponsorship. However, a punishing Sunday ride of over 100km meant that they were under constant time pressure to be on the move. As a result there was no spare time available to replace two flat tyres when disaster struck half an hour from the end of the race. On reflection, the visits to HEZ (Hunter Economic Zone near Kurri) and the Watagans had not yielded a return of birds to warrant the extra effort and time investment. The reliance on dedicated support crews to arrange the camp, brekkie and lunch logistics was also unfair and unsustainable. The objectives of this year's event were therefore to reduce the reliance on others, reduce the Sunday ride distance and hopefully increase the species total - nothing too ambitious then! It would also be nice to increase the total sponsorship and finally bag a Tawny Frogmouth...

Shortly after the adrenaline of the 2011 Twitch had subsided an outline sketch for the 2012 route was drawn up in Miyagi's head. Mulbring had been consistently productive for the Buzzards and HEZ had not proved to be much of an improvement on 2011's woodland offerings of the Sugarloaf foothills. The framework of the Saturday route would therefore be built around those two locations - starting in Mulbring before progressing to the woodland sites. The Sugarloaf Range would hopefully provide the wet/dry interface species and the nocturnal fare. Overnighing in the comfort of suburbia would provide improved resting opportunity, reduce reliance on others and minimise cycling distance the following day. The tides dictated that prime time Sandspit viewing would be late morning, with logistics determining extensive wetland birding to follow. That left the Fernleigh Track as the best-looking candidate for morning bush-bird mopping. And so the plan remained fixed for most of the year, until Miyagi discovered the missing piece of the puzzle. The weakest element of the initial 2012 plan was a lack of decent rainforest - hello Old Brush! This gem of a birding spot only 8km from Mulbring had slipped under the radar but became the main focus of pre-Twitch oiling. After much deliberation it was decided that it was worth extending the route to accommodate this site and the only place it could realistically fit was as the starting location.

The weather forecast in the build-up to the race looked reasonable, albeit with more wind than was desirable. Still, after a fairly successful dummy run on Friday the Buzzards travelled over the loaf in good spirits and optimistic of a successful year. Arriving at Old Brush half an hour before go, two Noisy Pitta were soon heard calling. One had been seen at 15:55 on Friday but not after 16:00 and lightning struck the same spot twice as the birds remained elusive again on the Twitch proper. Nevertheless some good targets were bagged before hitting the road at 16:15. These included Yellow-throated and Large-billed Scrubwrens, Wonga and White-headed Pigeons and Superb Lyrebird. With the critical species ticked off, many secondary targets were left to be mopped on the Sunday. A few speculative scans for raptors were made en-route to Mount Vincent, but to no avail. However, the views of the Watagan Mountains were impressive despite the lack of Wedge-tailed Eagles soaring above them. A White-throated Gerygone heard singing up the slope to the right was a welcome addition.

Yellow-rumped Thornbill was collected in Mount Vincent, but the Rufous Songlark present there last year had not taken up residence again. The Mulbring staples were soon to follow with Torresian Crow, Red-rumped Parrot and Blue-faced Honeyeater quickly making their way on to the list, leaving only Grey-crowned Babbler and Long-billed Corella to snag. After a few minutes were spent waiting in vain at the shop for a Babbler to call it was decided to cruise around the block in search of the prey instead. This proved to be an excellent decision, as both Rainbow Bee-eater and Latham's Snipe were added to the list - a nice couple of bonus birds. It was time to depart, Babbler or not, the Buzzards taking an alternative route out of town to their usual ride. This also proved fortuitous as a single Long-billed Corella was observed flying over one of the

rural properties. Idyllic Mulbring had once more proved to be a key location for the Buzzards.

Back on the road, the Buzzards took flight for their woodland haunts, pressed by a need to arrive before things started to quieten down. Cliffy keenly sighted the recently returned Jacky Winter on Richmond Vale Road, but again there was no sound of another of last year's Rufous Songlarks. Only one more stop was scheduled en route - the obligatory visit to poor man's Kakadu. Unfortunately the water hyacinths were Jacana-less, but both Tree Martin and Darter were solid birds to bank. Arrival at the first woodland spot was a good ten minutes ahead of schedule and delivered early with White-winged Chough, Mistletoebird, Buff-rumped Thornbill and Little Lorikeet soon added to the list. It was an agonising wait for Miyagi and Cliff as they strained to hear a Fuscous Honeyeater over the wind, but at last the distinctive rattle was heard - first distantly and then from a closer bird. No time to hang around - the targets were in the bag and another top woodland spot beckoned.

The power easement off George Booth Drive was true to form. Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Dusky Woodswallow and White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike were all gratefully ticked off with relative ease. The ever-reliable Chestnut-rumped Heathwren spot was not-so-reliable, failing to deliver as it had done two years previous. Still, the Buzzards were very pleased with how things had panned out over the first two-and-a-half hours of the race, sitting on a comfortable score of over 80 species. More fruitless scanning for Wedge-tailed Eagle was undertaken a number of times on the serious climb - much of which was undertaken on foot, proving too difficult to traverse on bike. The setting sun over the Lower Hunter Woodland was more breath-taking than the climb. One of those moments when you just have to admire what a beautiful world we live in. OK, enough with the sickly sentimentality, back to the birding. The late-in-the-day arrival in the Sugarloaves meant that the Buzzards were willing to take any of their wet/dry specialists as bonus birds. One of these was grabbed, with Cicadabird being heard at a couple of locations. With the better eastern gullies already in shadow, the Buzzards rested for a while overlooking the western slopes. A few birds could be heard calling occasionally below, but none of them new for the list.

The next hour was essentially a waiting game, with little to expect from further diurnal activity and too early to expect nocturnal activity. After a period of deliberation it was decided to take a chance on the eastern side of the loaf (despite the wind and shade) in an attempt to bag a Leaden Flycatcher or Brush Cuckoo. However, shortly after re-mounting their steeds disaster struck, of a magnitude far beyond the Buzzards' worst fears. It sounded like a stick might have become caught in Miyagi's spokes and before he knew what was happening the bike locked up, with the chain having come off. It had been playing up already, slipping a few times in the middle gears. When attempting to fix the chain it was soon realised that the rear de-railer had become bent up into the spokes and had almost been torn off. With the bike well and truly bugged, doom and despair beckoned. Bagsy sheepishly made the call to his better half and head of support crew operations - Verity, who was on the brink of enjoying a bottle of Shiraz with her evening's companions. After a little gentle persuasion she was heading to Mount Sugarloaf with a spare bike and some intrigued company, who were keen to grill the Buzzards about every aspect of their strange hobby.

The few kilometres of Blue Gum Trail were walked rather than ridden, with not even a sniff of a nocturnal bird. At Mount Sugarloaf Road a trading of bikes and redistribution of baggage was undertaken (thank you Verity!) and soon after, the Buzzards were hurtling down the hill and into Seahampton. Southern Boobook was added to the list in Edgeworth and was to be the only night bird of the evening - what a poor performance. The wind probably had not helped matters. Upon arrival in New Lambton Heights the exhaustion levels were too overwhelming to consider a visit to Blackbutt. Besides, home-cooked Lasagne and home-brewed beer beckoned at Cliffy's joint - so the decision was only ever going to go one way! American Pale Ale was the beverage of choice, for those of you that keep track of such things. A good few hours sleep were grabbed before dawn drew near and it was time to saddle up once more.

Twitchathon 2012 Reports cont.

Blackbutt was the first port of call, where some serious mopping was required to ensure the wet/rain forest section of the list measured up. As it was still dark upon arrival a hopeful scan of the Lookout Road car parks was undertaken in an effort to nail a Frogmouth - dipping! Miyagi decided to do his Powerful Owl impression at the fateful spot from two years ago. No response from the Owl, but a possum obliged. Looking for the possum Bagsy picked up a Pow-Ow in his light - get there! A disastrous one-bird nocturnal haul had been avoided and greatly lifted the Buzzards' spirits. Into the rainforest gully they went, where unfortunately there was not a peep from the Noisy Pittas that had been there a few weeks ago. Good job Bassian Thrush was already bagged as they were notable by their absence also. However, Black-faced Monarch, Rufous Fantail, Crimson Rosella and Brush Turkey were added. The Brown Cuckoo-Dove was not calling and would have to wait until Glenrock (hopefully).

Sunday morning's birding was constrained by a need to get the Stockton ferry at 10:30. With a visit to the baths scheduled beforehand there were effectively four hours available with which to complete the bush-bird mopping before an afternoon of wetland birds. The Fernleigh Track had been identified as the best use of time. It offered few target species, but hopefully presented a good opportunity for collecting incidental ticks. Having progressed beyond Kahibah the Buzzards encountered their second disaster of the weekend - Bagsy had lost his binoculars, having most likely slipped out of his pannier in Blackbutt. It was incredibly frustrating for the despairing Buzzard to battle on through the rest of the race without the aid of optics, although he didn't hold back from contributing with some decent bird spotting in spite of the disadvantage. A stop between Redhead and Jewells Wetland added three new birds to the list. Three Brush Bronzewing could be heard calling and New Holland Honeyeaters were also numerous - possibly relocated following the decimation of Awabakal by the recent bushfire. Scaly-breasted Lorikeet was also added through some distant scope action. Only Shining Bronze-Cuckoo was added in Belmont Swamp before heading back north for the estuary birds.

The last mopping activity was an off-road diversion through Glenrock, travelling from the Fernleigh Track past the lagoon and up onto Scenic Drive. A couple of reliable spots were tried for Leaden Flycatcher but there didn't seem to be any about and this was to become the Buzzards' biggest dip of the Twitch. However, a few nice birds were added including a distant calling Brown Cuckoo-Dove and an obliging Grey Goshawk circling over the headland. The star performer was spotted by an eagle-eyed Cliff, as a magnificent male Regent Bowerbird gifted us with a flyover. With the Buzzards having forgotten to bring the sunscreen with them, another disaster was avoided by meeting up with Verity to collect a bottle. She also brought along some fantastic chocolate brownie, a swag of muesli bars and a copious amount of jelly snakes - all essential Buzzard fodder. A pleasant ride along the Bathers Way ended at Newcastle Ocean Baths where bacon and egg rolls were ordered and the obligatory Powerades were guzzled. Wedge-tailed Shearwater and Common Tern were picked up over the sea, but only Miyagi was able to get on to a distant Jaeger. He did have a slight advantage, being in possession of the only scope. With no sign of roosting waders a quick detour to Stony Point was made, where a bevy of Ruddy Turnstone were present. No sign of Sooty Oystercatcher though - dipping for the second year in a row. Miyagi's knee was now giving him some jip, due to a combination of a lack of stretching and adaptation to the replacement bike. Some belated stretching was undertaken as the Buzzards waited patiently for their ride across the Hunter to arrive.

A pleasant cruise along the Stockton cycle path brought the Buzzards at last to the Sandspit. Grey-tailed Tattler and Terek Sandpiper were the first waders to be encountered at their high-tide roost. Brown Honeyeater and Mangrove Gerygone were soon added, both heard calling from the mangroves. A worrying lack of Pied Oystercatcher was noted en-route to the beach and this would turn out to be another big dip. The waders were already present on the falling tide and a good hour was spent scanning through them to steadily boost the list: Bar-tailed Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew Sandpiper,

Red Knot, Eastern Curlew, Red-necked Stint, Black-winged Stilt, Red-necked Avocet, Red-capped Plover and eventually (after some divine assistance) the Banded Stilt. This special bird had been present in the estuary for a few weeks and was a new bird for Cliff and the first in a long time for Bagsy - so seeing it was gratefully received. Gull-billed Tern was also added, but no Caspian Tern or Whimbrel - another two dips. A flyover Osprey was a welcome bonus though. A brief pause at the top of the bridge added White-bellied Sea-Eagle and Black-shouldered Kite was added at the other side. Royal Spoonbill was picked up on Long Pond before the next off-road stint began - Ash Island.

All that was left of the race now was a few hours of estuary wetland birding before heading to the finishing spot at the Hunter Wetlands Centre. On Ash Island a flock of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and another of Pacific Golden Plovers were the only additional waders - no Greenshanks or Marshies around this year. A compulsory scan of Deep Pond yielded both deep-water targets - Musk Duck and Hoary-headed Grebe. Passerine additions included Grassbirds, Reed Warbler, White-fronted Chat and Yellow Thornbill. Good progress was being made through rough terrain until the inevitable happened. The third and final disaster of the race - Bagsy picked up a puncture. Fortunately this year the route allowed for plenty of downtime on the home stretch and half an hour to mend a puncture was readily accommodated. Unfortunately there was another minute puncture that was undetectable and so routine stops had to be made to re-inflate the tyre. No stress this year though. As one Buzzard worked, the other two scanned - Whistling Kite, Swamp Harrier, Wedge-tailed Eagle (eventually and luckily) and Hobby were all added to the list. White-necked Heron too.

The final destination (asides from the finish) was Hexham Swamp where Black-fronted Dotterel (notable by their absence on Ash Island) was soon found. A single Spotted Harrier was an excellent final addition to the raptor list, which was now an impressive 11 species. Miyagi also caught a brief glimpse of a crane sp. but it disappeared as quickly as it had burst into view and the others were not able to get on to it. The journey back to the Wetlands Centre should have been easy but Miyagi was now really battling with the pain in his knee. Still, it would heal up within the week so he pressed on regardless, albeit some distance behind his team mates. With the best part of an hour to go a leisurely stroll around the Wetlands Centre was enjoyed. The in-the-bank birds of Magpie Goose and Wandering Whistling-Duck were bagged and numerous Nankeen Night-Herons were a welcome way to round off the list. No sign of any Shoveler this year though, which was yet another dip.

It was time to count up the total, which was hard to guess given the number of great birds being offset by an array of regrettable dips. After counting 169 twice Miyagi eventually found the addition he was seeking (an un-ticked Magpie Goose) bringing the total to 170 species - equalling the previous year's score. All in all the Buzzards felt good about their result. A number of birds that were taken as given were missed, but some unexpected bonuses had made up for these. Although there were some decent birds about, the estuary was not quite as good as was hoped for and combined with some unusually late migrants, had limited the potential for the Buzzards to improve on their PB of 170. The Fernleigh Track had also been a lot of mileage for little return, but this was probably the only major mistake as far as route planning was concerned. Still, the riding had been easier than 2011 and the flexibility to accommodate the odd emergency or two had been much less stressful too. The Buzzards thoroughly enjoyed their hard-earned kegs of pale ale and the post-Twitch banter at the BBQ.

With three Twitchathons now completed on bikes the Buzzards pretty much know the ins and outs of route planning, logistics and species optimisation. The quest for that elusive 180 still continues (and for a Tawny Frogmouth for that matter), but with a solid return of spring migrants and (hopefully) a near-flawlessly planned route, 2013 could well be the year. Only time will tell...

Miyagi Buzzard

Twitchathon 2012 Reports cont.

Hunter Home Brewers – The Cockatoo-less Hunter Runs Run

Having posted an impressive 246 by starting in the mallee country in 2011, the Hunter Home Brewers were somewhat obliged to remain reasonably “local” in 2012, as Mick Brew’s partner Maggie Brew was only 4 weeks from due-date. Negotiations on the home front resulted in a compromise that saw the Brewers sticking to their “routes” again and doing a Hunter Run.

As is customary, the Brewers headed off in time to test the water in the place they were intending to commence the Twitch. But something that was certainly not customary was the absence of Ando “Cockatoo” Brew, who couldn’t make the 2012 twitch, being his first dip in the 14th year of Hunter Home Brewing. This was sure to put a dampener on the ‘Crackers Disco’ and meant that the Brewers had to find a replacement esky to carry in Eric’s stead (seeing the return of the *Gresky*). It also meant the maiden voyage for Steve Brew’s Green Bottle Patrol.

After searching for Flying Coachmen and exploring potential shortcuts for the Twitch, the lads struck a mud-brick camp near the banks of the Goulburn River. After confirming that the Little Friarbirds had flown the coop, they headed off to Durrigere Road to commence the Dummy Run. The clouds were thick, the wind was strong and the mercury was low...but nowhere near as low as the bird count. It was eerily quiet and after allowing 15 minutes at this spot the Brewers had absolutely nothing of any consequence to show for it, let alone the specialties that make this remote starting point worth its while, such as Singing Honeyeater and Southern Whiteface. In fact, the best bird was Peaceful Dove, exemplary of how poor the birding was.

Even the long and usually productive road out produced absolutely nothing apart from roadside birds that could be had literally anywhere. Fortunately things picked up as they got closer to Goulburn River National Park as quality birds started showing, including a spot that held Southern Whiteface and Painted Honeyeaters and where a Square-tailed Kite was seen floating across a nearby woodland. They resolved to start the Twitch at this spot and give Durrigere Road the flick. At the end of the Dummy Run they had roughly 80 species but more importantly by dropping Durrigere Road off the agenda they could effectively have an extra hour to play with the following afternoon on the main event – the beauty of the Dummy Run shone through.

After enjoying a breakfast of very-free-range local chook eggs (excepting one egg they named “Davros”), their Saturday was spent refining their oil. What they really needed though was a ‘western wetland’ and they decided to investigate a mine dam that was showing on aerial images just off the main road. The dam looked fantastic and held plenty of common species but did have one bird of note in Red-kneed Dotterels. This was to throw a spanner in the works as it was probably 20 minutes from the Whiteface/Painted spot – would ‘one good bird’ be worth it? It was decided to revisit the dam at about 1530 to see if anything else was showing to make it a worthwhile starting point – if not, they would head east to the Whitefaces. When one, then two Baillon’s Crakes walked out of some low sedge, quickly followed by a Spotted Crake it was all over – the Brewers were to commence their Twitchathon at a wetland for the very first time. A perched Hobby was a sweetener as well. The Twitch Tab bookies were rubbing their hands together as this would throw many predictions into disarray.

Not wanting to push things with the crakes, the boys headed to a nearby picnic area and cracked the now-traditional bottle of Grosset as the pre-Twitch tippler. All agreed it was a fine drop and a toast was made to absent friends, whilst a flattering image of Ando Brew from a previous Cracker’s Disco was pinned to the back seat (where he remained, much quieter than normal). Arriving back at the dam at 1558, the scope was fixed on the reeds and the countdown

began. Time on...and a flurry of standard floaters filled the list in the early minutes, along with Red-kneed Dotterel and Musk Duck, while they waited anxiously for the crakes to call or appear. After a few agonising minutes a Baillon’s casually walked out, oblivious to the angst being felt by his observers. There was much rejoicing at this and possibly in response to the rejoicing a Spotted Crake began calling... “Spotted Crake!! Let’s go!!”

And so they jumped into the Green Bottle Patrol and headed east along the Goulburn River. Alas the Whitefaces, and more predictably the Squite, failed to show but a number of good birds were picked up here including the Georgies see-sawing away. Odd bedfellows to them were New Holland Honeyeaters feeding in banksias, right at the western extent of their range. Onwards towards the national park and their gun woodlands they resumed, missing en-route the lone Emu that had been on this stretch the day before.

After a quick detour to Cumbo Road, a bee-line was made for Ringwood Road, the lynchpin of their Saturday run. O’Brien Crossing failed to produce Plum-heads but the Rock Warblers showed well as they hit the sandstone and the start of the woodland proper. A quick jump out of the car in the ridge country produced the only target bird, White-eared Honeyeater, before they commenced their run of woodland sites. Slowly, things like Red-winged Parrot, White-winged Triller, Weebill, Buffies began to fall, while Little Ravens called in the pastures nearby. It wasn’t exactly firing and as happened in 2009, the Milky Bars were on ‘the poo spot’; its name owing to fact that it is a simply fantastic woodland site. Black-chinned Honeyeater, Shrike-tit, Restless Fly, Horsfield’s Cuckoo and eventually White-browed Babblers all fell. But conspicuous in their absence were the White-browed / Masked Woodswallows, White-backed Swallow and Turquoise Parrot all seen there the day before. A feature of this period was the number of Red-winged Parrots (25+) presumably flying to roost in flocks of 4 or 5 birds. The Brewers moved on and clawed back some handy additions at their very last woodland site with Heathwren and Western Gerygone.

Right at this point a cold and windy southerly change hit, which was to basically wipe out any hope of finding the claustrophobic species on the northern run out along Ringwood Road. When a brief esky stop was made in this patch of cropping country, two first-timer Hunter teams approached the Brewers from the south. They got out of their car and said “hello” and started introducing themselves.

“What the hell is going on here!?” the Brewers thought to themselves, this isn’t a social event!

As the esky was thrust back into the car and efforts were made to prise themselves away from the pleasantries an immature Spotted Harrier flew by – a nice addition to all 3 teams’ lists. With darkness falling, the southerly in full swing and rain starting to fall, there was virtually no hope of picking up a late-calling Blackbird in Merriwa, but after making a valiant yet vain attempt it was off on the night drive towards their rainforest camp. It was an “average” year on the night birds, picking up the standard 4 species on their way through to their rainforest camp. Having arrived at camp on 106 at the critical time of ten-to-one, they noticed two other Twitchathon teams file in soon after, both identified as teams making their way from the Liverpool Plains.

The dawn chorus started as always with the “choo-choo” of the Eastern Yellow Robin, which heralded the onset of a big day for the Brewers, needing a ruthlessly efficient Sunday morning to post a competitive score. The need for efficiency drove them to decide to leave the dense rainforest without Noisy Pitta (which was completely quiet, though Steve Brew had heard one calling during the night), Spectacled Monarch and Riflebird. Topknot Pigeon was also missing but they were confident at being able to peg it back at their rainforest mop sites. These sites were productive by providing the previously missed Pitta, along with Pheasant Coucal, Regent Bowerbird and Torresian Crow but for the first Twitchathon in memory there were no Topknots present.

The dash for the estuary then began, as the high tide was around

Twitchathon 2012 Reports cont.

0830, meaning that the majority of birds would be at Stockton Sandspit somewhere around 1000. The Brewers made the obligatory stop at the hallowed Twitchathon site of Green Wattle Creek. It was here, as seems to happen every year that they ran into two other teams, both being the Liverpool Plains teams they'd virtually shared camp with. The second of these was the Dodgy Drongos, which were promptly regaled a lively fist-waving expletive-ridden scoresheet-toting Brewer's Flash from the Patrol windows. As is customary, they simply shook their heads as Steve Brew put the foot down.

Seaham produced the omnipresent Scaly-breasted Lorikeets as well as Latham's Snipe and Night-Heron but conspicuously absent were Yellow-billed Spoonbills and Grey-crowned Babbblers. The run through Raymond Terrace was rewarding with several mops, but became especially rewarding when a Black Kite was picked up flying over Newline Road. Hoary-headed and Great Crested Grebes were ticked on Grahamstown Dam before the final run to Stockton was made.

They headed straight to Stockton Foreshore where a few roosting Pacific Golden Plovers were had, along with a bonus adult Brahminy Kite working the river. They then made their way to the Tattler/Terek roost and after seeing both of them, noticed that the tide was still way too high for there to be much beach exposed at the Sandspit. The executive decision was made to use this time to go to Newcastle Baths and then come back to Stockton. The net loss of time would be minimal and it was thought that the traffic in Newcastle would only gradually get worse as the day wore on anyway.

Upon arriving at the baths it was a pretty sad sight – the tide and waves had the ocean washing over the rock platform and even over the east side of the baths themselves. Fortunately there were a handful of hardy Sooty Oycs, a lone Common Tern and a single Little namesake hunting over the ocean, where the only tubenoses seen were Wedge-tailed Shearwaters.

Back to Stockton Sandspit where a number of teams could be seen peering through scopes, including the bicycle-pants-clad Dry-throated Buzzards. Those teams were apparently looking at the vagrant Banded Stilt that has been long-staying in the Hunter Estuary, but the Brewers were at the wrong angle to see this bird. They had to swallow some much more bitter dips than this though as they could not find some gimme species such as Pied Oyc, Whimbrel and Curlew Sands. Pegging back Ruddy Turnstone and Common Sands at the Sandspit and an Osprey that floated overhead made them feel a bit better about these dips at least.

With plenty of homework done on key species, the Brewers made time for themselves by making the logistical nightmare of Ash Island near-superfluous. Instead, they took a serious time risk and crossed the tracks onto Hexham Swamp to pick up a quick-fire Black-fronted Dotterel, Swamp Harrier and White-fronted Chat. The Dotterel was their 200th bird, seen just after midday. But the decision to come to Hexham Swamp nearly cost them dearly as from the pipeline track (where they had just seen the chat) they could see a coal train emerging that seemed to stretch all the way back to Tarro and was moving at a walking pace. If they didn't beat this train it could cost them twenty minutes or so. Some clever manoeuvring by Steve Brew and quick gate work by Mick had them safely onto the right side of the tracks in a nick of time and off they set to Maitland.

The run through the turf farm territory began well with a flyby Goldfinch, but then one of the most productive stops of the entire Twitch was made at a spot where Mick Brew was accosted by a local farmer for a chinwag. While he did his best not to be rude and pull away from the chatty cocky, 5 species fell within virtually a minute – Brown Songlark, Zebra Finch, Horsfield's Bushlark, Banded Lapwing and the sweetest of them all: Stubble Quail.

They decided it might be worth having a look at Walka Water Works given that a single Pink-eared Duck had been there a week earlier. But it was obvious from a distance that there was a seriously

popular event happening there and a rapid about-face was done. This brought them past another team and Steve quickly reversed the car back to deliver another vigorous explosion of fists and voice boxes that near lifted the hat off one of the team member's heads!

The well-oiled Sharp-tailed Sands were added on their way to an even better-oiled backup Blackbird site in Kurri before heading for their other lynchpin site – HEZ. An incredible penny dropped as they headed for a spot where they had been monitoring one or two Regent Honeyeaters in recent weeks. This penny dropped hard, but not immediately, as they drove past a Bell Miner colony. Mick Brew paused for one second and thought...then shouted... "Bell Miner!!" The boys hadn't even realised it was missing from their list, so it was dutifully added and sighs of relief exhaled.

The Warty-face was not present at the first spot they had been semi-frequenting. One team member getting onto a Painted Button-quail but not one of the others, combined with a dip on Pallid Cuckoo made this a frustrating stop indeed. However, pandemonium broke loose when they went to "Buttonquail Corner" and found their only maiden bird of 2012 – a lone male Regent Honeyeater feeding on mistletoe blossom. It was a great moment, made even more satisfying when a covey of button-quails were seen literally metres away from where they'd pulled up.

"What's that make us?"

"216" was Grena Brew's reply and with the passing of 1400 hours they needed to make their way back to Newcastle. Word had also filtered through via Hunterbirding of a group of Painted Snipe found by Greg Little at Maryland and they wanted to keep their options open for this bird. Mulbring failed to produce Grey-crowns but a very nice substitute was seen in the form of a Peregrine Falcon; only their 4th in 14 Twitchathons. Next was a scope over the western edge of Hexham Swamp where Glossy Ibis, Whiskered Tern and Sea-Eagle were added. After dipping on Channel-billed Cuckoo and their last-ditch effort for Topknots in a large fig tree and then a seemingly prolonged stop at Leneghans Flat, Steve Brew finally got onto the lone Jacana that had been there for the past week. 221 and with less than an hour remaining they needed to shake a leg and get to the Wetlands Centre. It was decided not to try for the Snipe, though another toilet stop from Steve Brew ("they're regular in that area") at Blue Gum Hills was made even more welcome when a pair of calling Bazas flew over and circled barely 20m above the car – get there!

With 222 they knew they would get at least 224 knowing that Wandering Whistling-Ducks were at the Wetlands Centre along with the ever-reliable Maggie Geese. They just needed to manage their time and although they knew there would be a crowd at the centre, they didn't expect scenes like they were at a Grand Final day at the MCG – a conference was on and there were people everywhere! The Brewers bustled through the throng and after finding the two dead-certs they headed back to the meeting point with a few minutes to spare, but alas no advance on 224.

It certainly didn't match the Hunter catchment score of 234 from 2009, but all-in-all the brewing gents were pretty satisfied. As Mick Brew deliriously collected the team sheets and read out the scores, they discovered it was enough to get them second place again. This was with the same two teams either side as the past few years (Menacing Monarchs and Dodgy Drongos, all eventually separated by only one bird).

There is something very satisfying in recording this many birds and not needing to cross the range. Even so, and with an average of 226 species spanning their past 3 Hunter Runs, the Hunter Home Brewers are already talking about "stretching their wings" once again in 2013.

Jacqueline Winter

Club Night Observations

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 Figbird	2	26/9/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
Australian Brush Turkey	1	11/11/12	Glenrock S.R.A.	C. & R. Goodenough
Australian White Ibis	>650 br	8/10/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Australian White Ibis	>400 br	19/11/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Baillon's Crake	1	14/11/12	Ash Island [Scotts Pond]	N. McNaughton
Bassian Thrush	5	3/10/12	Blackbutt Reserve	J. Nicholls
Black Falcon	1	26/9/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
Black Falcon	1	1/8/12	Scone	R. McDonald
Black-fronted Dotterel	4	11/11/12	Pambalong Nature Reserve	H. Boyce
Black-necked Stork	1	10/10/12	Walka Water Works	L. Mee
Black-winged Stilt	9	11/11/12	Pambalong Nature Reserve	H. Boyce
Blue-billed Duck	1f	10/10/12	Walka Water Works	L. Mee
Blue-faced Honeyeater	2+	Oct/Nov	Speers Point	S. Hamonet
Brown Falcon	1	8/10/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Buff-banded Rail	1	30/9/12	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Buff-banded Rail	1	20/10/12	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Buff-banded Rail	1	14/11/12	Ash Island [Scotts Pond]	N. McNaughton
Bush Stone-Curlew	1h	3/10/12	Eraring	C. & R. Goodenough
Bush Stone-Curlew	heard	1&9/11/12	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Caspian Tern	1	12/9/12	Morpeth S.T.W.	A. Lindsey
Cattle Egret	>450 br	19/11/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Cheatnut Teal	25+	11/11/12	Pambalong Nature Reserve	H. Boyce
Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	1	31/7/12	Bunnan [Ridglands Rd]	R. McDonald
Diamond Firetail	4 on	31/7/12	Bunnan [Ridglands Rd]	R. McDonald
Dollarbird	1	17/10/12	Morpeth	G. Brosie
Dollarbird	several	8/10/12	Wingen Travelling Stock Route	G. Newling
Dollarbird	1	30/9/12	Eagleton [Newline Rd]	P. Slack
Eastern Great Egret	1	11/11/12	Pambalong Nature Reserve	H. Boyce
Eastern Osprey	1	20/9/12	Wangi Bay	D. Johnson
Eastern Osprey	1	15/10/12	Maitland	G. Brosie
Fairy Martin	~50	16/9/12	Newline Rd [second site]	P. Slack
Fairy-Martin	~50 nb	16/9/12	Newline Road	P. Slack
Galah	2+1dy	13/11/12	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Glossy Ibis	18	11/11/12	Pambalong Nature Reserve	H. Boyce
Grey Fantail	Pr nb	18/11/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
Grey Teal	>800	8/10/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Grey Teal	>400	19/11/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Grey-crowned Babbler	12	8/10/12	Wingen Travelling Stock Route	G. Newling
Grey-crowned Babbler	party	18/11/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
Hardhead	4	19/11/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Intermediate Egret	5	11/11/12	Pambalong Nature Reserve	H. Boyce
Laughing Kookaburra	Pr fy	18/11/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
Leaden Flycatcher	1	20/10/12	Green Wattle Creek	G. Brosie
Leaden Flycatcher	1	20/10/12	Clarencetown	G. Brosie
Lewin's Rail	2	14/11/12	Walka Water Works	J. Smart <i>et al.</i>
Little Corella	~1-3	9/11/12	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Little Eagle	1	12/11/12	Halcombe Hill [Aberdeen]	G. Newling

Club Night Observations cont.

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer
Little Egret	1	11/11/12	Pambalong Nature Reserve	H. Boyce
Magpie Goose	86	19/11/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Mangrove Gerygone	2	8/10/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Nankeen Night-Heron	28 +imms	8/10/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Noisy Pitta	3	3/10/12	Blackbutt Reserve	J. Nicholls
Pacific Black Duck	60+	11/11/12	Pambalong Nature Reserve	H. Boyce
Pacific Black Duck	43	19/11/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Pacific Golden Plover	1	12/9/12	Morpeth S.T.W.	A. Lindsey
Pacific Golden Plover	464	11/14/12	Hunter Estuary	L. & C. Herbert
Painted Snipe	10+	7/11/12	Maryland	G. O'Connor
Pheasant Coucal	1	8/10/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Pied Currawong	2 fy	29/10/12	Newcastle University	H. Boyce
Powerful Owl	1+2fy	3/10/12	Blackbutt Reserve	J. Nicholls
Powerful Owl	1	12/11/12	Blackbutt Reserve	P. Lightfoot
Rainbow Bee-eater	many	26/9/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
Rainbow Lorikeet	2+2dy	13/11/12	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Rainbow Lorikeet	60-80	20/10/12	Rutherford	G. Brosie
Rainbow/Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	1 000+	9/11/12	Warners Bay	G. O'Connor
Regent Bowerbird	3	14/10/12	New Lambton Heights	P. Lightfoot
Royal Spoonbill	5	11/11/12	Pambalong Nature Reserve	H. Boyce
Ruddy Turnstone	16	1/10/12	Newcastle Ocean Baths	R. Nicholas
Rufous Fantail	1	12/11/12	Blackbutt Reserve	P. Lightfoot
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	1+1dy	12/11/12	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
Scarlet Honeyeater	Pr	10/11/12	Marmong Point	P. Durie
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	10	12/9/12	Morpeth S.T.W.	A. Lindsey
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	8/10/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
Spangled Drongo	1	10/10/12	Belmont South	J. Cockerell
Spotted Harrier	1	10/11/12	Thornton	C. & R. Goodenough
Spotted Harrier	1	27/7/12	Bunnan [Ridgelands Road]	R. McDonald
Square-tailed Kite	1	4/10/12	East Maitland	P. Freeman
Striped Honeyeater	2	26/10/12	Swansea [Osmond Reserve]	J. Adams
Swamp Harrier	1	4/10/12	Hexham	P. Freeman
Swamp Harrier	1	8/10/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Tawny Frogmouth	Pr+n4y	Oct/Nov	Speers Point	S. Hamonet
Wandering Whistling-Duck	22	8/10/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Wandering Whistling-Duck	150	1/10/12	Market Swamp	P. Slack
Welcome Swallow	2+2dy	7/11/12	Morisset	C. & R. Goodenough
Whiskered Tern	1	12/9/12	Morpeth S.T.W.	A. Lindsey
Whiskered Tern	95	23/10/12	Stockton Sandspit	L. & C. Herbert
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	2	8/10/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
White-browed Scrubwren	25	8/10/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
White-cheeked Honeyeater	5	6/11/12	Jewells	K. Howie
White-cheeked Honeyeater	Pr	10/11/12	Marmong Point	P. Durie
White-headed Pigeon	10	26/9/12	Dora Creek	C. & R. Goodenough
White-necked Heron	1	11/11/12	Pambalong Nature Reserve	H. Boyce
White-necked Heron	1	10/11/12	Floraville	K. Howie
White-necked Heron	1	12/11/12	Blackbutt Reserve	P. Lightfoot
White-throated Nightjar	1	10/10/12	Ash Island	N. McNaughton
White-throated Treecreeper	1 cf	8/10/12	Wingen Travelling Stock Route	G. Newling
White-winged Triller	1	18/11/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1	18/11/12	Parkville	G. Newling

Activities - December 2012 to February 2013

DATE	EVENT	MEETING PLACE & TIME	CONTACT
Wednesday 12 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
Saturday 15 December	Hunter Wader Survey	9.30 am Ash Island 10.00 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 Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay
Sunday 16 December	Latham's Snipe survey at Pambalong NR and other locations	8.00 am Minmi Pub	Liz Crawford 4959 3663 Please report results of your wetland survey to Liz
Tuesday 18 December	Tomago Wetland Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
JANUARY 2013			
Sunday 6 January	Remove mangrove seedlings from SSS	8.00am Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Saturday 12 January	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 Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay
Tuesday 15 January	Tomago Wetland Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Sunday 20 January	Field Outing – Stockton Borehole Lagoon	7.30am Teralba Bowling Club, York Street, Teralba	Greg Little 4955 6609
Sunday 20 January	Remove mangrove seedlings from SSS	8.00am Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Australia Day Long Wkend 26-28 January	Long Weekend Camp at Moonan Flat	Moonan Flat Camping Area	Lorna Mee 4987 2913 Note: You must book if you wish to stay in the Victoria Hotel at Moonan Flat - 02 6546 3165 or at the nearby camping area - 02 6546 3130. The hotel has 3 motel-style rooms, and a bunk house.
FEBRUARY 2013			
Friday 1 February	Remove mangrove seedlings from Swan and Wader Ponds	7.00am Wagtail Way, Ash Island	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Tuesday 5 February	Mid-week Outing - Bluegum Hills Reg Park Minmi/Pambalong NR	7.30am Bluegum Hills Regional Park, Minmi	Val and Don Moon 4359 1670
Wednesday 6 February	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	Mick Roderick 0421761237 All members welcome
Saturday 9 February	Hunter Wader Survey	8.00 am Ash Island 8.30 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 Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay
Monday 11 February	Port Stephens Waterbird Survey	9.00am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 Please ring to confirm - limited spaces available
Wednesday 13 February	AGM & Club Night	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre, Shortland	Guest Speaker: TBA
Friday 15 February	Remove mangrove seedlings from Swan and Wader Ponds	7.00am Wagtail Way, Ash Island	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785