



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with Bird Observation and Conservation Australia

NEWSLETTER

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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



“Observing the birdlife at Stockton Sandspit”, a three-minute video produced for the ABC Open **One On One: River Stories**, celebrates Tom Clarke’s long-standing care of and commitment to the birds and habitat on Stockton Sandspit along with Darryl Luck’s superb photography. The video will be screened on **ABC News 24 on Monday 20 February**. It is scheduled as an interstitial, appearing between two programs around 9.55am and again at 8.55pm. If you miss it on the big screen, you can watch it anytime on the ABC website at:

<http://www.abc.net.au/newcastle/photos/videos/?ref=nav#feature>



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President's Column

Welcome to another year of great birding experiences and active involvement in the life of HBOC during 2012.

One of the tasks requiring attention when Christmas and New Year festivities are over is that of putting together the HBOC Annual Report for the previous year. In the process of doing so one can only be impressed by the high level of activity that occurs within this energetic Club and which is reviewed in the Annual Report. Although an overview will be presented at the AGM in February, you are strongly encouraged to read both the overview and the full reports from the various sections of the Club when they are published on the HBOC website sometime after the AGM.

As this will be my last Column as President I will take the liberty of offering a personal reflection on several matters. As I have mentioned before, HBOC has a membership with a diversity of interests and needs ranging through recreational activities, field studies, conservation, education and photography, all driven by the shared enjoyment of birds and the desire to ensure their future. This mix however, raises the challenge of keeping these different aspects in balance while promoting each area to the benefit of members. This challenge was met to a reasonable degree during 2011 as attempts to better integrate both leisure and conservation into the birdwatching experience started to reap benefits. Meeting challenges such as this is well served by the traditional, although at times difficult, consensus method of decision making that operates throughout the Club but which, of course, generates healthy albeit at times robust debate.

The diversity of HBOC endeavours and increasing levels of need stemming from the community will necessitate HBOC establishing a set of future priorities/targets that have high impact and are achievable within the volunteer resources of the Club. HBOC, despite a desire to do so and with already high levels of goodwill, should not attempt to address every need and concern, so the prudent identification of priorities will be essential. The setting and achievement of identified priorities will safeguard the HBOC volunteer resource base, uphold HBOC's reputation and in time further enlarge HBOC's already significant circle of influence with resulting benefits for the Region's birdlife.

In 2011 the Committee initiated a strategy to address the issue of "duty of care" within the organisation. Work on developing protocols and record keeping still needs to be completed before the issue is raised for membership consultation and approval. OH&S legislation operative from 1st January 2012 will potentially place volunteer organisations such as HBOC under revised regulatory requirements similar to those applying to employers and

employees. An early resolution of this administrative matter in 2012 is indicated.

As in previous years HBOC was again assisted in achieving its aims through the continued support of other organisations within the Hunter Region. The fostering of collaborative efforts is, and will continue to be an important aspect of the role of Club management and that of the membership in general. The benefits of these collaborations are not just evident as financial support but rather as better communication, with the exchange of information and development of mutual understanding. This results in improved conservation outcomes for our birds which are under increasing environmental pressure.

Environmental entities such as HBOC possess, through their collective experience and specialist expertise, a "treasure trove" of knowledge that is invaluable for promoting the behavioural change necessary for effective conservation of the environment. I think it is incumbent upon the Club, as a custodian of this type of knowledge, to make its best endeavours to appropriately share this knowledge with the wider community at governmental, corporate and general public levels. Whether it be through technical publications, correspondence, newsletter, website, presentations, the media or members' personal interactions with the public at field days and displays, it will be via this educative process, (and also through its collaborative relationships) that HBOC will be able to influence long-term behavioural changes necessary to ensure a sustainable environment.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all members of the Club committees for their thoughtful input and dedication to maintaining HBOC as a respected, independent environmental organisation in the Hunter Region. As in previous years we have all benefitted from the regular attendance of (for want of a better word) "ex officio" members at the committee meetings. Their collective high levels of experience and contribution to continuity are always greatly valued. I also thank all of those who have found ways to direct their love of birds into practical ways of assisting the membership, the community and for improving the environmental outcomes for birdlife.

I have found my journey as President to have been very satisfying and rewarding primarily due to the generosity of spirit, cooperation, sound advice, and friendship that I have received from willing mentors and indeed from you all. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute and be a part of this wonderful Club. Great birding in 2012.

Paul Baird

Club Activity Reports

Fernleigh Track – Redhead

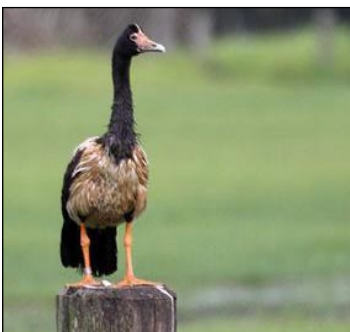
Tuesday 6 December 2011

Our last outing for the year was to the new part of Fernleigh Track at Redhead which continues south to Belmont. We only went part of the way, returning along the dirt road which runs adjacent to the track. We saw and heard 52 species which included Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Superb and Variegated Fairy-wrens, White-browed Scrubwren, Lewin's, Yellow-faced and White-cheeked Honeyeaters, Golden and Rufous Whistlers, Grey and Rufous Fantails, Red and Little Wattlebirds, Grey Shrike-thrush, Dollarbird, Figbird, Olive-backed Oriole, White-faced and White-necked Herons and a Swamp Harrier.

After morning tea at Webb Park, Redhead, and a quick look at the ocean, we drove down to the southern end of Cain Street, Redhead (behind the caravan park), and explored tracks and the boardwalk over the edge of Jewells Swamp. Thirty-five species were seen including 2 Black Swans near their nest, Chestnut Teal with 4 juveniles, Pacific Black Ducks, 1 juvenile Dusky Moorhen (continually calling for its parents), Willie Wagtail and Magpie-larks sitting on nests, Grey Fantail feeding young and a Nankeen Kestrel.

A total of 64 different species were seen for the morning's outing and the 22 people present enjoyed these two new areas which were well worth visiting. Some people later went to the Central Charlestown Leagues Club for a meal and some Christmas cheer.

Val Moon



Ash Island: Magpie Goose at Water Ribbon Swale, and White-faced Herons above Milhams Pond - Terry Fenning



Latham's Snipe Count

18 December 2011

HBOC has conducted an annual Latham's Snipe Count each December since 1997, focussing on Pambalong Nature Reserve with additional opportunistic surveys of other wetlands in the Lower Hunter. This year other sites included Newcastle Wetlands Reserve, Market Swamp, Lenaghans Swamp, Hexham Swamp, Pacific Dunes Golf Course at Medowie, a drainage line from Grahamstown Dam at Raymond Terrace and Ash Island.

Because of their cryptic colouring, excellent camouflage and crepuscular feeding, it is generally necessary to flush Latham's Snipe during the day in order to count them. The survey of Pambalong Nature Reserve requires beaters to walk through the swamp, flushing birds towards counters stationed on the disused railway line that traverses the wetland. Unfortunately for the last two years Alligator Weed infestation has precluded walking through the swamp as it is very easy to spread this noxious weed by breaking small pieces off and transferring them to uninfected areas. However, a known roost site in long grass at the southern shore of the wetland has been surveyed each year. This year, no snipe were found at Pambalong Nature Reserve from this limited survey.

The main snipe search was relocated to Ash Island where several sites were targeted by a keen group of seven HBOC members. Lots of waterbirds were enjoying the lush vegetation and high water level in Water Ribbon Swale but no snipe were seen. The southern end of Milhams Pond had around 40 White-faced Herons, 2 Red-kneed Dotterels and 3 Eastern Curlew but no snipe. Phoenix Flat had a few White-faced Herons and 2 Masked Lapwing but no snipe. Teal Waters had 3 Royal Spoonbills and 1 Chestnut Teal but no snipe. Finally our diligent searches paid off with 3 Latham's Snipe flushed at the Community Garden on Ash Island.

Results for sites surveyed on 18 December 2012:

Newcastle Wetlands Reserve	0
Market Swamp	0
Hexham Swamp	6
Lenaghans Swamp	0
Pacific Dunes Golf Course, Medowie	18
Drainage line from Grahamstown Dam	14
Community Farm, Ash Island	3

Liz Crawford

Club Activity Reports cont.

Ash Island

22 January 2012

Our leader, Ann Lindsey, met 9 people in the front car park at 8am and, after duly signing in, we moved to the dairy, car-pooled and headed off to Wagtail Way. At this point, we were joined by another 4 people – naturally looking for the elusive Eastern Yellow Wagtail – unfortunately not seen on this outing.

It was 22 degrees, overcast but very windy and this affected our birding for the day. The birds were sensible and hid in bays and corners to avoid being buffeted.

We had a large flock of Welcome Swallows flying low over the water – joined by a small but conspicuous group of Fairy Martins. We had good views of 2 European Goldfinches eating thistle – a beautiful looking bird. And, thanks to Ann, we had good binocular views of a White-winged Black Tern – a new bird for several people. (It was doing leg and wing exercises by sitting on a low post in Swan Pond facing into the wind and trying to balance).

We also checked out the gate area on north Wagtail Way. Again, no Wagtail or Painted Snipe but White-breasted Woodswallows feeding young, Grey Fantails feeding two insistent young and a Latham's Snipe.

We know we had Great and Little Egret and may have had Intermediate but the wind was making identification difficult. We had close views of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and there were a couple of hundred Black-winged Stilt and a few Royal Spoonbills. Plus we had White-fronted Chats and Australasian Pipits.

It was also fairly quiet on the raptor front – 1 Swamp Harrier, 1 Brown Falcon, 1 Nankeen Kestrel and 2 Whistling Kites.

The wind got a bit much so we adjourned to the Radar Hut for a late morning tea and then went in various directions – some to Hexham Swamp.

Overall, we had 51 birds (not bad in the conditions) with some exciting and interesting sightings.

Anthony Gooden

Hexham Swamp

22 January 2012

After lunch on the field outing to Ash Island Ann kindly offered to take those who wanted to on a reccce of the Hexham Swamp Nature Reserve. We entered off Woodlands Close, gathered into two vehicles, and followed the track alongside the railway line. We passed through two unlocked gates, and Ann pointed out where not to go (private property). The water pipeline now runs underground. Opening of the floodgates and subsequent inundation with tidal salt water is changing the ecology. There are few trees, and many islands with clumps of vegetation, though mangroves are reappearing. The CMA site http://www.hcr.cma.nsw.gov.au/articles/news.asp?news_id=260 has more information.



Painted Snipe at Hexham Swamp - Helen Windon

Birds seen included Glossy Ibis, sharing an island with Australian White Ibis and White-faced Heron, Red-kneed Dotterel and White-breasted Woodswallows. Highlight for me was the group of 4 Australian Painted Snipe, close to the road. Thanks Ann, for this magic moment.

Helen Windon

Twitchathon 2011 Reports

The Dry-throated Buzzards 2011 Twitchathon

The BASNA Twitchathon 2010 saw the Buzzards compete the Main Race on bikes, scoring a respectable 150 species and raising just short of \$1000 sponsorship. The event tested the water as to both the logistics of competing on bikes and what was achievable. The rains out west and subsequent dearth of spring arrivals in the Hunter last year limited the potential yield. This was further compounded by the unsympathetic timing of the tides at Stockton Sandspit. However, 2011 saw both a return to form of the Hunter and a more favourable tide. The limitations of last year were gone and the potential for amassing a big score on the bikes presented itself. The Buzzards' aims this year were to improve on last year's score, break the \$1000 sponsorship mark and lay to rest the demon of Brown Thornbill, which we'd missed on our previous two Twitchathon attempts.

So, when the dust of the 2010 Twitch finally settled the outline plan for 2011 was drawn up. The Sunday afternoon high tide would allow the route potential to be optimised by starting west of the Range (Sugarloaf Range - obviously). Improvements could be made on the quality of both the woodland and rainforest birding options. Saturday's ride would start in a prime Lower Hunter woodland spot and would end in the Watagan Mountains. Sunday would begin at a true rainforest site, take in some quality mopping opportunities in the morning and spend the afternoon in the estuary. One of the flaws of last year's ride was to include some serious undulations on Sunday afternoon. This mistake was rectified for 2011 and although the total ride distance would be much greater, climbs would be restricted to the morning only. The increased ambition of this year's ride required the assistance of a support crew to deliver and set up camp in the Watagans, cook breakfast and pack up camp - the Buzzards would have neither the time or energy to do this themselves. This assistance came in the form of Chicken George, who stepped down from the riding team, and his brother El Davido.

As spring arrived, so too did the migrants. Both wetland and woodland friends who were sorely missed in 2010 were pouring back into the greatest valley on the east coast. You could barely move without stepping on a White-necked Heron. Things were looking good - apart from the weather that is. It seemed a bit like Groundhog Day watching the weather forecast like a hawk (or should that be buzzard?) in the week leading up to the event. As was the case with the previous year, a rainy weekend was predicted and, as last year, this rain fortunately did not materialise - well, not for a while at least.

The Buzzards spent much of Saturday preparing their steeds for battle. Well, this fell largely on the shoulders of Baggers, our resident bike mechanic, with Miyagi and Cliff watching intently, and hopefully learning. He must have spent around four hours getting his hands dirty and we certainly would have been in no fit state to compete without him. After a quick lunch at Cliff's and an obligatory beer (incidentally a great home-brewed American IPA) it was off to the starting

location. A late flurry of scintillating reports emerging from the former jewel-in-the-crown of Lower Hunter woodland sites saw a switch in plan from starting at Kitchener to starting at the Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ) (near Kurri), which also meant an additional 11km of riding. The quality of this treasured woodland site was truly awesome, despite the best attempts of the rich and greedy to wipe it from the face of the earth. At least the nice road provides for easy access. An oiling trip the day before had delivered amongst others White-winged Triller, White-browed Woodswallow, Turquoise Parrot and Painted Button-Quail. So after parking the car at Kurri Hospital, dismounting the bikes from the rack and assembling our gear, we waited at the end of the cul-de-sac for the show to begin...

In typical fashion, five minutes before the race began a small flock of Needletails flew overhead, sending Miyagi into instant fretting mode - checking with Cliff every 10 seconds whether it was time to start yet. After what seemed like forever and a day, the hallowed four o'clock of the last Saturday afternoon in October ticked over and the Buzzards were out of the traps and eager to rail up. Little Lorikeet flew over and the well-oiled White-cheeked Honeyeater was still glued to his branch. The Triller soon let rip, just before a squadron of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos performed an unexpected and gratefully received fly-past. Up jumped a little friend to join Mr White-cheeked Honeyeater in his tree - Double-barred Finch - get there! The Woodswallows then took to the air, much diminished in their previous numbers. Only White-browed could be spotted unfortunately, with no Maskeds or Dusks presenting themselves. Both Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo and Rufous Songlark obliged us with their songs before the Needletails made a re-appearance, much to Miyagi's relief. After Jacky Winter was seen perching in the tree overhead it was time to make tracks. It was 16:20 and time was ticking.

The ride between HEZ and Kearsley provided little in significant ticks, with Fuscous Honeyeater being the only standout. Brush Cuckoo was heard at the top of the Kearsley fire trail before descending to Kitchener. Hardhead and Grey Teal were added to the list from the dam before a distant Wonga Pigeon was heard calling from the gully below. A flock of Brown-headed Honeyeaters flew overhead and a White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike was also seen. However, the woodland seemed quiet with generally little activity. With time pressing it was time to press on to Quorrobolong before dusk with the hope of grabbing a raptor or two. The ride to Quorrobolong picked up White-throated Gerygone, Grey-crowned Babbler, Red-rumped Parrot, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and White-winged Chough. Miyagi also managed to get the other Buzzards on to a Brown Thornbill, after hearing several earlier in the day - the monkey was finally off the back. The wetlands at Quorrobolong were true to form, delivering White-necked Heron and both Spoonbill species. The well-oiled Blue-faced Honeyeaters were easily added, as was Long-billed Corella. The late afternoon did not provide the raptors that were hoped for and the Buzzards kicked their heels waiting for dusk to herald their ascent of Heaton Road and into the Watagans.

Twitchathon 2011 Reports cont.

It did not take long for the first night bird to fall. An Owl-Nightjar was heard calling down to the left, shortly followed by a Boobook up to the right. The Buzzards had stopped for a brief rest to listen, which proved to be very fortunate. A different call was heard distinctly down to the left and Miyagi thought it could possibly be White-throated Nightjar. The Buzzards listened intently for it to call again, which it eventually did and confirmed the suspected identification. This was our best bird of the race so far and was met with much rejoicing - what a scalp to claim. It was looking possible for a five-or-six nocturnal bird haul, but unfortunately no more were added - not even Tawny Frogmouth, which is now our nemesis bird for the Twitch and a number one target for next year. Despite Miyagi's best attempts to call up a Powerful Owl or Sooty Owl on the ride across the Watagans or at camp, neither responded. The climb up the back of the Watagans is fairly serious, being around 2.5km in length 10% in grade and entirely unsealed - it certainly tested the Buzzards to the limit, particularly Cliffy, who was struggling with a lack of light until Miyagi lit up half the forest with his head torch. Chicken George and El Davido were waiting for us at camp with the tents already erected and ice-cold beers at the ready. Sausage sangers were soon cooked up and we relaxed over a few Hefeweizens.

The dawn chorus was attended at Boarding House Dam and soon Bassian Thrush, Rose Robin, Superb Lyrebird and Black-faced Monarch were heard. Brown Cuckoo-Dove and Satin Bowerbird shortly followed, but it was a long wait for the Catbird to let out his anticipated wail. No time was lost in returning to the picnic area to devour our bacon and egg muffins that the support crew had kindly been preparing. A Regent Bowerbird graced us with its presence - perching high on the branch of a dead tree. Just as breakfast was finished and Miyagi was busy wiping the yolk from his face, up went the call - "Raptor!" As we frantically scrambled for our bins the bird fortunately perched in the top of the dead tree, its crest clearly visible - "Baza!" Our first raptor of the race and a damn good one at that. Leaving the guys to clear up, we left Boarding House Dam with everything we'd expected and more. It was time to climb back on to the top of the range and back down Heaton Road. Cicadabird and Leaden Flycatcher were both heard and we stopped briefly for Baggers to fix up Cliff's gearing. We left the forest some 20 minutes ahead of schedule and re-emerged into the open country and immediately picking up the Hobby we'd hoped for yesterday.

It was largely a non-stop ride to Mulbring, which took in our last significant climb of the route, along Sandy Creek Road. It also took in a bonus tick in the form of maybe eight Gang-gangs flying and calling alongside us. Mulbring added Tree Martin, Rainbow Bee-eater, Pheasant Coucal and the ever-present Torresian Crow to the list and the customary visit to the shop to empty the fridge of its contents of cold liquids. We departed Mulbring still ahead of schedule and planned to ride pretty much non-stop from here to Lenaghans, where we had arranged for lunch to be delivered. The only essential stop on this leg of the journey was at John Brown's Lagoon. This proved to be highly successful, with Cliffy on fine form

- spotting Intermediate Egret, Darter, Sea-Eagle and a pair of Comb-crested Jacanas! We arrived at Lenaghans earlier than intended and soon added both Ibis species, Whistling Kite and Swamp Harrier before our lunch arrived. Our work colleague, Daniel Carpenter, and his family had kindly offered to bring us lunch, which turned out to be one of the race highlights. A smorgasbord of sandwiches was on offer, with four different fillings, immaculately presented and nothing short of delicious. Topped off with a drink of Gatorade, it was a feast fit for kings, let alone Buzzards. It proved very difficult to say goodbye and get back on the bikes.

With our schedule comfort margin now reduced to 10 minutes we pressed on to Ash Island, picking up an unexpected bonus of Musk Lorikeet, in Tarro of all places. Riding along the highway the predicted storms finally arrived and we began to get wet. The full brunt of the storm didn't hit us until we were in the middle of Ash Island, where we spent an uncomfortable period being lashed with rain and narrowly avoiding some closer-than-desired lightning bolts. Despite the deterioration in the weather we still managed to connect with the majority of our target birds, including Mangrove Gerygone, both Grassbird species, both Dotterels, Aussie Pipit and White-fronted Chat. Red-necked Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Sharp-tailed and Marsh Sandpipers were added through cloudy, rain-soaked binoculars before the sky finally cleared. A quick scan of Deep Pond yielded the expected Musk Duck and Hoary-headed Grebe and a couple of White-breasted Woodswallows were seen drying themselves on the wires. Unfortunately, but perhaps not unexpectedly, there was to be no repeat appearance of the Aussie Bittern that we flushed on our pre-Twitch oiling trip, or of the Chestnut-breasted Mannikins for that matter.

The next stop on the agenda was Stockton Sandspit and the ride there seemed much longer than it actually is, being along a relatively birdless and busy route whilst battling a very unsympathetic head-wind. We traversed Stockton Bridge using the pedestrian crossing as the road is a notoriously dangerous spot for cyclists and we were determined to finish the event in one piece. There were a few teams congregating at the Spit when we arrived and we set about the business of scanning for the required waders. Our initial excitement soon waned as it appeared we had timed our arrival fairly poorly, not that we had much choice in this, being restricted to near-zero flexibility by the cycling option. It was a big tide and we had hoped this would push the birds from the Dykes to roost on the Spit. This had happened to some degree, but not to the extent that we had hoped. Instead we were resolved to damage limitation, having to leave shortly to catch the ferry. The usual suspects were there, but we missed the Terns, Whimbrel and Curlew Sandpiper amongst others.

Having been going so well before arriving at Stockton, the poor showing took the wind out of our sails somewhat. It was now going to be a case of completing the race and hoping that our tally was as high as we were hoping. Two of our remaining "can't miss" birds fell on the ride to the ferry, Figbird and Little Wattlebird. Common Terns were also found roosting on a buoy. Once we'd made the trip across the Hunter River we

Twitchathon 2011 Reports cont.

had one more site left before the 15km ride to the finish line - Newcastle Baths. Having been so productive for us last year we were hoping for a repeat performance. This was not to be and it was further disappointment as we added only a single bird, Ruddy Turnstone. We couldn't locate any Shearwaters or a Sooty Oystercatcher and missing this was regarded as our biggest dip. Little did we know that our biggest downer was yet to come.

We made excellent progress cycling through town and were looking like arriving at the Wetlands Centre with over 20 minutes to spare. Then disaster struck. Having crossed over Croudace Street and now making progress along the cycle path into Jesmond, Miyagi was finding the cycling unexpectedly harder than envisaged. Nervously glancing down at his rear tyre he thought it was bulging slightly. By the time we reached the Jesmond roundabout the tyre was well and truly flat. Poor Baggers was feeling the pressure - cometh the hour, cometh the man. Being far and away the most accomplished tyre-changer in the team, all eyes were on him as he set about replacing the damaged tube. He quickly located the culprit (a sizeable piece of glass) and removed it from the tyre. Out went the old tube and in came the new one. All was going well until it appeared the tube was almost 2" too long for the tyre. It was the right tube but it wasn't going to behave and fit where it should do, despite much effort and cursing on Baggers part. With the kinky tube manhandled into the tyre, tyre back on the rim and wheel back on the bike we didn't dare fill it to pressure for fear of bursting it again, but that was OK, we still had 15 minutes available to cycle the final 3km to the finish line. Back on the bikes we got and 20 yards we made it before Cliffy cried out "hang on, I've got a flat too!" This could not be happening - we'd cycled 135km without a hitch, including over 30km on sandy fire trails, rocky mountain roads and rugged rail ballast and now with 3km to go in suburban Newcastle we'd picked up two flat tyres. We knew we didn't have time to change another tyre so we reluctantly pumped it back up knowing that we'd have to do this two or three times more on the ride up to Shortland.

The home run was tough going, with two of us riding on under-inflated tyres, little gas left in the tank and not enough time on the clock. We hurtled through the reception of the Wetlands Centre without paying (we came back in and paid later) and Cliffy tripped and nearly crashed into the applauding crowd. We'd made it there only two minutes late (or was that with only 10 seconds to go?) and cheekily added Magpie Goose to the list, as they were stood in full view from the windows of the Centre. At this moment the Buzzards had no idea how many birds they'd clocked up and Miyagi frantically ticked off their species on the sheet and added them up, an impressive 170 species. We should have felt ecstatic with our achievement, but the underwhelming final hours of the event coupled with the frantic ending left us feeling... nothing much really, it was difficult to take it all in. Anyway, we're feeling good about it now and are already looking ahead to next year's event. If we'd timed Stockton Sandspit better and had some more luck with raptors, then we could have had 180 species. However, the distance we rode left little or no room for error and there was too much pressure to be constantly on the move, reducing

our opportunities to maybe grab a few more species. Next year's plan will be to reduce the riding distance whilst still leaving scope to further improve our score again. Maybe we'll even break through the hallowed 180 barrier to win the species per kilometre prize.

Miyagi Buzzard

Varied Wrenegades Twitchathon 2011

With lots of sponsors signed up for bonuses if we cracked our 200 target, we set off early on Saturday morning for the upper Hunter, to check out Baerami and Widden valleys for the best starting point. Reconnaissance early in October had suggested that Baerami might be better than Widden this year, but we needed to check Widden just in case it had improved significantly as it was a shorter distance to travel and gave us more options. A Cicadabird in Widden tempted us to stay there, but in the end, we decided to start 30 km up the Baerami valley in the National Park, where we rapidly ticked off numerous woodland species, including seven honeyeaters, Speckled Warbler, White-throated Gerygone, White-throated and Brown Treecreepers, White-winged Triller and Common Bronzewing. As we drove back down the valley, we failed to find any Red-rumped Parrots which had been nesting in numerous fence posts in previous years; but we did find a solitary King Parrot as well as White-winged Choughs, Rainbow Bee-eaters, Little Ravens and Pallid Cuckoos. By the time we got to the Goulburn River rest area on our way to Widden, we had 63 species. We stopped briefly to twitch a pair of Black-fronted Dotterel that we had spotted earlier in the river channel and scored a Collared Sparrowhawk as well as Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater. A short distance into Widden valley we stopped to search for White-backed Swallow at our favourite spot. Conditions looked perfect - the air thick with insects backlit by the afternoon sun and numerous Welcome Swallows swooping low over the paddocks. We searched high, above the trees lining the creek banks, for the singularly beautiful white back of this distinctive bird - but saw only starlings and Rufous Songlarks wheeling into the sky. About to leave, we scanned one last time and there it was, flying fast to the left, behind some casuarinas, but only one of us had seen it... a desperate running commentary led us all to pinpoint the bird and we triumphantly ticked it up!

It was already well past 6pm when we cruised down the hill past James Estate Winery, heading for Old Yarrowa Road and Martindale. An interesting raptor brought us to a stop - it flushed a Brown Quail as it cruised low over the grass and disappeared behind some trees. Thinking we were onto a Spotted Harrier, we all poured out of the car for a better look but it morphed into a Little Eagle - perhaps not as special as a Spotted Harrier, but a nice bird to add to the list. Including some waterfowl from the dams, we now had 75 species.

Woodland near Kings Gap used to be a good place for Brown Treecreeper, Diamond Firetail, and Hooded Robin - today we found only Dusky Woodswallow...

Twitchathon 2011 Reports cont.

The light was fading fast as we made our way towards Martindale, but all was quiet when we reached Medhurst Bridge – we were too late, the birds had gone to bed. Our long drive down Baerami Valley was now starting to tell – we wouldn't be able to reach several other special areas on our usual Saturday afternoon route – we had run out of time. However we did find Tawny Frogmouth – on a nest – and Dollarbird during our drive, bringing the score to 81. Somewhere near Jerrys Plains the headlights suddenly lit up an amazing White-throated Nightjar resting on the road – hoping it would still be there we chucked a yuey and headed back for a second look – it stayed, then flew a short distance and landed on the road again – giving us a fabulous long look before it flew off into the darkness.

Buoyed by this delightful encounter we carried on to Maitland, crossed the Belmore Bridge over to Lorn and searched for Banded Lapwings on the turf farms . . . unsuccessfully. A beautiful Barn Owl, spotlighted as it took off from a fence post, gave us a thrill as it flew silently off over the paddocks. We only ever see these night birds if we're out looking for them – and Twitchathon gives us a great excuse to go searching!

White Rock campsite at Allyn River is our usual sleeping spot – but tonight we found our way barred by a locked gate – the site was closed for maintenance! Disbelieving, we turned back to the nearest campsite and rolled out our bedding, hoping it wouldn't be too far to walk in the morning to reach our preferred rainforest track. . . Sleep came in snatches between gazes at an exquisite star-studded sky and struggles to stay on the sloping mattress. . . it was a relief to hear the Rufous Fantail start the dawn chorus, rapidly followed by the chop chop call of the Eastern Yellow Robin and the melody of the Golden Whistler. . . time to get up and start walking up the track! This is the best part of Twitchathon – ticking off rainforest birds as they introduce themselves at first light. Russet-tailed Thrush and Black-faced Monarch punctuated the morning stillness and then the urgent walk-to-work call of the Noisy Pitta blended in, along with nearby Green Catbirds and a distant Brown Cuckoo-Dove. A large dark shape hurried into the undergrowth – a Superb Lyrebird, its flutey call confirming the diagnosis. Munching on muesli bars, we headed back to the car, craning our necks to scan the tall tree-tops for pigeons. Back at camp we were rewarded when two Topknot Pigeons flew into a tall eucalypt and a Rose Robin showed off his gorgeous breast.

On a whim, we headed up towards the Forestry Hut at Allyn River, searching for a Brush Turkey – found two Superb Lyrebirds but no turkeys. Scanning the backlit trees we found the unmistakable sickle-shaped bill of a Paradise Riflebird – as a female foraged in the loose bark of a branch high up in a tall eucalypt – another Wow! moment!

Around 7.30am we pulled away from the rainforest and headed down the valley towards Paterson. Excitement unleashed at

the first river crossing when an Azure Kingfisher darted down the river – would we all see it in time? Then a second one appeared – and we all saw it! Tick it off! What a relief - now we could sail past all the other creek crossings without searching for this elusive species. Torresian Crows and a fabulous black and yellow Regent Bowerbird soon joined the list, along with White-headed Pigeon and Bar-shouldered Dove.

Gresford gave us House Sparrows and Figbirds and soon after a delightful party of Grey-crowned Babbler added to our tally. Koel and Brush Cuckoo were heard around Paterson, then off to Woodville where Cattle Egret graced the fields and Long-billed Corella foraged on a garden lawn. A quick visit to Green Wattle Creek added a few species and brought some rain – we waited amongst nearby houses for the rain to ease and Blue-faced Honeyeaters to fly past.

Waterfowl on swamps and dams dominated for the rest of the route into the Hunter Estuary. Threatening skies above the estuary finally let loose with a dense shroud of heavy rain – would this be the premature end of the Twitchathon? We bought some cappuccino to cheer us up and waited for the rain to ease. Eventually it did and we joined several other Twitchathon teams scanning the roosting shorebird flocks at Stockton Sandspit. From tiny Red-capped Plovers to elegant Red-necked Avocets, a dozen species were quickly added to the list. Then it was off to view the ocean near Newcastle Baths – offshore rain made it difficult to see into the misty distance, but gradually shearwaters emerged from the gloom and several species of terns were roosting on the rock platform. Stupidly, we didn't race down for a closer look and missed the Ruddy Turnstones.

Hexham Swamp provided us with several much-needed raptors and a single White-fronted Chat before we made our way to the Wetlands Centre for the final half hour and a chance to add Magpie Goose and Wandering Whistling-duck to the list. At one minute to four o'clock, a Buff-banded Rail stepped out of the reeds long enough for us to twitch it as our final 189th species!

Well short of our 200 goal, but gladdened by the many moments of joy during the Twitchathon, we were destined to gain more from our sponsors than we'd anticipated. One sponsor who'd promised a bonus for cracking 200 relented and gave us a bonus anyway – after all the Powerful Owl needs all the help it can get! Twitchathon is the only time of the year we feel free to ask our friends, relations, ex-workmates and neighbours for money for bird conservation – and because of the nature of the race, they all grin and support us – this year we have raised more than \$1500, with many thanks to all our sponsors.

Liz, Chris, Janeen and Bob

Money raised by the 2011 Twitchathon will be used by Birdlife Australia to fund a Project Officer to manage the Sydney Region's Powerful Owl Project.

Featured Birdwatching Site - Harrington and surrounds

Harrington, at the northern mouth of the Manning River, and nearby areas offer a range of habitats and can provide a wonderful day of birdwatching experiences. Be warned though, in summer time and especially at weekends, the crowds build up wherever there is water!

One of the delightful things to do is stroll along the breakwater, beautiful clean water on both sides of it, and watch the behaviour of the various waterbirds. Pelicans and cormorants (all 4 of our local species) abound at times, either feeding or roosting. Silver Gulls and Crested Terns are present all year; in summer time they are joined by 50-100+ Little and Common Terns, and often some White-fronted Terns in winter-spring. The latter are only seen roosting, but the Little Terns usually are more active – either from their fishing expeditions or because of alarm at the approach of some raptor. The Common Terns behave similarly but less dramatically.

Until mid 2011, shorebirds used to roost on a large sandbank about 500m up-river, opposite a sandspit extending north from Manning Point. Both the sandspit and the sandbank disappeared in a severe storm in June 2011. However, a new sandbank has formed directly in front of the fish-cleaning station at the start of the breakwater. This is very convenient for birdwatchers – you hardly need to move from the carpark! Godwits, plovers, stints, curlews and oystercatchers may be viewed readily (better by telescope) either roosting or foraging, depending on the tide. If you're fortunate, you may find some less common waders present – for example, some Sanderling or Red Knot. Sometimes even Red-necked Avocet are found there. Unfortunately Little Terns had a breeding colony on the sandspit that disappeared, and now there are very few pairs able to breed around Harrington (most pairs apparently relocated to Mudbishops Point instead).

Osprey and Brahminy Kite are the two most common raptors present, also Whistling Kites and occasionally a Sea-Eagle. It's fascinating to watch how these species interact with each other, and how all the other species in the Estuary respond to them. And there are many opportunities to watch these interactions!

The breakwater connects to an island in the Manning River which has a reasonable selection of bush birds present and also gives opportunities to view waterbirds feeding in the shallow water trapped behind the breakwater. Striated Herons are often seen in this area, and also Eastern Reef Egret occasionally roosts/feeds on the river side of the breakwater.



The new sandbank in the Manning River at Harrington, looking towards Manning Point village



Looking back towards the Coastal Patrol building and the start of the Harrington breakwater



Panorama of the Manning Estuary at Harrington, taken from the Pilot Hill Lookout

Three species of corvid occur at Harrington but Forest Raven is the most commonly encountered. It is interesting that, at the southern mouth of the Manning River, around at Old Bar/Mudbishops Point, Torresian Crows and Australian Ravens are mainly present.

Featured Birdwatching Site - Harrington and surrounds cont.

The road in to Harrington usually offers some great birdwatching too although there is a steady stream of traffic to contend with. Just before the Cattai Creek Bridge is a wetland, where it is safe to pull over, which often has good numbers of birds present. However, the paddocks on either side of the road, for several kilometres before the bridge, can have large flocks of feeding egrets (mainly Cattle Egret), ibis and herons (including White-necked Heron quite often). A pair of Black-necked Stork, sometimes with young, are regularly seen anywhere along this road including in the paddocks further beyond the bridge on the way in. It can be surprisingly difficult to locate these large birds though!

I often stay overnight at the Big Four camping & caravan park, which has plenty of birds in its own right plus has convenient access to a lagoon where waders often feed at low tide and I've been lucky enough to see a pair of Beach Stone-curlews there once (they are normally around at Mudbishops Point).

A little way beyond the caravan park (it is well within walkable distance) is Harrington Rainforest. Be warned – this is the mosquito capital of the world! But it also has some great birds, and it seems to be a Mecca for any rainforest bird on passage. I personally have never managed to find anything “rare” there although several others have done so. But I never tire of going there to see what has “turned up”. Noisy Pitta, Emerald Dove, Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Varied Triller, Topknot Pigeon, Regent Bowerbird are some examples. Spectacled Monarchs seem to be resident there now as I have found

them in winter as well as summer. There are at least 2 pairs present and they breed there.

About 30m north of the signposted walking track through the rainforest is the start of the old road to Crowdy Head. This is also worth visiting as it provides another exposure to the rainforest, although you have to pick your way more carefully through it due to fallen trees etc. Some local kids have constructed a bike run through part of it, which has the benefit of providing a surer path for a while. You can walk all the way through to a carpark on the other side, and this is the alternative way to access this area i.e. drive to the carpark and walk in from there.

About 10 km north of Harrington is Crowdy Head, which is always worth a visit. In winter gannets fish in and around the harbour, you can scan for seabirds from the lighthouse (and for whales in winter). There is a great rock platform below the Head (the track to it starts from near the beach) where I have sometimes found Sooty Oystercatcher hunting and, less frequently, Eastern Reef Egret. Red-backed Fairy-wrens are sometimes in the area too (and Superbs – spot the difference!). Crowdy Bay NP is nearby, and sometimes you can see a Square-tailed Kite hunting over the trees. I have found Grass Owls in the NP although that was quite a while ago.

There are many other great spots in the Manning Valley that I will tell you about sometime. But a visit to the Harrington area is a great introduction to the delights of the Manning.

Alan Stuart

HBOC Needs Your Bird Sightings

When compiling the Annual Hunter Region Bird Report, Alan Stuart uses all the records submitted from Club Outings, from regular surveys by the Club, from the Birds Australia Atlas Database and from individual members. The latter are critically important in providing data about breeding birds as well as building up a regional picture of bird distribution. If you do not report your sightings to the Birds Australia Atlas, please report your sightings to our Records Officer, Sue Hamonet on ninox@exemail.com.au or direct to Alan Stuart on almarosa@bigpond.com

HBOC record forms are available on our website at <http://www.hboc.org.au/index.cfm?menukey=6>

New Members

The Club extends a warm welcome to: Grahame and Anne Feletti of Charlestown. We hope to meet you at Club outings and meetings.

Highlights of the 2011 Hunter Region Annual Bird Report

Note: Not all 2011 records have been received and this is an interim analysis based on the data available in January 2012. The 2011 Hunter Region Annual Bird Report will be the definitive analysis.

1. Some Intriguing Records

Magpie Goose – first records from Ash Island for several years, with peak count of 45 birds in December and some pairs breeding.

Plumed Whistling-Duck – first records from Upper Lansdowne (200+ birds in August) and Keinbah (up to 70+ birds in October and December).

White-throated Nightjar – 6 birds flying over a paddock near Carrington/Tahlee in April.

Black-necked Stork – many records of a pair in the lower Hunter, as well as the usual records from the Cooperook-Harrington, Bulahdelah and Forster areas.

Australasian Bittern – several records, including six birds in November during a targeted survey.

Black Petrel – 3 birds off Port Stephens in November.

Bush Stone-curlew – first records from the Manning Valley for several decades, with a bird roosting at Harrington for much of March and then up to 3 birds roosting nearby in July.

Beach Stone-curlew – first record of a pair in Port Stephens; they were present there all year, moving between Dowardee Island and Soldiers Point. The pair at Manning Entrance State Park successfully raised another chick.

Comb-crested Jacana – up to 7 birds at Cattai Wetlands during the year and breeding; also records from 4 other locations.

Australian Painted Snipe – in November up to 7 birds on Ash Island and 1 bird near Ellalong.

Long-tailed Jaeger – 7 birds off Port Stephens in March.

White-winged Black Tern – several records in the Hunter Estuary over January-March and in December.

Swift Parrot – up to ~100 birds at Dora Creek in August and some records from other locations of lesser numbers in April-May.

Turquoise Parrot – a bird at Cape Hawke in March may be a range extension for the Myall Lake NP population.

Rufous Scrub-bird – 26 confirmed territories were identified in the Gloucester Tops.

Regent Honeyeater – up to 13 birds at Morisset in May-June and August.

Painted Honeyeater – 3-4 birds at the Medhurst Bridge over September-December.

Varied Triller – a bird at Cape Hawke August and October; this suggests that a southwards range extension may be occurring as there are no previously known records from south of the Manning Estuary.

Masked Woodswallow – small numbers at Broke and Kurri Kurri in September-October.

White-browed Woodswallow – 400-450 birds flying over Broke in September and 600+ near Kurri Kurri in October.

Spectacled Monarch – a pair at Saltwater NP in March and September-October, and at Wallingat NP in September, suggesting that a southwards range extension may be occurring.

Pale-yellow Robin – reconfirmation of birds at the coastal southern limit of the range, at Violet Hill Road Myall Lakes NP in June.

2. Noteworthy Numbers

Grey Teal – 950-1,200+ birds at Hexham Swamp over June-August, 500+ birds several times at Ash Island from July onwards and 400+ birds at the Wetlands Centre in August.

Chestnut Teal – 4,497 birds in the lower Hunter in April (~4.5% of the world population) and >3,000 birds in March and May.

Topknot Pigeon – 150+ birds at Moorland in April and Gloucester in April-May.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher – 280+ birds estimated to have been in Region in the first half of the year.

Red-necked Avocet – only present in low numbers in the Hunter Estuary in the first half of the year, but the counts grew to 1,000+ birds subsequently.

Highlights of the 2011 Annual Bird Report cont.

Double-banded Plover – 137 birds at Newcastle Bight in May and 123 at Manning Estuary in June.

Banded Lapwing – 50-60 birds near Williamtown in May and 20+ birds at Newcastle Bight in August.

Black-tailed Godwit – lowest Hunter Estuary peak count on record: 116 birds in February.

Bar-tailed Godwit – first time ever that the Hunter Estuary peak count has been <1,000 birds (the peak count was just 909 birds, in October).

Eastern Curlew – lowest Hunter Estuary peak count on record: 312 birds in October; Port Stephens is now the more important site for this species in NSW.

Red Knot – about 1,000 birds at Milhams Pond, Ash Island in October.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper – 1,600 birds at Ash Island in November (1% of the Flyway population).

Curlew Sandpiper – pathetically low peak count of just 138 birds in January which is >40% decrease on the 2010 peak count after a decade of continual decline in numbers.

Little Tern – 726 birds between Old Bar - Crowdy Head in December including 246 in breeding plumage.

Musk Lorikeet – 100+ birds roosting at Lambton in May.

3. Noteworthy Breeding Records

Australian Pelican – it was confirmed that they still breed in Wallis Lake; a colony of approximately 100 pairs was on Snake Island in the latter part of the year.



Eastern Great Egrets nesting at Hunter Wetlands Centre - Chris Herbert

Eastern Great Egret – 64 nests at the Hunter Wetlands Centre in December; this is the largest breeding colony in the Region since the Bird Reports commenced (in 1993), although it is still substantially lower than the count of 198 pairs nesting at the Wetlands Centre in 1987/88.

Intermediate Egret – 42 nests at the Hunter Wetlands Centre in December; this is the largest breeding colony in the Region since the Bird Reports commenced, although it is still substantially lower than the count of 453 pairs nesting at the Wetlands Centre in 1987/88.

4. Missing, or Mainly So

No 2011 records were received for the following species: Western Gerygone, Southern Whiteface, Singing Honeyeater, Plum-headed Finch, and there were only two records of Diamond Firetail – at Jones Reserve Rd in May and near Baerami Creek in October. Hardhead, Hoary-headed Grebe, White-necked Heron and Yellow-billed Spoonbill were absent initially but progressively began to return from about March onwards. Some other species:

Pink-eared Duck – the only record was of two birds at Morpeth Wastewater Treatment Works in July.

Baillon's Crake – the only records were of single birds at Walka Water Works in October and November.

Red-kneed Dotterel – the only records were of low numbers (<20) at Ash Island in October/November.

5. Rarities

23 species which are rare or very uncommon in the Region were reported in 2011. Many of these have yet to be assessed by HBOC's Records Appraisal Committee; full details will appear in the 2011 Annual Bird Report.

Alan Stuart



Pelican colony on Snake Island, Wallis Lake - Greg Crisp

Mangrove Removal at Windeyers Reach Nocturnal Roost

Windeyers Reach, an identified nocturnal roost site for shorebirds, is located on the North Arm of the Hunter River in Hunter Wetlands National Park. A big concern for shorebird advocates has been the influx of immature mangroves into the site which are dominating the extensive saltmarsh meadow and tidal ponds where shorebirds prefer to roost. The mangrove incursion means that the shorebirds are less inclined to roost there as they like a clear line-of-sight to avoid potential predators.

NPWS has started removing mangroves from the Windeyers Reach nocturnal roost site to enhance this habitat for waders. In December 2011, NPWS Bush Regenerator/Volunteer Coordinator, Boyd Carney, organised our first working crew of ten NPWS staff to tackle the mangroves. Launching canoes from Riverside Park on Ash Island, we took 45 minutes to reach the difficult to access site using the tides to help us along. We used loppers and secateurs to chop the mangroves below the high-tide mark and concentrated our efforts on the main pond closest to the river, with a few ibis overseeing the job. We beat a hasty retreat in the afternoon before any shorebirds arrived and used the rising tide to canoe back up the river. Adjacent to the site are the remnants of a habitation site with intact

brick well and furrows; if anyone has more information on this site please contact Jo Erskine at the Newcastle NPWS office, we would love to know more about it.

Boyd Carney, who has taken on the project with boundless enthusiasm, said "we hope to achieve some positive habitat outcomes for wading birds". The mangrove removal will become a regular event for NPWS volunteer groups and Boyd is aiming to attract corporate volunteers in 2012.

NPWS is also about to start community consultation for its Plan of Management process for the Hunter Wetlands National Park. A Stakeholder Working Group has been set up with HBOC representation. An information day on 11 March 2012 at the National Parks office at the Hunter Wetlands Centre, Shortland will give the public the opportunity to pop into the office and talk with rangers about the national park, one on one. A one-day community consultation workshop will take place on Sunday 25 March 2012 and will be advertised in early March.

Jo Erskine

Ranger, Hunter Wetlands National Park



Saltmarsh and shallow ponds at Windeyers Reach before and after removal of immature mangroves. Shallow ponds with a clear line-of-sight to surrounding areas provide ideal nocturnal roosting habitat for shorebirds.

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Great Crested Grebes at Walka Water Works

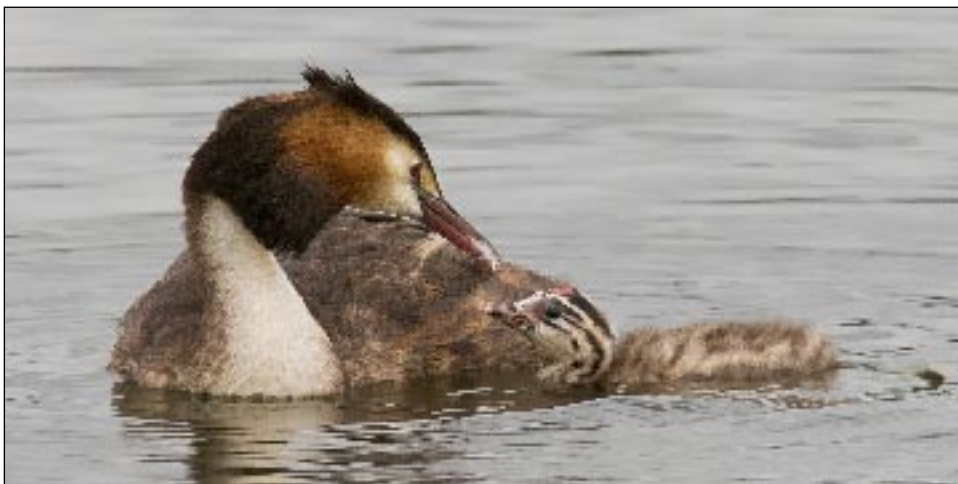
I spent seven hours over two days in January observing the Great Crested Grebes at Walka Water Works. These shots were taken with my biggest lens, a 600mm and a 1.4x converter on a tripod, and under camouflage for minimum impact. There are strict ethics regarding photography of wildlife who have young. I had no idea that I would be so captivated by their behaviour. This is just the beginning of a longer photographic relationship with these beautiful birds.



Great Crested Grebes mate for life and carry their young on their back. Both parents fulfill this function. According to HANZAB (Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds) “Males tend to differ from females in having a longer heavier bill, longer crest and tippets, and shorter thicker neck”.

This indicated that while I was photographing the grebes, the female was carrying the chick while the male was gathering food.

The male dived and hunted for small fish which he presented to the young at approximately half-hourly intervals. Meanwhile the female swam and drifted with the young on her back, occasionally tipping it into the water to swim for itself while she stretched, preened and rearranged her feathers.



One of the most intriguing things I observed was the female presenting the young with a feather she had plucked from her breast; she would dip it into the water and offer it to the bright and interested chick; she then proceeded to crush the feather before offering it again for the chick to eat. Perhaps this acts like white bread helping the fish bones to come up. All the behaviour I observed was confirmed by HANZAB.

Great Crested Grebes are recorded as uncommon and, although seen in all Australian states, are located mainly in the southeast and southwest of Australia. They are described in Michael Morcombe’s *Field Guide to Australian Birds* (2008) as a specialized aquatic species with large lobed feet set far back for optimum propulsion and hardly ever emerging onto land. Deep freshwater lakes are their preferred habitat, an environment which is under considerable threat. Like egrets, they were hunted almost to extinction in the 19th century to supply the fashion industry and now loss of habitat is a constant concern.



Silva Vaughan-Jones (*Hastings Birdwatchers*)

Hunterbirding and *Zoothera* Thrushes

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 four months.

October saw a flurry of bird observations in the lead up to the Twitchathon, with Ash Island and the HEZ (Hunter Economic Zone) site near Kurri featuring prominently. November discussions were dominated by Twitchathon reports from teams that competed in the Hunter and from further afield – many of which were featured in the last newsletter. Other contributions of interest over the last few months have included:

- Discussion as to the status of Yellow Wagtails in the Hunter, following recent observations;
- An identification workshop on Whimbrel and Little Curlew;
- Reports of White-winged Black Tern, Black-necked Stork and Sooty Tern;
- A Request for Information (RFI) regarding birding in Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands;
- The occurrence of Common Sandpiper away from coastal localities;
- Observations of large White-throated Needletail flocks; and
- The bush fire on Ash Island.

For this article, I have decided to make a special feature of a recent discussion regarding the status of both Bassian and Russet-tailed Thrush within the Hunter. The dialogue originated as a spinoff to an initial thread about summer observations of Noisy Pitta in the Harrington Rainforest. This raised the question as to whether this species could potentially breed in this location, or other suitable habitat along that stretch of coast, rather than simply being a winter visitor, as is the generally accepted current status. The debate made reference to other altitudinal rainforest migrants and the focus then shifted to the status of the two *Zoothera* Thrushes.

It was suggested that “... the distribution (geographical and seasonal changes) of Russet-tailed and Bassian Thrush in the Hunter Region is a worthy PhD project! We live in a zone where the patterns are not at all clear, whereas further to the north or to the south they seem to be well understood.” The Hunter River is pretty much the southern limit of Russet-tailed Thrush, with

very few records from the Watagans or Central Coast. It appears to be generally accepted that in the Hunter “Bassian Thrush is much the more likely species in the high country (>1000m) but there are credible Russet-tailed Thrush records from up there”, whilst “In the mid altitude areas (approx 300-1000m), both are recorded but I think Russet-tailed Thrush more often.” This altitudinal distribution is further complicated by a movement of birds to lower altitudes during the winter. This is noticeable in the Watagans population of Bassian Thrush, which seem to be absent during winter, when they are sometimes recorded in the Kurri-Cessnock woodlands instead during that period.

For Russet-tailed Thrush “... all but one NSWBA record for this species is east of the Divide and most are well east of Divide proper”, whereas “... Bassians occur along the entire NSW coast (and continue south into Vic, SA and Tas.) and they range west over the Divide, especially in southern NSW. In addition they have been reported at Mt Coricudgy, Mt Tomah, Rylstone and Oberon which, along with the southern Aust. records, tells me that they can cope better with colder climatic conditions and can better occupy higher elevations than the Russet-tailed which is a Torresian sp.”

Our understanding of these two species is further complicated as they “were only separated in the early 1980s - interestingly, thanks to work done by a Hunter birder (Glenn Holmes).” Records before this time are therefore of limited use for comparing the occurrence of each species. This then sparked a question regarding identification, as to “are there any hints or tips you... would care to give to help in the field?”

The responses included:

- Call is by far the most reliable way to identify which species it is;
- On Russet-tailed, the outer tail feather is more extensively white-tipped than on Bassian;
- The secondary coverts on Russet-tailed are more broadly cream-tipped than on Bassian;
- Bassian have a colder colouration, are more heavily scaled and may have a heavier head/bill; and
- Russet-tailed have a warmer colouration, plainer appearance and may have a smaller head/bill.

All up, it was a great series of discussion points regarding the status of the two species in the Hunter and how to go about identifying them. It answered many questions, but there is still a great deal that we are yet to learn. The more people that get into the field, observe these species and contribute their observations to the BA Atlas project the better!

Dan Williams

Encounter with a Juvenile Nankeen Night-Heron

On the 5th of November 2011 at 7.30pm, I was at the *Il Catchatori* Restaurant at Pokolbin for dinner. At the back of the restaurant there is a circular dam with reeds around the edge and a “fountain” in the middle. There are some trees close to the dam. The restaurant verandah is built out over the dam on one side.

I went out onto the verandah to take some pictures of the dam at sunset. I noticed a wading bird that I had never seen before on the floor of the verandah between the tables and chairs. It seemed to be eating something. On closer inspection, the bird was trying to eat a freshwater crayfish. It was readjusting the cray in its beak in order to swallow it. The cray was holding onto the side of the bird’s beak with its claw. The bird put the cray on the floor and picked it up again to readjust its position. Eventually the bird swallowed the cray.

Using flash, I took several photographs of the bird eating the cray from about 5 metres away. It seemed unconcerned with my presence.

David Atkinson



Editor’s note: The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds (1990) notes that Nankeen Night-Herons roost and breed communally but feed solitarily. They eat mainly aquatic animals, principally fish but also frogs, freshwater crayfish and insects. They are opportunistic and may take any suitable prey when available including newly hatched sea-turtles, nestlings, house mice and human refuse.

Australian Wildlife Health Network (AWHN) Notification

The following update from the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI) confirms detection of pigeon paramyxovirus 1 (PMV-1) in two additional species of birds in Melbourne. One Collared Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter cirrocephalus*) found dead and one Spotted Turtledove (an introduced free-ranging feral species of dove) have been confirmed with the disease. It is assumed that these birds were infected through contact with feral pigeons.

The DPI Victoria website provides the following details - see <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/animal-diseases/vetsource/vetwatch/vet-watch-february-2012>

Sparrowhawk case: “PMV-1 was isolated from the tissues of a sick sparrowhawk (*Accipiter cirrocephalus*) – a raptor native to Australia. The bird was collected by a park ranger, who had been monitoring a family of sparrowhawks in a park in central Melbourne. Four birds died around or before 10 January with some displaying neurological signs before death. Paramyxovirus 1 infected feral pigeons had previously been confirmed in the immediate area and it is likely that infection in the sparrowhawk may be the result of high virus challenge associated with recent predation on diseased pigeons. Although this is the first time pigeon paramyxovirus 1 has been isolated in a native species in Australia, there are several reports of predatory and in-contact birds becoming infected in endemic countries overseas.”

Spotted Turtledove case: “PMV-1 was confirmed in a Spotted Turtledove (*Streptopelia chinensis*), an introduced species. The bird had been in close contact with a group of semi-feral pigeons which have been previously diagnosed with paramyxovirus.”

Birdwatchers are asked to be alert to any signs of disease that are unusual or clusters of deaths in wild birds. Please report these to your local AWHN Wildlife Coordinator, your local Department of Agriculture, or call the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline: 1800 675 888.

NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee - ORAC

Records appraisal committees are a part of modern birdwatching nearly as much as binoculars and, these days, digital cameras. As our knowledge of the status and distribution of birds increases, there is a need to 'manage' the reliability of the information that contributes to that knowledge. In instances where birds considered to be particularly rare or unusual to a particular area are reported, supporting information may be required to validate the record, with a view to ensuring that the knowledge-base is credible and has been collated through a thorough vetting process. Generally, these committees carry a list of bird species that require a submission to validate the record (viz a "review list").

You may be aware that HBOC has a Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) that oversees rare or unusual bird records from our region, as has our new national birding organisation, BirdLife Australia (the records committee is currently known as the Birds Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) as it was established by Birds Australia). These committees are composed of members that have advanced knowledge of the identification and distribution of bird species in a given area. In the case of BARC, it is composed of some of Australia's foremost field and academic ornithologists. What may be lesser known is that there is such a committee that oversees rare and unusual records in NSW, being the NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC), which is actually chaired by Dick Cooper, a member of HBOC.

ORAC was established in 1992 and is not tied to a single parent organisation, as our RAC and BARC are. Rather, NSW ORAC is composed of representatives

from the larger birding organisations in NSW (Hunter, Cumberland and Illawarra Bird Observer Clubs, Birding NSW and the NSW Bird Atlasers), as well as other members appointed by the committee due to their advanced knowledge of birds occurring or likely to occur in NSW.

Currently ORAC consists of Dick Cooper (Chairman), Roger McGovern (Secretary), Alan Morris, Alan Rogers, Tony Palliser, Chris Brandis, Rod Gardner and me. Past HBOC members who have sat on ORAC include Sue Hamonet, Wilma Barden and Ann Lindsey.

To avoid duplication of effort when assessing rare birds for NSW, ORAC works closely with BARC. Whilst not every single bird that could possibly 'turn up' in NSW is included in the review list, communication between these two groups ensures that unusual reports are investigated. A good example occurred recently when a Yellow White-eye was reported at Sawtell, a very long way south of its normal range. It was decided that BARC would assess that case (which was eventually accepted) due to its being of significance in a national context and because there was a possibility of its being a vagrant bird to Australia. Likewise, the links between HBOC and ORAC ensure that unusual records are vetted by the relevant group.

Included in this newsletter are cases for which decisions were made by ORAC in 2011. If you would like more information on ORAC (such as how species are removed from the review list), there are links to the ORAC rules, current review list, guidelines for submissions and unusual record report form on the HBOC website.

Mick Roderick

NSW ORAC Cases Decided in 2011

494		Black-breasted Button-quail	Dorrigo NP	31-07-07	Not Accepted
512		Scarlet-chested Parrot	near Silverton	10-08-10	Not Accepted
513	P. Maher	Purple-crowned Lorikeet	Deniliquin	28-10-10	Accepted
514	P. Terrill	Pied Heron	Narran Lake	11-04-11	Accepted
515	G. Clancy	Radjah Shelduck	Carrs Creek, Grafton	29-01-11	Accepted
516	N. Haass	Cook's Petrel	Sydney Harbour	26-03-09	Accepted
518	N. Haass	White-bellied Storm-Petrel	off Ulladulla	29-03-09	Accepted
519	N. Haass	Grey-backed Storm-Petrel	off Wollongong	28-05-11	Accepted
520	A. Hamilton	Green Pygmy-goose	Smiths Lake, Coffs Hbr	28-05-11	Accepted

NSW ORAC Cases Decided in 2011 cont.

Case 494: A bird thought to be a Black-breasted Button-quail *Turnix melanogaster* was seen near the canopy walk at Dorrigo NP on July 31, 2007. This case caused an enormous amount of discussion within the committee and eventually went to a second round of voting. In the end, more than half of the committee voted against acceptance since the bird would have been more than 200km south of its known range, and due to the lack of detailed field notes or photographs.

Case 512: A bird thought to be a Scarlet-chested Parrot *Neophema splendida* was seen 3 kilometres east of Silverton on August 10, 2010. Although this species is difficult to confuse with any other species, four members of the committee felt that the extremely brief description provided and the unsuitable habitat for this species gave too much doubt to the sighting and it was not accepted.

Case 513: Two pairs of Purple-crowned Lorikeet *Glossopsitta porphyrocephala* were seen and videoed at Murray Valley Regional Park near Deniliquin and at least one of the pairs was observed to be breeding. This is the first confirmed breeding record for NSW.

Case 514: A Pied Heron *Egretta picata* was seen and photographed at Narran Lake east of Brewarrina on April 11, 2011.

Case 515: Two Radjah Shelduck *Tadorna radjah* were seen and photographed at Carrs Creek, Grafton between January 29, 2011 and February 5, 2011.

Case 516: A Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii* was recovered live at Circular Quay, Sydney on March 26, 2009 and was released at sea off Wollongong on April 25, 2009 after being in care at Taronga Wildlife Hospital. This is the 6th confirmed record for NSW.

Case 518: A White-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregetta grallaria* was seen and photographed during a pelagic trip off Ulladulla on March 29, 2009. This is the 16th confirmed record for NSW.

Case 519: A Grey-backed Storm-Petrel *Garrodia nereis* was seen and photographed during a pelagic trip off Wollongong on May 28, 2011. This is the 9th confirmed record for NSW.

Case 520: Two Green Pygmy-geese *Nettapus pulchellus* were seen and photographed at Smiths Lake, Moonee Beach, between May 28, 2011 and May 30, 2011. This is the 7th confirmed record for NSW.

BARC* Cases pertaining to NSW decided in 2011

* Birds Australia Rarities Committee

636 R. Baxter, A. Richardson, M. Roderick New Zealand Storm-Petrel off Port Stephens 28 March 2010 **Accepted**

Case 636: A New Zealand Storm-Petrel *Pealeornis maoriana* seen and photographed some 25 nautical miles east of Port Stephens on March 28, 2010. This is the first confirmed record for Australia and an addition to the list of Australian birds. Richard Baxter, Allan Richardson and Mick Roderick.

HBOC Membership Fees for January - December 2012

Membership Fees for 2012 are \$30.00 Single and Family, \$5.00 Junior

Membership forms can be obtained at Club Night or by downloading from the website: www.hboc.org.au
Please pay at Club Night or send cheque or money order payable to HBOC, PO Box 24, New Lambton 2305.

If you prefer to pay by electronic transfer, please include your name in the transaction to:
Greater Building Society; BSB 637000; Account No. 782260316; Account Name: Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

Australian Bird Study Association Seminar

You are invited to attend the Australian Bird Study Association (ABSA) Seminar to be held on:

Saturday 10 March 2012 from 9am to 5pm at the Hunter Wetlands Centre, Shortland

Attendance fee is \$25 which includes morning and afternoon tea.

Provisional Program:

Registration and Morning Tea	9am – 10am
Presentations	10am – 12noon
Lunch and ABSA AGM	12 noon – 2pm
Presentations	2pm – 4pm
Afternoon Tea	4pm – 5pm

Lunch can be purchased from Nourish Café at the Hunter Wetlands Centre.

Speakers will include:

Nick Carlile (Gould's Petrel),
Greg Clancy (Black-necked Storks),
Liz Crawford (Flagged Shorebirds in the Hunter Estuary),
Chris Herbert (Shorebirds in the Hunter Estuary),
Mike Newman (Shorebirds of Morpeth),
Alan Stuart (Shorebirds in the Hunter Region), and
a speaker from SOSSA to talk about albatross research.

Enquiries:

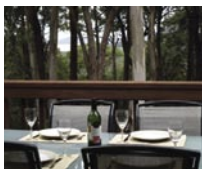
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Australian Bird Study Association Inc.
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info@absa.asn.au or
jw.hardy@knightgraphics.com.au

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Club Night Observations December 2011 - January 2012

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

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer
Australian King Parrot	1+2dy	1/01/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
Australian White Ibis	>350 br	17/12/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Banded Lapwing	3pr	Nov 2011	Stockton Beach	W. Mayers
Barking Owl	1heard	29/12/11	Pokolbin	P. Freeman
Black Falcon	1	5/12/11	Scone [2km north of town]	G. Newling
Black Kite	1	2/12/11	Scone [2km north of town]	G. Newling
Black-necked Stork	1flying	4/01/12	Ash Island	R. & L. Walker
Black-shouldered Kite	1	25/11/11	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke
Buff-banded Rail	1	1&7/12/11	Clarencetown	L. Storm
Buff-banded Rail	1+6dy	3/12/11	Bobs Farm	D. Hatfield
Buff-banded Rail	2+3dy	2/12/11	Swansea	J. Adams
Cicadabird	1	2/11/11	Rothbury	T. Clarke
Eastern Barn Owl [deceased]	2	29/11/11	Ash Island	T. Clarke
Eastern Osprey	2	19/11/11	Woods Point [Morisset]	V. Moon
Eastern Osprey	1	7/12/11	Speers Point [Esplanade]	C. Mann
Fork-tailed Swift	~15	3/01/12	Eleebana	C. Mann
Grey Goshawk	4	2/11/11	Rothbury	T. Clarke
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	1	1/12/11	Wingen	G. Newling
Comb-crested Jacana	1	11/01/12	Tarro Swamp	per R. Walker
Latham's Snipe	1	11/01/12	Tarro Swamp	per R. Walker
Leaden Flycatcher	2	27/10/11	Flaggy Creek	T. Clarke
Mistletoebird	Pr+3fy	3/01/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
Nankeen Night-Heron	37 incl imm	17/12/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Nankeen Night-Heron	1	29/12/11	Bolwarra	P. Freeman
Painted Honeyeater	3	29/12/11	Medhurst Bridge	R. Stewart
Peregrine Falcon	1	5/12/11	Wingen	G. Newling
Purple Swamphen	1+3dy	14/01/12	Lakelands	R. Walker
Rockwarbler	1	30/12/11	Giants Creek	R. Stewart
Royal Spoonbill	2+2dy	24/11/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Rufous Scrub-bird	1heard	7/11/11	Gloucester Tops	D. Hatfield
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	1/01/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
Speckled Warbler	6	30/12/11	Giants Creek	R. Stewart
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	2	29/12/11	Medhurst Bridge	R. Stewart
Striated Heron	1	7/12/11	Speers Point [Esplanade]	C. Mann
Striated Heron	1	26/12/11	Hexham Swamp	P. Freeman
Tawny Frogmouth	1	28/10/11	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke
Wandering Whistling-Duck	4	17/12/11	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Wandering Whistling-Duck	7	9/01/12	Charlestown Golf Course	G. Thelander
Wandering Whistling-Duck	20	11/01/12	Tarro Swamp	per R. Walker
Western Gerygone	1	1/01/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
White-browed Babbler	2	30/12/11	Giants Creek	R. Stewart
White-necked Heron	1	20/11/11	Tighes Hill	T. Clarke
White-throated Needletail	30+	29/12/11	Newcastle University	P. Freeman
White-throated Nightjar	1 on 1e	17/11/11	Beresfield	K. Peters
White-throated Treecreeper	3	1/01/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
White-winged Chough	6	30/12/11	Pokolbin	P. Freeman
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	1	1/01/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling

BirdLife Australia and Birds in Backyards

Many of you will be aware that Birds Australia has recently merged with Bird Observation & Conservation Australia, to create BirdLife Australia – the face of bird research and conservation for the next 100 plus years.

BirdLife Australia is dedicated to creating a bright future for our birds as the only national conservation organisation in Australia that focuses on birds as key indicators of environmental health, right across our unique and varied landscapes.

The Birds in Backyards Program is committed to protecting the birds that live where people live by encouraging people to connect with them, and take action in their own space.

We are thrilled to let you know that the new look Birds in Backyards website is now up and running at www.birdsinbackyards.net

When you visit you will see a very different looking site with some great new features. Check out our new videos, including two we have developed with Focus Films on how you can help birds in your garden.

In the new [Creating Places](#) section you will find a [Gallery of Gardens](#) featuring photos of a range of bird-friendly gardens from around Australia to inspire you, as well as a range of new articles in this section and throughout the site.

The [Your Space](#) section will soon provide a home for Birds in Backyards Local Groups – community groups, school and local council who are all working for birds in our parks and gardens so keep an eye out for these groups as they come online.



Eastern Osprey - A Lumnitzer

Of course your favourite features are still here including the [Bird Finder](#) and fact sheets for around 400 of Australia's birds (we are continuing to develop more fact sheets). The [Birds in Backyards Surveys](#) are still up and running but are now a part of BirdLife Australia's [Citizen Science portal](#).

This fantastic new feature allows you to pinpoint your location using GoogleMaps as well as allowing you to investigate bird sightings yourself. Read up on the [current research](#) we are undertaking and don't forget to log in to the [Forum](#) to talk about your latest bird sightings, to show off your photography skills, or to get advice from other members.

BirdLife Australia Activities

Bird Photography 101 - Dr Anna Pillich

9am – 4pm Sunday 29 April 2012
BirdLife Australia Discovery Centre, Newington Armory,
1 Jamieson St, Sydney Olympic Park.

Anna teaches photography and has won awards for her nature photos. Join our basic digital photography course to find out what gear you need and how to use it to capture brilliant bird moments. The day will begin with a presentation about cameras, equipment and basic digital information, and some of Anna's beautiful bird shots, then you will get to do some outdoor photography, followed by a discussion and review of your work. Bring your own camera equipment and manual. Participants will be provided with a disc of learning material.

Numbers are limited for this course so book early by returning a registration form to our Sydney office. Cost is \$59 for members and \$69 for non-members

To request a registration form, email: southernsw@birdlife.org.au or call Pixie on 02 9647 1033.

Introduction to Bird Portraiture - Australian Birds of Prey

9am - 3pm Saturday/Sunday 10/11 March
at the BirdLife Australia Discovery Centre,
Newington Armory, 1 Jamieson St, Sydney
Olympic Park.

If you are a bird lover wanting to draw and paint, or an artist wishing to engage with birds, this is the workshop for you. Through a simple, step-by-step approach, you will learn the fundamental skills you need to draw and paint birds alongside professional artist, Peter Wale.

Cost: \$99/\$119 members/ non-members.
Bookings essential: call Pixie on 02 9647 1033 or email southernsw@birdlife.org.au

HBOC Activities February to April 2012

DATE	EVENT	MEETING PLACE & TIME	CONTACT
Saturday 11 February	Hunter Wader Survey	10.30 am Ash Island 11.00 am Other locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 4959 3663 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Mick Roderick 0421761237 – Deep Pond
Sunday 12 February	Remove woody weeds Stockton Sandspit	1.00pm Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418411785
Sunday 19 February	Field Outing – Old Brush, Brunkerville (\$2 entry fee)	7.30am Entry to Liebert's Lane, Brunkerville	Robert McDonald 4023 1204
Sunday 19 February	Remove mangrove seedlings Swan Pond & Wader Pond	1.00pm Wagtail Way, Ash Island	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Monday 20 February	Port Stephens Wader Survey	7.00am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 Please ring to confirm - limited spaces available
Tuesday 21 February	Tomago Wetland Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Sunday 26 February	Remove woody weeds Stockton Sandspit	1.00pm Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
MARCH 2012			
Sunday 4 March	Clean Up Australia Day	8am - 12noon Stockton Sandspit 8am – 11am Kooragang Dykes Boat Ramp	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785 for Stockton Sandspit Liz Crawford 0412 722 644 for Kooragang Dykes
Sunday 4 March	Remove mangrove seedlings Swan Pond & Wader Pond	1.00pm (after Clean Up Australia Day) Wagtail Way, Ash Island	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Tuesday 6 March	Mid-week Outing - Tocal College	7.30am Tocal College Visitor Centre (not homestead) off Tocal Road	Ray McLean 4987 4512
Wednesday 7 March	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Saturday 10 March	Australian Bird Study Association Seminar	9.00am The Wetlands Centre, Shortland	Jeff Hardy 0405 015 221
Sunday 11 March	Hunter Wader Survey	9.30am Ash Island 10.00am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 4959 3663 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Liz Crawford 0412 722 644 – Stockton Mick Roderick 0421761237 – Deep Pond
Sunday 11 March	Remove woody weeds Stockton Sandspit	1.00pm Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Wednesday 14 March	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre, Shortland	Guest Speaker: Mike Richardson – Tristan da Cunha
Sunday 18 March	Remove mangrove seedlings Wader West	1.00pm off Ramsar Road, Ash Island	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Tuesday 20 March	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Sunday 25 March	Field Outing to: Grahamstown Dam area	7.30am Finnan Park, Richardson Road, Raymond Terrace	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Sunday 25 March	Remove woody weeds Stockton Sandspit	1.00pm Stockton Sandspit	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
APRIL 2012			
Sunday 1 April	Remove mangrove seedlings Wader West	10.00am off Ramsar Road, Ash Island	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Tuesday 3 April	Mid-week Outing – Stockton Sandspit	8.00am Under Stockton Bridge	Judi Thomas 4952 2960
Wednesday 4 April	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
EASTER CAMP 6 - 9 April	Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve	Honeyeater Flat Field Studies Area (Possible monitoring of Mudgee- Wollar IBA)	Liz Crawford 4959 3663
Tuesday – Friday 10 -13 April	Migration to Macquarie Marshes	"Willie Retreat", Macquarie Marshes	Robert McDonald 4023 1204
Wednesday 11 April	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Guest Speaker: Mike Newman – Field Studies at Green Wattle Creek
Sunday 15 April	Remove mangrove seedlings Milham Pond	10.00am Neville's Nook (Radar Huts) Ash Island	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Tuesday 17 April	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
Saturday 21 April	Hunter Wader Survey	8.00am Ash Island 8.30am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 4959 3663 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Mick Roderick 0421761237 – Deep Pond