



Newsletter

Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

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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

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2012 JN Hobbs Memorial Medal awarded to Mike Newman

The 2012 J.N. Hobbs Memorial Medal has been awarded to Mike Newman, a well-known and highly respected member of HBOC. The Medal is awarded to an amateur birdwatcher who has made a significant contribution to the knowledge or conservation of birds in Australia. This is taken to include contributions to Australian ornithology through the organisation of and participation in Birds Australia's / BirdLife Australia's collaborative programmes. The emphasis is on the amateur status of the recipient's contribution (i.e. not a professional ornithologist).



Mike Newman responding to the award of the JN Hobbs Memorial Medal at the December Club Night.
Photo by Allan Richardson

The J.N. Hobbs medal was once awarded by the NSW regional group of Birds Australia, but since 1999 it has been a national award which is conferred for outstanding contributions to Australasian ornithology by an amateur ornithologist. Nominations are made by BirdLife Australia members and the winner is selected by a committee that includes representatives from Local Branches and Special Interest Groups and the Research and Conservation Committee (RACC).

It is generally accepted as being one of, if not the, highest awards in Australia for recognition of an amateur ornithologist. The full citation and Mike's reflections on receiving the award are on **page 3**.

President's Column

By the time you read this the “officialdom” of the Annual General Meeting will be fast approaching, just passed...or perhaps you're reading this whilst sitting waiting for the AGM to start? Either way, I must say that putting together the Annual Report for the club has really driven home to me (again) just how effectively the cogs of HBOC really drive the club to great heights.

It has also driven home just how important it is to have motivated people involved and ready to take on tasks in the name of giving a voice to the birds we love observing and recording so much, and speaking up to protect the habitat in which they live. The birds do not contribute to the anthropogenic machinations of habitat loss and the pressures of urban and industrial expansion; instead they do their best to cope with those pressures and fragmentation of habitat. Through the simple chores of observing, recording and (to some degree) understanding our birdlife we make very important contributions to their ongoing survival. In 2013 I encourage those who do this to continue and those who don't and that might want to, to ask someone with experience about how they can assist.

We are always looking for “new blood” to take on a variety of tasks and there is never a shortage of ways to help out. In particular we are looking for someone to carry the “conservation baton” that Ann Lindsey has carried so well for many years. It is a baton that she has had in her grasp for some time, but one that she wishes to pass on! I have been involved with many of the “projects” in which Ann has defended bird habitat and I can see how rewarding it can be when HBOC's submissions result in better outcomes for the birds. Obviously, in the current climate of continued declines in many of our birds, it is a very important thing to consider getting involved in.

If you are interested, have a chat to Ann or to one of the committee members.

Another baton that is being passed on is that of our Records Officer, Sue Hamonet. Sue has been doing this job for many years, in fact she has been collating records since the club started in 1976 (which she did with her husband Ed). Just think about that for a minute... that's 37 years of commitment to a very constant and demanding responsibility. For all these years Sue has kept track of the great number of forms from Club outings and camps and has received reports from numerous individuals as well – sometimes on paper and sometimes via a telephone call. She also entered many of these records onto Birds Australia/BirdLife Australia Atlas sheets and in recent years took on the secretarial role of the Club's Records Appraisal Committee. Of course, anyone who has been to a Club night knows how diligently Sue collects forms for just about every bird reported in that forum.

Sue now feels that the job would be best done by other people and is looking forward to freeing up some time to devote to other commitments and interests that she has. As one of the people that will be taking over her duties (which will be shared with Alan Stuart and Dan Williams) I was amazed at the organisation and sheer number of records, reports and forms she had filed away (in fact, we needed a wheelbarrow to get them out of her office).

I would like to extend the Club's and my gratitude to Sue for the many years of unremitting effort she has put into this pivotal role.

Mick Roderick

New Members

The Club extends a warm welcome to:

Gary and Eileen Keeton – Fern Bay
David Stuart – Dungog
Oscar Mella (junior) – East Seaham
Lene Parashou – Wallsend
George Gillam – Hamilton
Theresa Sabella – Hamilton
Cleo Rowland – Mayfield
Chris, Sally, Lucy & Laila Egan – Charlestown
Trudy Fennell – Edgeworth

We hope to see you at Club meetings and outings

2013 Membership Fees

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 will increase to \$35 in 2013;
Family membership will increase to \$40 in 2013;
Junior membership will remain at \$5 in 2013.

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

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

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

2012 JN Hobbs Memorial Medal Awarded to Mike Newman

Citation

Mike Newman has been awarded the 2012 J.N. Hobbs Memorial Medal for his outstanding contribution to Australasian ornithology as an amateur ornithologist. Continuing the fine tradition of amateur ornithologists that has persisted since the time of Gilbert White, Mike's ornithological work has been undertaken both while he was employed as a metallurgist and since he retired.

Applying his scientific discipline to the study of birds, Mike has undertaken numerous long-term monitoring studies. Most recently, these have included surveys at Morpeth Wastewater Treatment Works, Green Wattle Creek and 'Warakeila', a cattle property in the Allyn River Valley, as well as his earlier surveys at Pottery Road and shorebird populations in the Hobart area. From this monitoring has flowed an array of papers about various guilds of birds — shorebirds, waterbirds, bush birds — as well as numerous notes on population trends of particular species encountered during these surveys, and behavioural observations which allow an insight into the private lives of our birds.

Mike understands the importance of publishing results so that they are available for others to use, thereby aiding the study and conservation of Australia's birds. Thus, typically, Mike first came to notice when, almost as soon as he had moved to Hobart, he began collating records for the inaugural *Tasmanian Bird Report* in 1971, a role he maintained for several years. Since then he has championed the Atlas project (both phases of the project) and made the publication of other works possible through his lobbying (the *Seabird Atlas of South-Eastern Australian Waters* and the *Little & Fairy Tern Conservation Statement* spring to mind immediately). He has published over 50 ornithological papers.

Of course, to collate and publish results, it is necessary to spend time in the field collecting data and observing birds. Demonstrating his enthusiasm for fieldwork, he has submitted nearly 3000 surveys to the current Atlas database, and, earlier, many records to the *Tasmanian Bird Atlas*, the first *Atlas of Australian Birds*, the Nest Record Scheme and the short-lived Australian Bird Count as well.

Much of Mike's early work centred on shorebirds, particularly Australian Pied Oystercatchers and Hooded Plovers, and through his work on these birds over many years he became the world's foremost expert on the former species.

Although many of Mike's published papers concern shorebirds, his ornithological work is not at all blinkered to concentrate just on waders. He is also interested in birds of the woodlands and forests (as evidenced by his study at Pottery Road, just outside Hobart, and in many of his later surveys in the Hunter Region of NSW), and seabirds as well (he was co-author of the *Seabird Atlas of South-Eastern Australian Waters*, a Birds Australia Monograph).

Away from the shores and the bush, Mike has been a crucial member of a number of committees, including the Atlas Advisory Committee and the Birds Australia Research Committee, and he was a long-time councillor

at Birds Australia, serving two terms, first between 1986 and 1988 (when he was Vice President), and again between 1999 and 2006. He was also a Regional Organiser during the first Atlas and was a founding member of the Bird Observers' Association of Tasmania. He has been a member of RAOU/Birds Australia since 1968. He is now also an extremely enthusiastic member of the Hunter Bird Observers' Club, editing their journal *The Whistler*.

Recognising his long and important role in Australian ornithology, Mike was elected a Fellow of Birds Australia in 2003. As further recognition of his deeds, the 2012 J.N. Hobbs Memorial Medal is just reward for decades spent studying Australia's birds.

Mike Newman's Response

When you are informed of an award like this it is both a surprise and an honour. Inevitably you think of the many other people who are equally deserving of similar recognition. How do you decide who is the most deserving?

The award is particularly important to me because it is a visible recognition of the contribution which amateurs can make to ornithology. Indeed it is one of the few branches of science where you can do meaningful work requiring only a pair of binoculars, a notebook, a pen and an enquiring mind. Perhaps I should add a good collection of bird books. Amateurs do not require funding, do not have to meet criteria of novelty and can doggedly pursue a project over time spans which far exceed the duration of graduate degrees and continuity of funding. Amateurs have a valuable role to play in documenting the status and the plight of Australia's birds which goes beyond being the directed labour force collecting data for professionals to interpret. Of course for these lofty goals to be achieved the knowledge we generate must be available to others through publication. The Hobbs Medal is in recognition not only of knowledge generation but also of its application to the conservation of Australian birds. In this respect, through its publications and submissions, I feel HBOC has few equals at a regional bird club level in making that knowledge available to land managers and those accountable for protecting our birds and their habitats. I hope that this award is also seen as recognition of the excellence of the HBOC community.

Which leads to my final point, namely that one's environment and peers contribute to individual achievements. Throughout my life I have had valuable mentors starting with my parents and my grandfather. The local bird clubs in Brisbane, Hobart and now the Hunter provided stimulating peers and exciting challenges. To all those people who have shaped my destiny I extend my gratitude.

December Club Night - Members' Night

The capacity crowd enjoyed a delightful variety of presentations from Club Members - a brief summary follows for those of you unable to be there.

Keith Eastwood began with a homily: *"There are none so blind as those that will not see"* - and provided an expose of the amazing inability of some people to see the extraordinary birds outside their own back door. Keith featured the Green Wood Hoopoe, a fantastic brightly coloured South African bird that his Johannesburg hostess had "never seen" until he pointed it out to her!



Green Wood Hoopoe by
Yves Thonnerieux

Chris Herbert gave an illustrated talk about "Fiddling with Fotos" in your digital dark room, explaining the "Rule of Thirds" to aid composition and showing how you can remove the odd stick and even move the birds to improve the shot...

Max Maddock described the constant parade of small birds visiting his native plant garden in urban Ashtonfield, near Maitland. Fortunately, Max lives near the native bushland adjacent to the perimeter of this suburb and has tracked birds back to the bush as they carried food from his garden to their nests. He emphasised how

connected everything is - how his garden is a small, albeit important, part of a greater whole.

Grahame Feletti took us on an investigative journey to discover the inspiration for the parrot featured on Arnotts biscuits. Birds such as Eastern Rosella, Western Rosella, Crimson Rosella, lorikeets and macaws were all considered and dismissed. Perhaps the bird was inspired by a "Mexican Parrot" referred to in the Arnotts historical information as it is not a true representation of any living parrot. Grahame has provided an article summarising his investigations for this Newsletter (see next page).

Alan Morris came up from the Central Coast to present prizes to the three Hunter Teams that won the first three places in the Main Race of the 2012 Twitchathon: Menacing Monarchs with 225 species came first; Hunter Home Brewers with 224 species came second, closely followed by Dodgy Drongos with 223 species in third place!



The winning team: Menacing Monarchs prior to the start of the 2012 Twitchathon - Peter Struik, Robert McDonald and Michael Kearns. Photo by Toni Marsh

Ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald brings wildlife to the Hunter

When Tropical Cyclone Oswald drenched North Queensland with flooding rains, little did we expect that it would bring exciting wildlife to our shores as well as strong winds and heavy rains. On Sunday 27 January, keen birdwatchers started to haunt Fort Drive with its great views out over the Tasman Sea, hunkered down in the boot of a hatchback with the lid up to keep the rain off... On Monday 28 January, after a day of home duties, another keen birdwatcher braved the strong winds and headed off to Swansea Heads ... he was rewarded with a Red-footed Booby perched on the aerial above the Coastguard station. Obviously very tired, the Booby sat with its head tucked in, brown wings beside a white breast and tell-tale red feet dripping over the narrow perch. This was the start of several days of exciting bird-watching as several tropical species were discovered foraging along with shearwaters off Nobbies and the Newcastle Rock Platforms.

A strong southerly change on 2 February seemed to spell the end of the unusual birds spectacular - except for the Lesser Frigatebird that was seen on 3 February.



Lesser Frigatebird
off the Hunter - Lorna Mee

ARNOTT'S FAMOUS PARROT



As a baby boomer I was raised on Arnott's Biscuits, but only recently asked myself – what parrot species *is* their trademark, and why have a parrot, rather than say a kid, eating one? A quick flick through Slaters' Field Guide basically convinced me it wasn't an Australian parrot. The closest looking east-coast parrots were the Eastern or Crimson Rosella; or from the west coast – the Western Rosella or Red-capped Parrot. Nor was it an Eclectus parrot or Palm Cockatoo. Their relative size, length of tail and colour combinations were all wrong. So I tried Arnott's website www.arnotts.com.au/history.aspx. More surprises than a pack of Assorted Creams! Not only wasn't the parrot Australian; neither was William Arnott, founder of the biscuit company. He and his brother emigrated from Scotland in 1847. William was 20, an apprentice baker. On the long trip they had to eat stale biscuits made from oatmeal, scotch barley and a vegetable called Arrowroot. After settling in Maitland they began making bread and biscuits for sailors on the coal ships on the Hunter River. To cut this short, one ship captain gave William a "Mexican parrot", and his brother's wife painted it sitting on a T-bar (no, the parrot, not her). He decided to use this as the logo for his biscuit company.

OK. So now off I go surfing the jungles of Wikipedia looking for Mexican or South American parrots. One large and diverse group is the Amazona parrots, mostly green bodies with various colours of head and back but relatively shorter tails. The other more likely group are the Macaws; pirates and sailors loved them as pets. Wikipedia says there are 999 species of Macaws, sized from 33 to 97cm long; some now extinct. Although the colours still don't match

the sketch of Arnott's famous parrot, the closest include the Military Macaw, the Scarlet Macaw, and Red & Green Macaw. Hoping the approximate size of Arnott's parrot might help to compare it with these species, I latched onto the half-eaten biscuit. If it's roughly the same as today's Milk Coffee biscuit (7x4cm) then the parrot is about 57cm long - still much smaller than the Scarlet Macaw (85-97cm) or Military Macaw (71cm). So, I'm not much wiser, but hope this will find someone who is!

The latest logo is more stylised, but the parrot and T-bar are still in the logo. Why? Seems it was Mr Arnott's little joke. We all know Polly was a pet name for parrots. One story is that it fitted his company motto "Honesty is the best policy". On this T (bar) is the best Polly – see?

Grahame Feletti
Contact 0429 455 243



Mother again at 62 - Laysan Albatross on Midway Atoll

The world's oldest-known wild bird—a 62-year-old Laysan Albatross on Midway Atoll in the Pacific Ocean—is also a new mother. This week she hatched a chick, her sixth in the past six years. The mother received her first identification band in 1956. Back then, USGS scientist Chandler Robbins estimated she was five years old. Since then, she has worn out five ID bands, returning year after year to lay an egg at Midway, a remote island WNW of Hawaii that was the site of a famous 1942 naval battle. Today, it's a US national wildlife refuge where hundreds of thousands of albatrosses nest every year. Albatrosses lay only one egg a year. Legendary long-distance marvels of the animal kingdom, they fly thousands of kilometres across the ocean, gliding on wind currents with their large wings. They feed on fish, squid and other marine life. Most Laysan albatrosses live between 12 and 40 years, although some have been documented surviving into their 50s.

Researchers estimate that quite probably she has travelled 80,000 kilometres a year as an adult. That's at least 3 million to 4 million kilometres since she was first banded, the equivalent of four to six trips from Earth to the moon and back. **San Jose Mercury News**



Article adapted from news item on smh website 8 February 2013

The Laysan Albatross pictured with her newly hatched chick at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge in March 2011. Photo by US Fish and Wildlife Service

Activity Reports

Catherine Hill Bay

Tuesday 4 December 2012

We met near the cemetery where we were greeted by a flock of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos with dependent young. We proceeded to walk around this area, out to the ocean and then looked at the nearby bushland. After this we went back down Flowers Drive to the middle camp area.

During the morning's outing we saw 55 species and heard 7 more. Some of those seen were: Australasian Darter, White-faced Heron, Crested Tern, Eastern Osprey, Whistling Kite, Brown Goshawk, Sooty Oystercatcher, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Eastern Rosella, Channel-billed Cuckoo, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Sacred Kingfisher, Dollarbird, Satin Bowerbird, Brown Thornbill, Brown Gerygone, Eastern Spinebill, Lewin's and New Holland Honeyeaters, Little Wattlebird, Golden and Rufous Whistlers, Australasian Figbird, Olive-backed Oriole, Eastern Yellow Robin, Silveryeye and Mistletoebird.

After doing the birdcall, we adjourned to the nearby pub for lunch which was a happy ending to another good year of birding and companionship.

Val Moon

Annual Snipe Count - Pambalong Nature Reserve

Sunday 16 December 2012

Pambalong Nature Reserve is largely overgrown with typha north of the old railway line and no snipe were flushed from this area. However, we noticed several foraging along the edge of the typha in the southern section so I walked along the edge of the dense reeds to flush the snipe while Helen and Chris counted - we estimated a flock of 50 birds. There were innumerable foraging holes in the soft mud along the wetland margin.

Liz Crawford

Jerusalem Creek Erratum



This beautiful photo of Jerusalem Creek taken by Juliana Ford, was wrongly attributed to Tom Clarke in the December Newsletter - apologies to Juliana.

Stockton Borehole Lagoon

Sunday 20 January 2013

On Sunday morning, our group of eleven keen birders met at the Teralba Bowling Club on an ominously wet and miserable looking morning and set off to observe birds at Stockton Borehole Lagoon. While light rain fell all morning this seemed to add cheerfulness to the atmosphere and did not stop our intrepid troupe from finding a few bird niceties. First stop was beside Cackle Creek at a convenient but rubbish-strewn gap between mangroves with only a few resident birds observed over the water. Stopping next at the lagoon, the searching talkative troupe moved slowly alongside the road recording an interesting variety of birds on and adjacent to the broad shallow lagoon. Several members commented that the grey outlook and still, glassy water provided a picturesque setting. We recorded a range of birds including Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal, Black-winged Stilt, cormorants, Masked Lapwing, Red-kneed Dotterel, egrets, a White-breasted Sea-Eagle, a trio of Swamp Harriers, White-breasted Woodswallows, White-winged Triller, fairy-wrens, Australian Reed-Warblers etc. Last stop was at the weir, a couple of kilometres further on from the lagoon, hoping to see Black Bittern, which unfortunately did not show but has been observed in trees by the author and others from canoes on this part of the waterway. In surrounding bushland at the weir we recorded mainly Bell Miners and Lewin's Honeyeater. All up we recorded 58 bird species. For morning tea and the bird count we stopped at Speers Point Park at a welcome dry spot under cover. Note, after the outing Liz recorded a pair of Latham's Snipe on the oval adjacent to Teralba Bowling Club - foraging on the short grass as light rain filtered down.

Greg Little

Moonan Flat Camp

Australia Day weekend 2013

Moonan Flat is the first village that the Hunter River passes through, winding its way down the mountain. It was founded in 1870 to service the Denison Gold Diggings. Locals live in 130-year-old houses backing onto the river, watching the river slide by. Ringed by the Mt Royal Range, Moonan Flat occasionally experiences snow. The Victoria pub was built in 1890. A delightful historic suspension bridge crosses the river to the pub and post office. An old bunk house out the back built in 1868 still stands; historically Captain Thunderbolt was a frequent visitor.

The camp site provided us with a nice shower and powered site - a welcome pleasure to plug in the fridge and be able to enjoy a very cold one at the end of the two warm days preceding the rain. I selected a shady corner of the camp ground overlooking the Hunter River.

Activity Reports

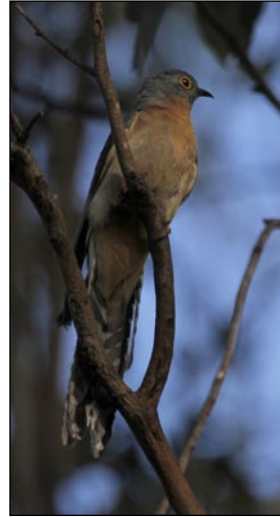
Double-barred Finches, Superb Fairy-wrens, Golden Whistler and Eastern Yellow Robin were at our feet and Crested Shrike-tit and Diamond Firetail in the trees behind the camp. A pair of Dollarbirds and a Common Koel welcomed us each day. Azure Kingfisher zipped along the river and the Restless Flycatcher scissor-grinded some of the day. Early morning birding around the village and in the camp gave us 74 species.

We did a lovely scenic drive to Stewarts Brook and an afternoon visit to Ellerston, past James Packer's property to view the golf courses and polo fields; a property where everything is possible and money is no option.

For diversity, two afternoons were spent atlassing at Dicky Dan's TSR and Pages Road TSR.

Lunch at the pub was very pleasant as we were able to meet and interact with some of the locals, gathering for their Australia Day celebrations and the pie-eating competition and bush band. We chatted to them about their village, of which they are very proud.

Two young Tassie Devils from the Devil Ark project founded by John Weigel (who runs Gosford Reptile Park and is now of "The Big Year" fame), came as special guests to the pub. These two have been adopted by the publican.



Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Crested Shrike-tit and Tasmanian Devils at Moonan Flat - Lorna Mee

Despite the lack of participation (only 2 people - Lorna Mee and Trevor Jurd followed by Joanne Natano, who increased our group by 50% on Saturday afternoon), we had a lovely time at Moonan Flat. The patter of rain early on Sunday morning put paid to our intended trip to Polblue; instead we all packed up. A total of 86 birds was seen.

Lorna Mee

Future Activities

2013 HBOC PhotoTwitch **10 March 2013**

What is a Phototwitch? The name says it all: twitch as many birds as you can and get an identifiable picture of them all. Sounds easy but trust me it's a real challenge.

When? Any 8-hour period on **10 March 2013**.

Where? Anywhere you like!! It would be great if participants could stick to the mighty Hunter Valley but if you're out of town and want to participate feel free.

Rules:

- Participants must notify me of their intention to take part before the Sunday.
- You are restricted to a consecutive 8hr period of which the start time is your choice.
- All birds photographed must be wild and alive!
- No playback is to be used.
- Photos of birds on nest or feeding young in nest will not be accepted.
- When you've completed your race please send an email to me with your end total and species list.

- The top 3 participants may be required to send in their pictures for scrutiny if the results are tight.
- Photos will be judged by an independent, nonparticipant and all birds should be clearly identifiable. If in doubt take another photo.

Important information

You don't need to be an awesome photographer to compete! You don't need the most expensive equipment! You don't even need super-sharp images. As long as you can tell what the bird is, that's all that's needed to compete. Get out there, snap away and enjoy the Hunter's birds.

Grant Brosie

pictorella@yahoo.com.au

Diamond Firetail - Grant Brosie



Future Activities cont.

Coal Terminal Action Group

16 March 2013

Picture this. It's 10am, Saturday **16 March 2013**. Hundreds of people have gathered in the park beside Customs House, Newcastle. Families, community groups and children. Together we declare our visions for Newcastle, the Hunter and NSW. We take to the street, waving colourful banners, walking to the beat.

What a powerful way to communicate unified hope for a healthy prosperous region. What a powerful way to communicate our opposition to the proposed 4th coal terminal.

That's our vision. We're planning a rally for Saturday 16 March and hope you'll join us to make sure it's big, fun and high impact.

You can help make the rally large and diverse by doing the following things:

- Put March 16th in your diary now and make sure you come along on the day!
- [Click here](#) to make a donation to help us cover expenses associated with the rally (such as printing of promotional materials).
- [Visit the rally event page on Facebook page](#) to RSVP and share it with your friends and family.
- [Download and print posters and fliers here](#) to spread the word throughout your community.
- Organise to bring members of your group to the rally with a banner or placard to show your support for healthy communities.

We're counting on you to make the rally a huge success!

Annika Dean

(Hunter Community Environment Centre)

On behalf of the Coal Terminal Action Group

T4 campaign update

- The Coal Terminal Action Group has grown to 18 community groups. We've met with several state and federal politicians. Member for Newcastle Tim Owen remains committed to T4 and unresponsive to our concerns. NSW Teachers Federation and Nurses & Midwives Association have expressed support. These large statewide organisations share our concern about the health of the 23,000 children attending school within 500 metres of the coal train line.
- With your support, we monitored particle pollution at 12 houses close to the coal train line during December. The results are now being analysed by University of Newcastle experts and will be released at a community forum in March.

- And we're preparing for the Planning Assessment Commission that will decide whether the NSW Government approves T4. This commission will consider the 500 submissions on T4 and hold hearings in Newcastle – probably in March. We'll be encouraging local groups and residents to attend and express their concerns.

About T4

State and Federal Governments are poised to give the green light to a massive new coal terminal in Newcastle, called T4. If T4 goes ahead, it will mean:

- **More coal dust.** Coal stockpiles would total almost 10km in length, and be more than 20m high. These uncovered coal stockpiles would be less than 2km from urban areas, and would radically increase the coal dust problem in Newcastle suburbs.
- **More coal trains.** 47 coal trains per day would be needed to deliver coal to T4. These trains would be uncovered, polluting towns and suburbs all through the Hunter with coal dust. These coal trains would also emit large volumes of diesel exhaust – a proven carcinogen – into urban environments.
- **More coal mines.** You can't double coal exports without doubling coal mining. If T4 goes ahead, it would need about 22 average sized coal mines to supply the coal. Communities, waterways, farmland and bushland are already being ripped apart by coal mines. If T4 goes ahead, it will get a lot worse.
- **Lost biodiversity.** The proposed T4 site is part of the globally important Hunter Estuary, and shares a border with the Hunter Wetlands National Park. 21 threatened species are known to use the site. T4 would destroy critical habitat for globally migrating bird species, and could mean the regional extinction of the Green and Golden Bell Frog.
- **More global warming.** Global warming is happening faster than scientists ever thought possible, and coal is one of the main causes. The greenhouse pollution from coal shipped from T4, if it goes ahead, would be more than 300 million tonnes per year. That is more than every power station, and every vehicle in Australia, combined.

That doesn't need to be our future. We can stop T4. With your help we will.

Coal Terminal Action Group

<http://coalterminalactiongroup.nationbuilder.com/>

Editor's comment:

HBOC has made submissions against the Proposed Coal Loader T4 because it will remove Deep Pond, which is important habitat for migratory shorebirds and waterfowl, especially during periods of inland drought. HBOC has also made submissions against proposed incursions into the eastern side of Swan Pond on Ash Island for additional rail lines to service the proposed expansion of existing coal loaders. HBOC's position is to reject further destruction of existing bird habitat in the Hunter Estuary.

Future Activities cont.

Easter Camp at Macquarie Marshes

29 March to 1 April 2013

The camp will be held at *Willie Retreat*, a private property on corner of Gibsons Way and Carinda Road. Please book your own accommodation or camping space - phone Myra Tolhurst on 02 6824 4361. Information on accommodation options is available on the website: <http://www.willieretreatmacquariemarshes.com.au/>

Directions from Warren to Willie Retreat

Leave Warren heading northwest along Carinda Road, following signs towards Carinda and follow the road for approximately 110km. When you see a Telstra tower, turn right onto Gibsons Way. The entrance to *Willie Retreat* is on the right-hand side approximately 2km along Gibsons Way and should be well signposted. (The entrance is at 30° 53' 48" S, 147° 29' 08" E). If you cross a main creek you've gone too far!

Bowra - migration after Easter

Bowra is a hotspot for Australia's threatened birdlife. It is renowned as one of the country's most rewarding birdwatching destinations, featuring iconic species such as Hall's Babbler, Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush and Grey Falcon. Located in the heart of the Mulga Lands, on the Warrego River plains, *Bowra* is a vitally important property for the conservation of Australia's wildlife.

After being in the McLaren family for five generations, Ian and Julie McLaren made the difficult decision to sell *Bowra*. Fortunately, Australian Wildlife Conservancy secured the contract to acquire *Bowra* to ensure that its diversity of habitats and extraordinary wildlife - particularly its birds - will be protected in perpetuity. The Federal Government made a generous

grant from the National Reserve System to assist with the purchase of *Bowra*. Generous assistance has been received from Birds Australia and Bird Observation and Conservation Australia (now amalgamated as BirdLife Australia) and other groups committed to providing a secure future for *Bowra* and ensuring that birdwatchers from around Australia (and the world) can continue to enjoy this remarkable destination.

Directions to Bowra Station

The *Bowra* section of our Easter camp exodus will start on Monday 1 April. Anyone wishing to go to *Bowra* earlier can, if they are camping. The bunkhouse is booked out until Tuesday afternoon by another group.

Your mission is to get to Bourke and then to Cunnamulla. (Bourke to Cunnamulla 257 km)

From Cunnamulla drive west, on Eulo Road, over the bridge. 500 metres past the bridge turn right at signs, top one "*Bowra*". Approximately 9.5 km along this sealed road there is a 44-gallon-drum mail box also signed "*Bowra*". Turn left here over a cattle grid onto a dirt road; the homestead is to the left 6.5 km along this road. *Bowra* is the only property on the road once you turn over the grid.

Please call in at the homestead for information about accommodation in the bunkhouse and camping. Hopefully the wardens (our own Toni Marsh and Peter Struik) will have a map of birding routes and a list of possible birds to be found.

If you have any questions or problems please contact me before 28 March by email lornamee33@gmail.com (best) or by phone on 02 49872913 or 0499 015 500.

Lorna Mee

Personal Effort Reaps Rewards

Judi Thomas regularly monitors the birds on Newcastle's rock platforms, counting Sooty Oystercatchers, Ruddy Turnstones and other shorebirds including terns. Judi is very aware of the human-induced repeated disturbances to roosting birds and is particularly annoyed by unthinking people who encourage their dogs to chase the birds. In December, Judi approached a repeat offender who regularly let his small dog chase the roosting birds in front of Newcastle Baths. Her explanation of the need for birds to roost in peace and not waste energy in escape flights was met with a very hostile reaction. This incident led the HBOC Committee to lobby Newcastle Council to install explanatory signs about shorebirds on Newcastle Beach - something that was promised several years ago when a study of the birds on Newcastle's Rock Platforms was commissioned by Newcastle City Council [see Publications section of www.hboc.org.au

for the report on *Birds of Newcastle's Rock Platforms* by Chris Herbert (2006)].

Progress has been made - Council has undertaken to find funding for signs and plans to install signs about shorebirds at both Newcastle rock platform and Stockton Channel. But the best news is from the man with the small dog - he has apologised to Judi, expressing his love of birds and now keeps his dog on a leash at all times on the rock platform! Judi has also been approached by a woman who used to unleash her dogs on the beach until Judi requested her to keep them on the lead - this woman expressed her delight at the recent article on Painted Snipe in the Newcastle Herald.

Thanks Judi for expressing yourself on behalf of the birds - you are making a difference!

Lee Rhiannon Inspection of Proposed T4 Coal Loader

On 13 December 2012, Greens MP Lee Rhiannon invited Mick Roderick to accompany her on a helicopter flight over the proposed T4 Coal Loader site in the Hunter Estuary - this is what she posted on her website after the inspection:

Imagine you are a bird and you weigh about 30 grams. Every year as the days start to shorten over your home in the Arctic Circle, you eat so much your weight nearly doubles. Then the urge kicks in to fly and fly and you head south. The fatty reserves stand you in good stead for your incredible flight to Australia. But when you arrive off the east coast and swing across the Hunter River you can't find your second home. It is now a coal terminal.

For Red-necked Stints and other species this is a real story.

There are three giant coal terminals at the mouth of the Hunter River. The construction of these sites would have destroyed significant bird habitat. Now the coal industry wants to build a fourth coal loader, known as T4. More than 200 species of birds either live in or migrate through the Hunter estuaries.

Yesterday I flew by helicopter over the proposed site with Hunter Bird Observers Club president and ecologist Mick Roderick. It was a very informative trip, but I found it disturbing to contemplate the massive environmental damage that would occur if the fourth coal terminal was built.

On the north and west side of the existing coal terminals there is extensive habitat. This is the second home of the tiny shore bird, the Red-necked stint, that makes the annual trek I described above.

Hundreds of thousands of birds migrate to Australia and many head for the Hunter Estuary Wetlands, located just a few kilometres from the heart of Newcastle. Significant areas are listed under the international treaty known as the Ramsar Convention, and Birdlife International has designated it an IBA - Important Bird Area. The Hunter Estuary is widely recognised as being the most important migratory shorebird site in NSW.

The area earmarked for T4 was not included when the Ramsar listing was made, but this was for political reasons only and it remains significant bird habitat that well and truly meets the criteria necessary for Ramsar-listing. Furthermore, the Australian government has contractual obligations with China, Japan and Korea to protect migratory shorebirds and their habitat.

The Labor government also needs to comply with the Bonn Convention for the protection of migratory wild animals and its own Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

The loss of more feeding and nesting sites (for resident shorebirds) in the Hunter Estuary will hasten the already alarming decrease in the number of shore and wading birds in this area.

In the 1970s it was estimated 10,000 birds migrated here each year. That number is now down to 3,000 and if this downward trend continues it is estimated that by 2025 there will be virtually no birds migrating to this region and many species will be locally extinct (in the most important habitat in the state).

Our helicopter ride allowed us to closely inspect Swan Pond and Deep Pond, where bird habitat will be destroyed if T4 is built. This area is an Important Bird Area because the swamps and estuary support the endangered Australasian Bittern and over one per cent of the world populations of Chestnut Teal, Straw-necked Ibis, Red-necked Avocet, Eastern Curlew, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and sometimes Latham's Snipe.

Another important asset that Deep Pond provides is a drought refuge for waterfowl. Because it is the only fresh water swamp in the estuary, it is used by a different suite of bird species to those that use the tidal areas. This is the case because it rarely dries out and so provides a reliable area of habitat that is used by birds that are often associated with inland habitats, such as the Pink-eared Duck and the threatened Freckled and Blue-billed Ducks.

T4 was referred to the Federal Department of the Environment in June 2011 and Minister Tony Burke's office was originally expecting to make a decision this month. This decision is now delayed while the NSW government's Planning Assessment Commission finalise their consideration.

This process is already compromised. The Hunter Bird Observers Club in their submission on T4 pointed out that information on the offset site for migratory shorebirds was not publicly available prior to the deadline for submissions. The offsets have still not been disclosed.

Offsets are a planning instrument that supposedly protects other land if a project such as T4 damages local biodiversity. They have become increasingly discredited as nothing more than a publicity stunt used by Labor and Coalition governments to approve unpopular developments.

Right now the authorities are working out how they manage this project, which is under increasing public scrutiny due to adverse climate change and local health impacts as well as the loss of biodiversity.

The answer is simple - don't approve another coal loader for Newcastle Port, already the world's biggest coal port.

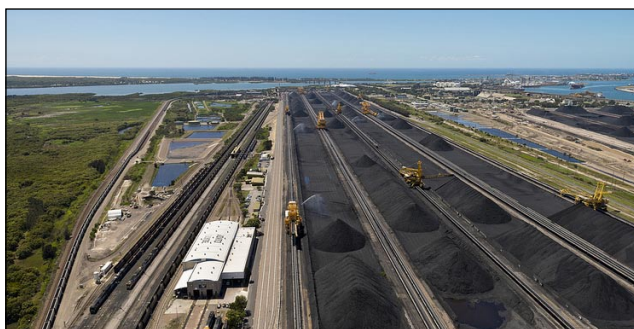
When the Red-necked Stint flies in from a trip of more than 10,000 kilometres it has a right to find its home and feeding grounds.

Lee Rhiannon

<http://lee-rhiannon.greensmps.org.au/content/blog/coal-loader-more-bird-habitat-destroyed-govt-breaking-international-treaties>



Deep Pond and part of Swan Pond (above) will be obliterated by the proposed T4 Coal Loader. Coal reality (below)



Birding Feature - Willie Wagtails

A long-term frequent user of our Ashtonfield urban property and the immediate neighbourhood

The Willie Wagtail is one of the best-known bird species in Australia. The Reader's Digest (1982) *Complete Book of Australian Birds* states that it is found almost anywhere in the continent, except for "dense forests or open treeless plains" and is only "accidental in Tasmania" and is "common in inhabited areas, parklands, most towns and cities and often seen accompanying or riding on live stock". On a walk at Walka Water Works in August 2012, I saw several foraging very close to cattle in the paddock beside the track along the wall of the lake. They were chasing disturbed insects, in competition with Welcome Swallows. Some of the swallows were riding piggy back on the cattle but I did not see wagtails doing the same.

My first experience of the species occurred in the early days of the establishment of the egret colony at Shortland 1981-1983, when I was making regular visits to monitor the bird population. I spent hours observing the behaviour of the nesting egrets and cormorants from a hide up a tree in the Melaleuca Swamp. A pair of Willie Wagtails established a nest very close to the hide, and became adjusted to my regular presence. I frequently observed their aggressive protective belligerence and was particularly impressed by their defence of their nest area when a White-bellied Sea-Eagle landed nearby. One of them viciously attacked the eagle and landed on its back to pull feathers for several minutes, but caused only passive shrugs from the eagle which eventually took off. It was a typical behaviour for which the species is renowned, described by Reader's Digest (1982) as "particularly aggressive when breeding, driving away Wedge-tailed Eagles, brown hawks, Kookaburras and Magpies".

Surprisingly, during 1984-2006 on our property at Glen Oak, we had no records of the species, but were aware of a nesting episode in 2005 on Kevin McDonald's property in East Seaham, not far away, and in a similar setting to ours. However, when we moved to urban Ashtonfield in 2006, the species was already well established. A pair regularly visited, perching on our side fence, searching for insects to pounce on in the lawn below, and sometimes also foraging on the front lawns. As the gardens matured, their usage expanded to the whole property.

After 2008, they treated the patio as home territory. They sheltered from heavy rain by perching on the pillars and on the backs of the chairs, used the furniture for loafing in the shade on hot days and foraged the walls and roof for insects and spiders. By 2009, they were demonstrating possession of the territory by aggressively attacking the resident Kookaburra when it perched on the fence to survey the lawn for its prey, despite the fact that Wagtails' targets were different from those of the Kookaburra. Like the Sea-Eagle at Shortland, the

Kookaburra basically ignored the flying attacks. On one occasion I watched the Kookaburra flying fast up the street with Willie riding on its back like a jockey, its beak working overtime to peck the feathers on its back! When we put a birdbath at the edge of the patio in 2011, they became regular bathers and then extended their patronage to the additional birdbaths we set up in the front gardens in 2012, particularly because of their close proximity to suitable perching branches for the vigorous flapping and preening routines.

In November 2011, we were alerted to their nesting somewhere nearby when they brought in three very newly fledged chicks, parked them in the patio to make use of chairs, barbecue, pillars and an occasional excursion out to the clothes line, while they foraged the neighbourhood and ferried prey back at regular intervals to feed the young. On 29 January 2012 a very new fledgling, with typical very short tail, was found preening on the branch overhanging the bird bath, suggesting that it was from a second clutch.

The Reader's Digest (1982, p.393) states that "both male and female build the nest, several clutches of 3 or more eggs may be laid in a season, nests are often re-used, sometimes nests may be placed in sheds or on verandas, incubation takes about 13 days and young fly in a similar period". This information and Michael Morecombe's (2000, p.406) estimate of incubation by both sexes as 14-15 days, have been used as guides for evaluation of the observations. Kevin McDonald's (September - November 2005) unpublished report on successful nesting by Willie Wagtails records *a nest built amongst the branches and foliage on an ornamental grapevine on the front porch, viewable through the lounge window, producing 3 eggs on 29 September, hatching on 13 October and 3 chicks fledged on 25 October (found on the ground near the water tanks). On 2 November the three chicks were on the back lawn, with the parents "bombing" a Raven and by 18 November all five were seen together, followed by occasional sightings over the next few weeks.*



22 Oct 2012:
Adult Willie Wagtail starts the 2012 nesting season collecting nesting material from our garden to carry to the construction site in a street tree 60m away

The 2012/13 nesting season at our place started in September-October when the parent birds were gathering fibre from our hanging baskets in the patio and later thin dry grass stalks from the front garden, to disappear over the road. The destination turned out to be a nest being built 60m away from our front door, low in the foliage of a street tree in the opposite side street. I made daily

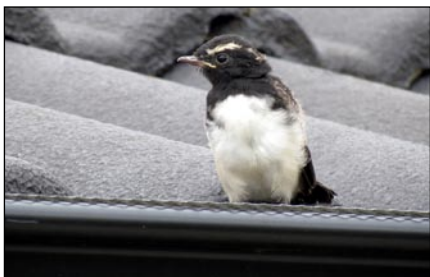
Birding Feature - Willie Wagtails cont.

visits to make notes of the progress and found that the birds took absolutely no interest in my presence, instead of the severe attacks I had expected. They later ignored a ride-on mower when a local drove under the branches of the tree and at Christmas ignored the noise and movement of a street cricket game being played close to the nest by a number of local families. However, a stray Kookaburra that had come near the nest area was not spared and was despatched in the usual way!



16 Nov 2012
Parent brings an insect to feed the surviving chick of the first nesting attempt

I started taking photos, about 20 – 50+ daily from when the first chicks hatched onwards, to record the behaviour of the parents and their offspring, the rapid rate of change as the chicks grew, as well as what food was delivered to them. I was amazed at how quickly the chicks developed. It reminded me of an old pop song of my youth: “What a difference a day makes, just 24 hours”. When the eggs first hatched on 9 November, two chicks were seen being fed, but only a single chick survived, passing from blind and naked to rough feathering and subsequently plumage capable of flight, when it fledged 14 days later on 23 November. I found the nest empty, but similarly to Kevin’s brood, the fledgling was found on the ground, not far from the nest tree, a very vulnerable situation in the streets of Ashtonfield. Fortunately it was able to fly onto the roof of a house. A couple of days later I found it hidden in our Callistemon Wildfire and being regularly fed by the parents. By 6 December, it was independent and confronting a juvenile Magpie-lark for bathing rights to the bird bath and perching rights for its preening and flap-drying ritual in a nearby shrub in the front garden. It was photographed again at the bird bath on 13 December.



19 Nov 2012
The chick was found on the ground near the nest tree and then flew up onto a safer house roof on its first day of fledging

Eighteen days after the single offspring had fledged, Mum and Dad were found regularly changing guard on the same nest in the street tree. On 23 December, three pink, naked and blind chicks were observed poking their heads above the edge of the nest and the next day one of the parents was photographed delivering a large cricket to three hungry mouths. On a very hot 24 December and 1 January, the adults shared shifts, standing over



30 Dec 2012
A parent brings a very large insect to feed the three chicks of the second round in the same nest. They are beginning to gain feathers.

1 Jan 2013
On a very hot day, a parent with beak agape takes a turn to provide shade for the advanced three chicks



the chicks with their beaks agape, providing shade and flying out to forage and returning to feed the chicks. The first sign of the approach of fledging occurred on 1 January, when the most active of the offspring (the one I had named No.1) left the nest and moved to a nearby branch. It was fed in turns with the other two still in the nest, but eventually returned to join them.



3 Jan 2013
Three fully feathered hungry chicks asking for more from a parent the day before fledging

The next two days saw vigorous wing flapping and frequent changes of positions in the nest. At 1000h on 4 January all three were still on the nest but No.1 took the lead and moved a bit at a time up the tree, then was followed by No.2 and then both disappeared when they reached the top, leaving No. 3 behind. At 1245h, the nest was empty and although the adults were observed foraging, no fledglings were located until 6 January when one was in our patio. It eventually responded to an unseen adult call and flew over the back fence to where the adults had been seen carrying the food.



13 Jan 2013
One of the parents (right) has just fed the only offspring located after the fledging of three chicks in the second nesting. They are on the fence between the front & back yards.

Since then, up to finishing this account on 16 January, there have been frequent visits by the fledgling and the adults to feed it, but no signs of the other two. I am concerned they may have become victims of a cat

Birding Feature - Willie Wagtails cont.

that has started regular invasions of our property. On 15 January, 11 days after the fledging of the second brood, I walked down to check on the state of the nest. Compared with the day of fledging, it looked a bit worse for wear, with the fine inside lining pulled up and some overhanging. If there is to be a third nesting, there is some repair work to be done.

The devotion of the adults to looking after the chicks and their capacity to organise was impressive. Feeding was well planned and distributed evenly between the babies. Many items brought in were very large insects, such as dragonflies. The largest I observed was an orange Wanderer Butterfly that the parent found could not be handled by the chicks. The problem was solved by flying down to the ground near my feet, giving the butterfly a considerable bashing on the hard surface and flying back with the fragments to distribute between the offspring. On another occasion, I saw similar treatment

given to an unidentified, very large, winged insect. The early stages of dealing with faeces were achieved as if the chick had received a signal to back its tail over the edge of the nest for the adult to remove the blob and dispose of it in the middle of the road. Towards the end, the chicks automatically put their tails over the edge to defecate, producing a patch of white blobs on the ground underneath the nest.

Coincidentally, a Christmas Card from a long-term West Australian friend told the story of a "little bit of excitement" from a pair of Willie Wagtails, viewed from his bedroom, which raised two successful nests of three chicks and had a failed third attempt. Heather and I are waiting to see if our nest is to be repaired to produce a successful third clutch.

Max Maddock

Are our migrant birds arriving in the Hunter Region earlier?

In the northern hemisphere it is well known that many migrant bird species arrive and breed earlier than they did fifty to one hundred years ago. This has been attributed to climate change and is considered a valuable ecological indicator. In Australia there are few long-term data sets which can be used for similar evaluation. An exception involves the comprehensive records of Peter and Judy Smith dating back to 1980 which show that arrival dates of a number, but not all species, have become earlier during the last thirty years (*Emu* 2012 **112**: 333-342). In woodland at Blaxland in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney they found that the average time of arrival of 16 bird species was 4.4 days earlier every 10 years, involving a change of just over 13 days (half a month!) during their 30-year study. Scarlet Honeyeaters showed the most dramatic change arriving on average 1.9 days earlier each year. Despite these long-term trends there were a lot of year-to-year variations in the timing, similar to the very late arrival in the Hunter of the Brush Cuckoo during the recent spring. One factor influencing these annual variations was the minimum temperature in more northerly areas of eastern Australia at the time of migration.

Fascinated by the Smiths' results I examined my collection of HBOC Annual Bird Reports to see if there were any comparable trends in the Hunter over the last 17 years. Unfortunately the records were too inconsistent to draw any conclusions. I then remembered Ross Carlton has kept weekly records in his East Seaham garden since 2001. Ross enthusiastically agreed to tabulate his records, but found no obvious trends over the last 12 years. However, some species often arrived at the same time each year with surprising consistency. For example both Rufous Whistlers and White-throated Gerygones

usually arrived during the first week in September, but in some years the first records of these species were either appreciably earlier or later than this date. The comparable dates for these species found by the Smiths were 7th October and 15th September respectively. These later arrival dates probably reflect the more southerly location of their Blaxland study site.

The Channel-billed Cuckoo heralds the arrival of spring in the Hunter Region. In Ross' garden the first calls were heard every year around the start of the second week of September; extraordinary consistency of timing exceeding that of all other species. At Blaxland, which is south of the Hunter, arrival time was very similar, about 12th September during the years corresponding to Ross' records. The Smiths found the arrival of the Channel-billed Cuckoo was about 5 days earlier every 10 years; in the 1980s the arrival was typically about the 20th of September.

Returning to the question posed by this article, "Are our migrant birds arriving in the Hunter Region earlier?"; the answer is we suspect they are but we can't prove it. Unfortunately Ross' weekly records are not sufficiently long-term or accurate enough to establish trends in arrival dates. Nevertheless they provide very valuable indicators of the behaviour of our migrant species and fit well with many of the Smiths' findings which involved daily records.

I would be delighted to hear from anyone in the Hunter who keeps daily records in a bushland setting and point out this is great opportunity to collect some accurate arrival dates next spring.

Mike Newman

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.

I don't know about everyone else, but the last couple of months have certainly been very exciting for me on the birding front. I wasn't around for the heady days of 2002, when no fewer than 14 species were added to the Hunter list, including a bevy of crippling rarities. However, the recent flurry of activity on the rarities front has given me a taster of those halcyon days, where opportunities for twitching were in abundance. Hunterbirding has been a part of this excitement, acting as a medium for sightings of unusual birds to be shared with our local birding community – and hopefully enabling a few of us to tick up in the process!

Speaking of 2002, I was curious to see what I was up to birding-wise a decade ago and so I dug out my old birding diaries that I used to keep back then, and took a trip down memory lane. For me, 2002 was perhaps my last great year as a free birder. That was the year I got together with my wife – and the most important thing in my life ceased to be birds and became her. Marriage, three kids and a translocation to the other side of the world later, here I am typing this summary for you now.

So although looking back to 2002 holds some of my greatest memories, it is also like looking through a window at a former life. It contains events such as birding holidays and twitches, that would slowly become a thing of the past for the former and a rare event for the latter. My birding diary informs me that I amassed a total of 11 lifers during the year (in this context "lifer" refers to the British list, and not necessarily the first for my lifetime).

The "lifers" included Arctic Redpoll at Titchwell, Hoopoe at Hampton-in-Arden, Lesser Sand Plover at Rimac, White-rumped Sandpiper at Kelling, Ortolan Bunting at Cart Gap, White Stork at Cottenham, Sardinian Warbler at Old Hunstanton, an armchair tick in the form of the Hooded Crow "split", Western Bonelli's Warbler in Nanquidno Valley, White-throated Sparrow at Flamborough Head and Pallid Harrier at Warham Green. Other twitches during the year included a Grey Phalarope, Green-winged Teal, Great Grey Shrike, Icterine Warbler and a King Eider.

There was a spring trip to Andalucia, Spain to take in the raptor migration at Gibraltar. Highlights here included Marbled Duck, White-headed Duck, Spanish Imperial Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Barbary Partridge, Red-knobbed Coot, Little Bustard, Slender-billed Gull, Little Gull, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Thekla Lark, Lesser Short-toed Lark, Black Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, Spectacled Warbler, Olivaceous Warbler and Rock Bunting.

The annual bird club trip to Cornwall for a long weekend of birding and drinking was also attended, although it looks like it was a pretty ordinary year on the birding front aside from the Bonelli's Warbler. Pec Sand, Siskin and Firecrest were nice bonuses though and although I can't remember, I'm sure the social side of things was a good craic [Irish for great time].

Anyway, back to Australia, the Hunter and I guess specifically, Hunterbirding... well for me the flurry of excitement began on 16th December, when I finally connected with the Grey Plover at Stockton Sandspit, which had been reported on Hunterbirding a month previous. Then, right at the turn of the year, another unusual wader was found at the spit – this time a Greater Sand Plover. Both the initial sighting and subsequent informative discussion on identification was a Hunterbirding highlight.

A third rare wader – same Bat Time, same Bat Channel – Broad-billed Sandpiper was reported on hunterbirding and subsequently fell to my still-smoking ticking pencil (or more precisely the less exciting score in an Excel Sheet). So things were looking good on the birding front as we moved into 2013. If things seemed good then, ex-cyclone "Oswald" certainly raised the bar!

Over the few stormy days and the few calm ones that followed "Oswald", many a like-minded birder was out scanning the sea and many a good bird was seen. With frequent reporting of unusual sightings through Hunterbirding, some of the air of excitement was captured. Hopefully it also encouraged many of us to go out and do some scanning for ourselves, and for the fortunate enough amongst us, bag a few ticks in the process! I managed to add no fewer than four birds to my Hunter list, including Red-footed Booby, Lesser Frigatebird, Black Noddy and Bridled Tern (terms and conditions apply). Given some of the reports coming through Hunterbirding it sounds like I missed a few goodies too! Oh well, we can't get them all...

So far 2013 has rekindled that twitching flame inside me that although dwindling, had not died. Let's hope that the year has more surprises in store and that Hunterbirding continues to be a valuable tool in sharing those surprises. Happy twitching!

Dan Williams

Dodgy Drongos Twitchathon 2012....Back to Basics

After last year's Lake Cargelligo flop the Drongos decided that returning to the route we know best was the best way of trying to wrestle our way out of third place. A brief reccie to Nyngan confirmed this suspicion and on Twitchathon eve three of the team (the co-pilot, Max and I) gathered at the usual starting point ready for our pre-race time trial. The weather was feral and the birding rubbish (80 species) so our hopes for the main event were low to say the least.

We woke to a glorious morning and after picking up our fourth member Robbie we headed out for some last minute oiling. As we cruised along the back roads I noticed a familiar looking bird perched above the road. Swinging the car around revealed a Ground Cuckoo-shrike! Further observations revealed a second bird and a nest!! What a corker to bag just before the race.

As 4pm approached, a female White-winged Triller was spotted flying into a tall eucalypt and there it stayed, with four desperate observers straining their necks, until the alarm went off and that rather dull little girl became our first bird for the race. White-throated Gerygone, Brown Treecreeper, Diamond Firetail and Fuscous Honeyeater were the next to fall. Little Friarbird was heard and a Double-barred Finch flushed from the grass. Wedgies, Tree Martin, Bee-eater and Dusky Woodswallow were seen soaring above. Rufous Songlark were very vocal and a brief glimpse of a Turquoise Parrot was a relief. A well-oiled pair of White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike on nest was our last sighting here.

We zipped along picking up Little Raven, Banded Lapwing, Little Corella and Grey-crowned Babbler on the way. A Plum-headed Finch was fluked and nervous waiting finally revealed a Painted Honeyeater calling and a Singing Honeyeater feeding in mistletoe. A bit further up the road and two biggies fell, White-backed Swallow and Horsfield's Bushlark. A White-winged Fairy-wren was seen in the usual place but we dipped on Yellow-throated Miner. A Spotted Harrier glided past and the co-pilot somehow managed to hear a Cockatiel at 100kph! Ground Cuckoo-shrike, Blue Bonnet and Zebra Finch were easily seen but we dipped on Red-capped Robin and Spotted Bowerbird.



We entered Leard State Forest and quickly picked up a swag of western woodland species like Leaden and Restless Flycatcher, Varied Sittella, Speckled Warbler, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Western Gerygone and Common Bronzewing. We then swung the car around and headed for Boggabri. We didn't need to leave the main street to get our targets: Blackbird, Brown

Honeyeater and Musk Lorikeet. With the sun nearly gone we made a dash for Gunnedah and with minutes to spare, Pink-eared and Blue-billed Duck made the list.

Our night-time drive was pretty uneventful with only the big three night birds recorded: Barn Owl, Southern Boobook and Tawny Frogmouth. Masked Lapwing and Cattle Egret were spot lit bringing our Saturday total to 114 species.

After another uncomfortable night on the ground we awoke to a

subdued dawn chorus but slowly the list started to grow. Noisy Pitta, Russet-tailed Thrush, Spectacled Monarch, Wompoo Fruit-dove, White-headed Pigeon, Brown Cuckoo-dove, Green Catbird and Yellow-throated Scrubwren were heard and seen. A Red-browed Treecreeper was the highlight as we crossed over the ridge, where on the other side we saw Brush-turkey, Crimson Rosella and Bassian Thrush.



Bassian Thrush - Grant Brosie

Pheasant Coucal, Variegated Fairy-wren and Common Koel were recorded on the drive down to Dungog. Long-billed Corella was seen south of town. Clarendtown only revealed Scarlet Honeyeater, whilst Seaham came through with the goods....Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Nankeen Night-Heron and Scaly-breasted Lorikeet. Green Wattle Creek only produced White-naped Honeyeater, not an easy bird to get during the Twitch. Geoff [the duck] proved quite difficult to locate in the Terrace and it won't be long before a new location might be



Brown Quail - Grant Brosie

needed. Musk Duck and Great Crested Grebe were seen at our 'New Walka'. We arrived at Stockton Sandspit to find the tide still quite high so we decided to leave and come back in an hour's time. Tattlers and Tereks were seen in Fern Bay and Golden Plovers along the Stocko foreshore.

The Baths were exceptionally quiet with only Crested Tern, Sooty Oystercatcher and Wedge-tailed Shearwater seen. We then headed west to Hexham Swamp where the waders of the previous week had disappeared but Brown Quail and Little Egret were welcome sights. Ash Island was quite good and we managed some beauties like White-fronted Chat, Brown Songlark, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Osprey and Brown Goshawk.

Back to the Sandspit and there were the waders! In a very quick space of time we saw Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwit, Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel, Red Knot, Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Pied Oystercatcher and Gull-billed Tern. It was at this point that a quick count put the wind in our sails....212!

Next was Lenaghans which produced Glossy Ibis, Channel-billed Cuckoo, Latham's Snipe and Topknot Pigeon. Over the range we dipped on Jacana and most of the woodland birds we were relying on but Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters were present in numbers. We then drove to our One Bird Town where we saw Goldfinch. Our final stop was the Wetlands Centre....Magpie Goose, Wandering Whistling-duck, White-cheeked Honeyeater and our final bird for the day, Tawny Grassbird.

We had managed to equal our highest score of 223 species and raise over \$600 for the Cowra Woodland.

Dodgy Drongos

Varied Wrenegades Twitchathon 2012

Normally we start the Twitchathon somewhere in the Upper Hunter to collect some of the more western bush birds before heading across to the Allyn River area at Barrington for rainforest species during the Sunday morning dawn chorus. But this year we had a significant constraint - our daughter was about to give birth to our second grandchild and we were needed to look after the first while she was in labour. We decided to work out a route that would take us no further than one hour's drive from John Hunter Hospital and would maximise our chances of being within mobile phone contact at all times. That meant no Allyn River and no western bush birds. We were aiming for at least 180 birds to be in the running for the "most species per kilometre" prize...

Turning our usual strategy on its head, we started in the east at Grahamstown Dam with Musk Duck, Great Crested Grebe and Hoary-headed Grebe. Driving through Raymond Terrace to Ross Wallbridge Reserve and Newline Road ensured that the common urban species were soon added as well as many waterbird species. Irrawang Swamp yielded a Pallid Cuckoo and a few kilometres north a beautiful Spotted Harrier cruised past along the Paterson River floodplain. We twitched Scarlet and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and Musk Lorikeets feeding in flowering callistemons at East Seaham followed by Long-billed Corellas and Scaly-breasted Lorikeet at Seaham Swamp Nature Reserve - but no breeding egrets. Sacred Kingfisher on the wires as we drove to Green Wattle Creek where we heard Wonga Pigeon, Jacky Winter and Fuscous Honeyeater. By 6pm we were heading for Paterson and Bolwarra, gleaning any bird we could from the cleared paddocks, powerlines, fence posts, occasional trees and small wetlands. To our delight, a couple of Latham's Snipe were feeding on the muddy margin of Bolwarra Lagoon and Banded Lapwings were quickly located beside an irrigation pipe on a Glenarvon Road turf farm. And for the first time in our Twitchathon history, we scored a Blackbird at Lorn! At Walka Waterworks we added Striped Honeyeater, Silveryeye and a nest-building Purple Swamphen. In the twilight we headed for Hexham Swamp where we munched on zucchini slice and enjoyed the gentle ambience of that fabulous wetland - framed by never-ending coal trains on their way to Newcastle. We listened hard but no booming bitterns could be heard - only the Australian Reed-Warbler and some Black-winged Stilts yapping in the moonlight. The last bird for the night was a Tawny Frogmouth, sitting on a fence post as we left Hexham Swamp.

A comfortable bed is some consolation for a shortened Twitchathon route and it was relatively easy to get up at 3am and head out to the Watagans for the dawn chorus. In the pearly pre-dawn we heard Sooty Owl and Southern Boobook as they headed for their day-time roosts and began ticking as the dawn chorus swelled around us. Eastern Yellow Robin, Rose Robin, Noisy Pitta, Green Catbird, Superb Lyrebird, Lewin's Honeyeater, Spotted Quailthrush, Black-faced Monarch and

many more joined the list. Three lyrebirds skittered across the road as we headed through the Watagans. On the way down the mountain to Old Brush we met two new teams coming up - some members a little the worse for wear after some well-earned beers the night before! Several pigeons joined the list at Old Brush - Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove and White-headed Pigeon - as well as Large-billed Scrubwren. Plenty of Twitchers there too! Off to John Browns lagoon where we searched in vain for Jacana, adding Little Grassbird and Swamp Harrier instead. By 8.30am we were driving into the Kurri woodlands (HEZ) searching for finches, honeyeaters, woodswallows and anything with feathers... not as successful as our previous day's reconnaissance but we were thrilled to find Painted Buttonquail as well as Brown Treecreeper and a Collared Sparrowhawk. Blue-faced Honeyeaters are common around Kurri, but where are they when you need them??? Luckily, there they were on a power-pole when we were forced to stop at traffic lights!

On the way into the Hunter Estuary we headed along the western side of Hexham Swamp, hoping for some raptors - and found a fabulous Black Flacon and Black Kite together near Leneghans Swamp. At Maryland we followed Greg Little's directions to a drainage line adjacent to a pathway where he had seen Painted Snipe a few days before - one flew across the nearby wetland and suddenly 19 were in the air - an absolutely stunning spectacle. A couple of Nankeen Night-Herons were roosting in the casuarinas bordering the wetland and a magnificent Channel-billed Cuckoo soared overhead. Very happy with these sightings we continued on to Fern Bay, Stockton Channel and Stockton Sandspit where Pacific Golden Plover, Grey-tailed Tattler and a host of other shorebirds soon joined the list. The pink legs of the single Banded Stilt took some finding in amongst the forest of pale blue Avocet legs. Near Newcastle Baths we added Ruddy Turnstone and Wedge-tailed Shearwater to the list before heading out to Hexham Swamp again for a daylight visit. Black-fronted Dotterel, White-breasted Woodswallow, White-fronted Chat, Tawny Grassbird, Australian Hobby and Golden-headed Cisticola soon joined the list but our foray onto Ash Island was less successful - only Grey Butcherbird, Yellow Thornbill and Brown Falcon were new sightings. Only a couple of new species could be added at the Wetlands Centre, leaving us with a grand total of 176 birds - a few short of our 180 target, and only one species ahead of the Dry-throated Buzzards who stunningly completed their Twitchathon on bicycles!

Ah well, we are grandparents after all - and were delighted to be woken at 3am on Monday morning immediately after the Twitchathon, when our daughter went into labour and gave birth to our grand-daughter Elsie Matilda several hours later - you couldn't ask for better timing!

Liz Crawford

Capertee Tree Planting 2013

2013 marks the 20th year of operation of BirdLife Australia's **Capertee Valley Regent Honeyeater recovery project**, a project which has been dependent for its success on the efforts of our valued volunteers. Why not celebrate the occasion by joining us in the beautiful Capertee Valley at one, or both, of the two tree-planting weekends planned for the year; on **4-5 May** and **17-18 August**? We hope to see as many of you as possible. Assistance is always needed to help in laying out plants the day before the planting, so if anyone is able to come a day early that would be greatly appreciated. If you have any queries about the weekend please contact Pixie at the BirdLife Australia Sydney office on 9647 1033 or southernsw@birdlife.org.au.



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Membership Scheme

Club members are being issued with a HBOC membership card for 2013. Members may be asked to show their membership card and another form of corresponding ID when applying for a discount at the companies listed below. Discounts are at the discretion of these companies. **If you have a query or have paid your membership fee and not received a card please notify the membership secretary - hbocmembership@hotmail.com**

Qs Bookshop	115 Beaumont St, Hamilton, Newcastle	15% on second hand books
Ray's Outdoors	6 Northcott Drive, Kotara	6.5% on purchases. Quote card no: D136073 <i>Ask instore for other discounts</i>
Hunter Wetlands Centre	412 Sandgate Rd, Shortland	20% discount on entry fee. 20% discount on HWC Membership
NDF Camerahouse	261-263 Hunter St, Newcastle	10% on binocular purchases. <i>Ask instore for other discounts</i>
Hunter Valley Zoo	Lomas Lane, Nulkaba	20% discount on entry
Kathmandu	6 Northcott Drive, Kotara	Vouchers. Available at some club night meetings <i>Ask instore for other discounts</i>

Hunter Wetlands Centre are pleased to offer a 20% discount on their memberships (listed below) for fellow HBOC members.

Supporting Members: 4 free visits a year; 10% discount in gift shop; members only events invitations; the Wetlander magazine
\$30 concession, \$50 individual, \$80 family (2 adults + 2 children), \$90 Family plus (3 or more children)

Full Membership: Unlimited entry; voting rights at AGM; 2 guest passes; 10% discount in gift shop; members only events invitations; the Wetlander magazine
\$45 concession, \$75 individual, \$125 Family (2 adults + 2 children), \$135 Family plus (3 or more children)



The companies above have been kind enough to offer discounts to HBOC members but please check with each one for the precise details of the discounts available and any terms and conditions. HBOC does not endorse any of these companies or their activities. 01/13

Book Review

Moonbird - A Year on the Wind with the Great Survivor B95 by Phillip Hoose

“Weighing a mere four ounces, Red Knot B95 has flown more than 325,000 miles in his life - the distance to the moon and nearly halfway back. He flies at mountaintop height along ancient routes that lead him to his breeding grounds and back. But changes throughout his migratory circuit are challenging this superbird and threatening to wipe out his entire subspecies of *rufa* Red Knot.”

So begins Phillip Hoose’s account of the life cycle and migration of Red Knot B95 and his flock as they spend the non-breeding season at the foot of South America, pecking mussel spat from the intertidal zone. As autumn approaches, they pile on fat supplies to fuel their northward migration, first to a staging point in Brazil, then another in Delaware Bay on the east coast of the USA - on the Atlantic Americas Flyway. There they fatten up on thousands of Horseshoe Crab eggs before making their long flight to their breeding grounds in the Canadian tundra. After breeding, the knots make the return journey to South America again, stopping at critical staging points en route. The story follows B95 through these critical staging areas, documenting

threats to their food resources and human use of the same habitats.

Hoose highlights the amazing physiological changes these birds undertake to achieve maximum flight distances. A worldwide network of interdependent ecological habitats is revealed, along with adverse human impacts which threaten to push this Red Knot to extinction.

But it is not all gloom! The book highlights actions being taken to conserve the species; provides profiles of conservationists and bird enthusiasts, including teenagers; and offers contacts and internet links for more information. The book is aimed at the younger generation, hoping to stimulate them to take conservation action.

A down-to-earth yet uplifting story about an amazing avian athlete whose annual migrations have traversed the whole of the Americas for the past 25 years. But without human action to preserve essential habitat, this species, like so many in the East Asian - Australasian Flyway, may fade into extinction.

Liz Crawford

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	12/12/12	Clarencetown	L. Storm
Australian Brush-turkey	3	6/1/13	Rankin Park	J. Stephenson
Australian Pelican	~40	8/9/12	Bengalla Road	T. Clarke
Australian Pelican	14	13/9/12	Elderslie Road Bridge	T. Clarke
Banded Lapwing	6	4/12/12	Hexham Swamp	A. Lindsey
Bar-shouldered Dove	1	6/1/13	Speers Point	S. Hamonet
Black Bittern	1	14/12/12	Brush Creek	G. Cooksey
Black Bittern	1	2/1/13	Cocked Hat Creek	G. Cooksey
Black Falcon	1	1/12/12	North of Gundy	M. Hunter
Black Kite	1	12/12/12	Wallalong	M. Newman
Black-fronted Dotterel	14	17/12/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	A. Lindsey
Black-winged Stilt	230	12/12/12	Hexham Swamp	M. Newman
Blue-faced Honeyeater	1	8/12/12	Lambton	P. Freeman
Brahminy Kite	1	22/12/12	Lemon Tree Passage	P. Hill
Brown Cuckoo-Dove	1	6/1/13	Rankin Park	J. Stephenson
Brown Goshawk	1 +dy	12/12/12	Bobs Farm	D. Hatfield
Brown Goshawk	1	24/12/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
Brown Quail	2+2dy	17/1/13	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Brush Cuckoo	1	15/12/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Brush Cuckoo	1	14/12/12	Duns Creek	M. Newman
Buff-banded Rail	3	11/1/13	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Caspian Tern	1	23/12/12	Stockton Sandspit	A. Lindsey
Common Sandpiper	1	8/12/12	Stockton	D. Jenkin
Common Tern	30+	28/11/12	Newcastle Rock Platform	M. Roderick
Common Tern	many	27/12/12	Stockton Sandspit	A. Lindsey
Crested Tern	30+ 1dy	28/11/12	Newcastle Rock Platform	M. Roderick
Fork-tailed Swift	6	11/12/12	Speers Point	S. Hamonet
Glossy Ibis	42	12/12/12	Hexham Swamp	M. Newman
Great Knot	1	23/12/12	Stockton Sandspit	A. Lindsey
Grey Goshawk	1	22/1/13	Speers Point	S. Hamonet
Grey Plover	1	23/12/12	Stockton Sandspit	A. Lindsey
Grey-tailed Tattler	1	8/12/12	Stockton	D. Jenkin
Gull-billed Tern	~100	20/11/12	Stockton Beach	R. George
Gull-billed Tern	many	27/12/12	Stockton Sandspit	A. Lindsey
Little Corella	~200	29/11/12	Nobbys Sand Dunes	R. Nicholas
Little Lorikeet	14	11/12/12	Speers Point	S. Hamonet
Little Tern	many	27/12/12	Stockton Sandspit	A. Lindsey
Little Tern	~14	9/12/12	Stockton [Ferry Wharf]	S. Hamonet
Marsh Sandpiper	2	23/12/12	Ash Island	G. Brosie <i>et al</i>
Nankeen Night-Heron	46	11/12/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Davidson
Nankeen Night-Heron	16	11/1/13	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P. Lightfoot
Noisy Pitta	1h	4/12/12	Duns Creek	M. Newman
Olive-backed Oriole	Pr+1 juv	24/12/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling

Club Night Observations cont.

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Pacific Golden Plover	53	20/11/12	Stockton Beach	R. George
Pacific Golden Plover	5	8/12/12	Stockton	D. Jenkin
Red-necked Avocet	~1,000	6/1/13	Stockton Sandspit	J. Stephenson
Red-kneed Dotterel	20	27/12/12	Hunter Wetlands Centre	A. Lindsey
Red-necked Stint	2	28/11/12	Newcastle Rock Platform	M. Roderick
Reef Egret	1	1/2/12	Merewether Baths	J. Nicholls
Ruddy Turnstone	13+1juv	20/11/12	Newcastle Rock Platform	R. Nicholas
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1010	4/12/12	Hexham Swamp	A. Lindsey
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	700+	23/12/12	Tomago	A. Lindsey
Sooty Oystercatcher	24	7/12/12	Newcastle Ocean Baths	J. Thomas
Southern Emu-wren	1	12/12/12	Hexham Swamp	M. Newman
Striped Honeyeater	2 ffy	7/12/12	Swansea [Osmond Res]	J. Adams
Stubble Quail	1f	4/12/12	Broadmeadow	D. Williams
Tawny Frogmouth	2	6/1/13	Rankin Park	J. Stephenson
Tawny-crowned Honeyeater	2	10/1/13	Fernleigh Track	R. & M. Stewart
Torresian Crow	3+dy	12/12/12	Bobs Farm	D. Hatfield
Tree Martin	500+	4/12/12	Hexham Swamp	A. Lindsey
Whimbrel	1	28/11/12	Newcastle Rock Platform	M. Roderick
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	Pr nb	Nov/Dec	H.R.Botanic Gardens	D. Rogers
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	1	24/12/12	Wingen [garden]	G. Newling
White-throated Needletail	90	1/12/12	Toronto West	L. Crawford
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1	12/12/12	Nelson Plains	M. Newman
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	5	12/12/12	Bobs Farm	D. Hatfield
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	8	6/1/13	Rankin Park	J. Stephenson

First Arrivals in the Hunter Region - from hunterbirding

Species	Where	When	Observer
Channel-billed Cuckoo	Wangi Wangi	1/09/2012	Beverley Roderick
	Adamstown Heights	19/09/2012	Ian Martin
	Carey Bay	21/09/2012	Chris Herbert
	Tighes Hill	21/09/2012	Ian Benson
	Maryland	23/09/2012	Greg Little
Common Koel	Nelson Bay	3/09/2012	Darryl Eggins
	Merewether	3/09/2012	Rob McDonnell
	The Junction	4/09/2012	Ian Benson
	Shortland	20/09/2013	Dan Williams
Pacific Golden Plover	Hunter River North Arm	29/08/2012	Liz Crawford & Chris Herbert
Ruddy Turnstone	Newcastle Baths	2/09/2012	Richard Nicholas
	Stony Point, Hunter R. entrance	17/09/2012	
Dollarbird	Munmorah SCA	20/09/2012	Alan Morris
Sacred Kingfisher	Ash Island	18/09/2012	Ian Benson
	Rothbury	c.19/09/2012	Steve Roderick
	Kurri	c.19/09/2012	Steve Roderick
	Green Wattle Creek	20/09/2012	Mike Newman
Leaden Flycatcher	Dunns Creek	19/09/2012	Mike Newman
White-browed & Masked Woodswallows	Muswellbrook	21/09/2012	Allan Richardson
	Kurri	21/09/2012	Steve Roderick

Activities - February 2013 to April 2013

DATE	EVENT	MEETING PLACE & TIME	CONTACT
FEBRUARY 2013			
Wednesday 13 February	AGM & Club Night	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre, Shortland	Guest Speaker: Liz Crawford <i>Flagged Shorebirds in the Hunter Estuary</i>
Friday 15 February	Remove mangrove seedlings from Swan and Wader Ponds	7.00am Wagtail Way, Ash Island	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785
Sunday 17 February	Field Outing – The Basin, Watagan Mountains	7.30am Cooranbong Park, Freemans Drive, Cooranbong	Allan Richardson 4977 2508 or 0459 806 176 (Meeting Point coords are 33 04 42 151 26 57 on Google Earth)
Tuesday 19 February	Tomago Wetland Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
MARCH 2013			
Sunday 3 March	Clean Up Australia Day	8am - 12noon Stockton Sandspit 7.30am – 11am Kooragang Dykes Boat Ramp	Tom Clarke 0418 411 785 for Stockton Sandspit Liz Crawford 0412 722 644 for Kooragang Dykes
Tuesday 5 March	Mid-week Outing - Seaham Wetland and <i>Wattlewood</i> (private property)	7.30am Seaham Wetland, cnr Seaham and East Seaham Roads	Pam Hill 4984 5270
Wednesday 6 March	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	Mick Roderick 0421761237 All members welcome
Saturday 9 March	Hunter Wader Survey	7.00am Ash Island 7.30am 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 Sue Hamonet 4958 1023 – Swan Bay
Sunday 10 March	HBOC Photo Twitch	Any 8-hour period, anywhere	Grant Brosie pictorella@yahoo.com.au
Wednesday 13 March	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre, Shortland	Guest Speaker: Chris Herbert <i>Shorebird Population Trends in the Hunter Estuary</i> Bird of the Evening: TBA
Sunday 17 March	Field Outing to: Ash Island and Stockton Sandspit	7.30am Car park after crossing Ash Island bridge	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008
Tuesday 19 March	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 Please ring to confirm
EASTER CAMP 29 March - 1 April	Macquarie Marshes	Phone 6824 4361 to book your own accommodation at <i>Willie Retreat</i> , cnr Gibsons Way & Carinda Road, Warren	Robert McDonald 4947 9190 Post-Easter Migration to Bowra - see <i>Newsletter for directions</i> Contact Lorna Mee lornamee33@gmail.com
APRIL 2013			
Tuesday 2 April	Mid-week Outing – Myuna Bay	7.30am Myuna Bay car park	Val and Don Moon 4359 1670
Wednesday 3 April	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	Mick Roderick 0421761237 All members welcome
Wednesday 10 April	Club Meeting	7.30pm The Wetlands Centre	Speaker: TBA Bird of the Evening: TBA